



[CENTRAL African rebels seized control of the capital Bangui as the president fled, but they promised to respect a January peace deal that provides for elections within three years. Looters and armed gangs roamed the streets of the city and there were casualties as South African troops clashed with the rebels. But after the fighters from the Seleka rebel coalition occupied the presidential palace Sunday they declared victory. Seleka coalition leader Michel Djotodia told Radio France Internationale (RFI) they would respect the terms of a peace deal signed with the regime of Francois Bozize, the president they have just overthrown.]

BURUNDI :

Le Burundi : un « carrefour de deux civilisations complémentaires et non concurrentes »

25 mars 2013/temoignages.re

La Journée internationale de la Francophonie a été célébrée jeudi à Bujumbura. Au Burundi, l'émergence du chinois et de l'anglais amène une recomposition. Ce pays est une ancienne colonie belge, sa langue officielle est le français. Il partage une frontière avec la Tanzanie, ancienne colonie britannique.

Le monopole du français, en tant que langue officielle dans le pays, avait résisté à la politique nationale de "Kirundisation" de l'enseignement dans les années 80, avant de céder du terrain au cours de ces cinq dernières années d'adhésion du Burundi à la Communauté anglophone des pays d'Afrique de l'Est (CEA) de libre échange.

L'autre épreuve annoncée pour la "Langue de Molière" est la demande en cours d'adhésion du Burundi au Commonwealth qui regroupe les anciennes colonies anglaises.

Au niveau officiel, on estime que le désenclavement culturel et même physique du pays passe par là et l'on ne considère plus comme un tabou le fait d'accepter l'usage d'autres langues étrangères dans la vie de tous les jours, malgré les relations privilégiées de longue date avec la famille francophone. Le gouvernement burundais encourage et facilite de plus en plus l'accès de ses fonctionnaires et autres citoyens aux cours du soir en anglais afin d'être en relation directe d'affaires avec la CEA résolument anglophones.

Un haut cadre du Ministère burundais des Relations extérieures et de la Coopération internationale, Isaïe Kubwayo, a cependant mis du bémol dans cette concurrence, jeudi, lors des cérémonies commémoratives de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie, en déclarant que son pays constitue aujourd'hui un « carrefour de deux civilisations complémentaires et non concurrentes aux plans culturel et linguistique » .

Le français doit encore composer avec l'influence grandissante au Burundi de la culture orientale à la faveur de la récente ouverture d'un institut Confucius à l'Université du Burundi chargé de vulgariser la langue chinoise dans le pays.

Les relations diplomatiques et d'affaires marchent également bien entre les deux pays et sont de nature à conférer une place de choix à la langue chinoise au Burundi, dit-on dans les milieux linguistiques à Bujumbura.

D'autres craignent de voir le Burundi s'enfermer plutôt dans une "Tour de Babel" à force de se mettre résolument à la mode linguistique du temps, comme cela s'observe déjà surtout chez les plus jeunes qui maîtrisent mal à la fois le français et l'anglais, quand ils ne les mélangent pas dans la vie de tous les jours.

RWANDA :

IMF sees two-fold rise in Rwanda's economy

zawya.com/Mar 25 2013

It may be a bit difficult to find Rwanda on the map as it's lodged between much larger neighbors, but it has emerged as a standout economy in the continent.

"Rwanda has been an economic success story," proclaims the International Monetary Fund in its latest report on the economy on March 19.

From a low base, the economy is set to double within five years, the fund forecasts in its March 21 report on the country.

While the global economy reeled in 2008, Rwanda galloped ahead at 13.4% and continued its good run with between 6-8% growth leaps over the past four years.

Last year, the country posted a 7.7% increase in GDP, and the IMF expects the country to maintain that momentum till at least 2017.

"Real gross domestic product (GDP) growth averaged above 8% per year in the last decade; inflation has been subdued since 2009; foreign reserves have been kept at adequate levels; poverty based on the household living conditions survey declined from about 57% in 2005/06 to below 45% in 2010/11; and income inequality declined notably," the IMF noted.

Unlike its other African counterparts, which have been boosted by oil and gas finds, Rwanda's success has been driven by good economic governance.

The country emerged as the 52nd easiest place to do business in, according to the World Bank's 2013 study, although it was four places below its ranking in 2012.

Rwanda was ranked eighth globally out of 186 nations, in terms of starting a business, which is in itself a remarkable achievement, given that the country was ranked 150th in 2008.

Rebel ties hit foreign aid

But Rwanda's reputation was tarnished after the United Nations accused the government of supporting and training M23, an armed rebel group in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. Rwanda has repeatedly denied its involvement.

The US, United Kingdom, Germany and other Western nations have taken notice of the UN's accusations, and stopped aid to Rwanda in November last year, which led to the widening of the

current account deficit, as 45% of the budget is plugged by international aid.

"Risks to the outlook arise mainly from possible cutbacks in aid and a more challenging global environment," the IMF noted. "Staff estimates indicate that a prolonged delay in the delivery of budget support could lower growth in 2013 by 1½ percentage points and possibly more, depending on the magnitude of second round effects."

But in a surprise move, Bosco Ntaganda, a key leader of the M23, voluntarily surrendered to the US embassy in the Rwandan capital of Kigali on March 21, and asked to be transferred to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Analysts expect the rebel leader's surrender should help Rwanda resume its access to Western aid. Even before the rebel leader's surrender, Britain had released nearly USD 25 million directly to aid agencies in Rwanda, while Germany had also sent EUR 7 million to Rwanda in February - only a portion of the hundreds of millions it receives in aid.

Still, reducing dependence on aid is a key priority for the government, which is seeking a USD 350 million Eurobond to fill a budget hole as aid has dried up. The plan was first mooted in 2012, but postponed.

Investor reaction to the bond will depend on whether the UN is satisfied that Rwanda's president Paul Kagame has stopped meddling in Democratic Republic of Congo's affairs.

Kagame has also been accused of restricting freedom of expression and suppressing opposition parties by the Human Rights Watch, which could reduce investor appetite.

Vision for the future

Rwanda has come a long way from the genocide in 1994 that saw almost a million of the Tutsi and Hutus tribes massacred. Kagame's Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), which had finally emerged victorious from the debacle, has been in government since 2000, and turned the economy around remarkably.

The country aims to become a lower middle-income economy by the end of the decade, as part of its Vision 2020 program. Key aspects of the plan include developing human resources and cultivating a knowledge-based economy led by the private sector.

"Private-sector-led growth is a core pillar of Rwanda's vision of middle-income status by 2020," said the African Development Bank. "Overall, 90.8% of Rwanda's workforce is employed in the private sector, which makes it a catalytic sector in terms of reforms to ensure inclusive growth."

"Over 123,000 SMEs operate in the private sector, accounting for 98% of all businesses and 84% of private sector employment. However, 88% of these SMEs are informal and as such, their contribution to total tax revenues, estimated at less than 2% in the budget, remains meager."

Indeed, the country has a long way to meet some of the lofty goals envisioned in the 2020 vision plan.

Reforms needed to shore up economy

The African Development Bank estimates that the country will need an additional USD 200 million to USD 400 million (4% to 8% of GDP), to realize growth of 8.5% annually.

"However, limited growth in credit to the private sector and low-tax effort are key bottlenecks," the AfDB noted. "Thus, mobilization of public resources through improvements in tax policy and administration and mobilization of private sector resources including through PPPs [public private partnerships] is crucial."

In addition, youth unemployment and poverty remains elevated. And while the private sector is expected to pick up the slack, it has not been energized yet.

Despite high doing business ranking, Rwanda's private sector remains weak and foreign direct investment have not increased as expected, the AfDB noted.

"Maximizing the contribution of Rwanda's private sector in terms of employment, export earnings, and tax revenues is currently impeded by several key bottlenecks including high costs of doing business and inadequate business development services."

The resumption of international aid flow is crucial to Rwanda's economic prospects and new socio-economic projects, and Kagame would do well to remain focused on the country's own affairs and shun the rebel group across its western border.

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RDC CONGO :

RDC: 245 miliciens impliqués dans l'attaque de Lubumbashi en route pour Kinshasa

Source: belga/ dimanche 24 mars 2013

Près de 250 combattants d'un groupe armé local qui avaient attaqué samedi la ville de Lubumbashi, le chef-lieu de la province du Katanga (sud-est de la République démocratique du Congo), ont été transférés dimanche à Kinshasa, a annoncé la Mission de l'ONU en RDC (Monusco).

Les 245 miliciens Mai-Mai du groupe Bakata Katanga, remis au gouvernement provincial du Katanga par la Monusco ont été embarqués dans des bus pour l'aéroport international de la Luano, où un vol spécial a été affrété pour la capitale congolaise, a précisé la mission onusienne dans un communiqué.

La remise de ces miliciens est le résultat de négociations menées sous l'égide de la Monusco, entre le gouverneur du Katanga, Moïse Katumbi Chapwe, les autorités militaires et provinciales et les Mai-Mai.

Selon le ministre provincial de l'Intérieur du Katanga, Jean-Marie Dikanga, la décision de transférer ces rebelles émane «des autorités du pays» et l'UNICEF a identifié 77 enfants dans le groupe avant l'embarquement pour Kinshasa.

Un groupe armé Mai-Mai local se réclamant du mouvement Bakata Katanga, venu du nord de la province - une zone théâtre de troubles depuis quelques mois du fait d'une recrudescence des activités de ces combattants -, était entré samedi en milieu de matinée à Lubumbashi, riche cité minière, provoquant une panique générale. Il a affronté en début d'après-midi à l'armée et à la police alors qu'il s'approchait du gouvernorat, selon des témoins. 245 miliciens réfugiés au siège de l'ONU s'étaient ensuite rendus aux autorités.

Selon des ONG locales, citées dimanche par la Monusco, environ 35 personnes ont perdu la vie dans l'attaque de la ville, la deuxième de la RDC par la population.

Les autorités locales ont pour leur part fait état de dix-neuf morts - dix-huit miliciens et un membre des Forces armées de la RDC (FARDC).

Selon des sources locales, la vie a repris dimanche à Lubumbashi.

UGANDA :

Uganda's sanitation inspires Africa

By Stephen Otage/monitor.co.ug/Monday, March 25

Kampala

Because of Uganda's ever improving water and sanitation sector, the National Water and Sewerage Corporation will become a training centre for developing countries.

This follows an announcement by Water Aid International, a leading International NGO in the water and sanitation sector working in 20 countries around the world, that most developing countries are inspired by Uganda's water and sanitation systems, which are seen as among the best among developing countries.

Political will

Speaking at the International Water Day celebrations in Kampala on Friday, Mr Girish Menon, the Director Water Aid International, said Uganda is inspiring most developing countries in the water and sanitation sector because of the high level of political will. "Uganda is leading the way in showing developing countries how solutions can be developed towards the local water and sanitation needs," he said.

According to Mr Alex Gisagara, the managing director NWSC, the government no longer budgets for cholera and typhoid outbreaks because waste water and fecal waste no longer have access to piped water systems because of the investment into the sector.

He said with the commissioning of the Lubigi sewerage plant in August this year, piped water and sewerage coverage is expected to increase as the corporation embarks on Lake victoria pollution by treating water passing through Nakivubo, Kagugube and Kinawataka before it enters the lake.

The United Nations declared the day in 1993 to draw international attention towards water and sanitation.

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SOUTH AFRICA :

Pilot Whales Found In South Africa On Noordhoek Beach

By By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA /huffingtonpost.com/03/24/2013

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Six of 19 pilot whales that were stranded Sunday on a beach in the South African city of Cape Town have died and authorities said they planned to euthanize some of the surviving whales.

Police and other rescue workers had hosed down the surviving whales at Noordhoek Beach to try to keep them alive.

The South African Press Association quoted Craig Lambinon, a spokesman for the National Sea Rescue Institute, as saying authorities had considered whether to try and refloat the whales, which washed up on the beach on Sunday morning.

"Seven are in poor health," SAPA quoted Lambinon as saying. "We are still trying our best to save them, but those that can't be saved will be humanely euthanized."

One whale was being transported to a naval base and will be taken out to sea, according to authorities.

"At this stage the first whale is on its way on a trailer to the naval base," Lambinon said. "There are a remaining five whales in good health and we are going to attempt to do the same for them."

He appealed to the public to stay away from the beach because enough workers are there, trying to help the whales.

In 2009, authorities in the Cape Town area removed the carcasses of 55 whales that beached themselves and had to be shot despite the frantic rescue efforts of hundreds of volunteers.

South Africa Trade Hits Bump

By PATRICK MCGROARTY/online.wsj.com/March 24, 2013

JOHANNESBURG—South Africa joined a club called BRICS a few years ago to tighten ties with the world's largest emerging markets. Today, the embrace from outsize competitors in the club, particularly China, is suffocating South African manufacturers, executives say.

"Manufacturers need economies of scale, and we don't have that," said Stewart Jennings, chief executive of South African glassmaker PG Group Ltd. and chairman of the Manufacturing Circle, an industry group. "And I think China uses that to do what they want to do. They're the gorilla in BRICS. We're the runt."

The issue comes to light as South Africa hosts leaders from Brazil, Russia, India and China in the port city of Durban this week for a summit that aims to foster so-called South-South trade among developing economies. The bloc—comprising Brazil, Russia, India China and South Africa—has previously staked out positions to counterbalance American heft in the global economy.

BRICS nations have called for a global reserve currency to compete with the U.S. dollar; criticized the tight control the U.S. and Europe exercise over the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; and said they would create their own development bank.

But the most immediate impact for South Africa has been to expose glaring weaknesses in its own economy, foreshadowing risks other African countries face as BRICS nations step up trade on the continent.

Chinese President Xi Jinping began a tour of Africa on Sunday during his first trip abroad, where he signed more than a dozen trade and cooperation deals with Tanzania.

To be sure, economists say South African manufacturers would be in even worse shape if their country hadn't joined the BRICS. The sector provides 15% of South Africa's gross domestic product and a million jobs—more than a 10th of the workforce in a country with an official unemployment rate of 25%.

Buffeted by rising wage and utility costs unrelated to competition from BRICS countries, manufacturers have shed 85,000 jobs over the past three years.

Like other African countries, South Africa also is hobbled by a costly, undereducated workforce and neglected infrastructure that leave manufacturers vulnerable to imports from abroad. African business leaders say the continent's fragmented economies are just too small to contend with the manufacturing might of the BRICS, especially China.

"It's a serious threat to our factories," said Andries Tshabalala, executive director of Actom (Pty.) Ltd., a maker and distributor of electrical equipment. After customers switched to cheaper Chinese imports, Actom scaled back several product lines. "South Africa just can't afford to lose these jobs," he said.

South Africa was never supposed to be part of the club.

The group grew out of Goldman Sachs GS +0.84% economist Jim O'Neill's bet that those big emerging economies were poised to challenge traditional powers like the U.S. and Germany as global leaders. The countries invited South Africa to join the annual summit beginning in 2011, largely to have a representative from Africa in the club.

South Africa hasn't kept up with its new peers. In the past three years, South Africa's rate of growth has been the bloc's slowest by a full percentage point. In recent weeks, its currency fell to four-year lows—outpacing declines of other emerging-market currencies—as concerns have mounted over South Africa's economic outlook and political stability.

South Africa's BRICS membership hasn't come with any market-opening obligations, but manufacturers complain the government hasn't fought very hard on their behalf, either. As a result, imports from member countries to South Africa rose 25% annually over the past two years, while South Africa's exports to them rose just 13%.

South Africa runs a trade deficit of nearly \$1 billion with Brazil, for example, and last year chicken farmers complained that cheap imports from the South American country were killing their business.

When South Africa imposed steep tariffs, Brazil complained to the World Trade Organization, and Pretoria backpedaled. In December, Trade Minister Rob Davies dropped the tariffs, saying the government would instead investigate a "comprehensive strategy" that didn't target any one country.

South Africa's lone stainless-steel manufacturer says it also confronts hurdles abroad that its competitors don't face to enter South Africa. "Anybody can send their steel here with no duties, yet

in a lot of these other countries we face quite significant duties of up to 25%," said Dave Martin, CEO of Columbus Stainless (Pty.) Ltd. "Our government is a lot slower to take decisions on trade issues, for fear of upsetting very large trade partners."

South African officials say they want to change the trade balance dynamic. The country's biggest trade deficit is with China, a figure that reached \$4 billion last year.

"We are where we are but that's not where we want to be," Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan said in an interview last week.

He said he planned to lobby fellow BRICS nations for more balanced trade between those countries and all of Africa, not just South Africa. The depressed state of manufacturing is felt at places like Sheffield Manufacturing, which makes stainless steel tableware.

Today it produces about a third fewer steel bowls and plates than five years ago because many catering companies, schools and hospitals are buying thinner, cheaper products made in China, said managing director Kevin Buckley. He's trimmed the workforce at his Durban factory by a quarter to 85 employees, and started making thinner tableware, too.

"We retool and we hope," Mr. Buckley said.

Len Moulton, who ran 3M Co.'s MMM +1.41% South Africa business until last year and now oversees some of the St. Paul, Minn.-based company's operations across Africa and the Middle East, said South Africa's induction into BRICS encouraged him to lobby for consolidating and then expanding 3M's manufacturing here at a single plant near Johannesburg's airport.

Since then, South Africa's annual economic growth has slowed from 3.1% in 2011 to around 2.6% last year and this year. A wave of strikes has crippled the mines that provide half of South Africa's exports and many of 3M's largest clients. As a result, 3M has centralized its South African manufacturing in Johannesburg—but the company hasn't expanded.

3M is waiting for signs that Africa's largest economy is committed to business friendly policies and that growth is picking up.

"South Africa can't afford to watch and wait for too long," Mr. Moulton said. They don't watch in India and China. They move."

Write to Patrick McGroarty at patrick.mcgroarty@dowjones.com

Anne Applebaum: South Africa's last step
13/03/25/fullcomment.nationalpost.com

Twenty years ago, I visited South Africa and got lost. I set out from my hotel in Durban in search of a small black college, where some leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) party were meeting before the country's first post-apartheid elections. I drove around Durban's white suburbs for hours, looking for a building that was not on my map because, technically, it was not in Durban. It was in KwaZulu, one of the black "homelands" that existed alongside but legally separate from the white neighbourhoods. When I stopped for directions, nobody I asked had ever heard of the college, even though it was only a few miles away.

South Africa is so different today as to be unrecognizable. Living restrictions are gone,

neighbourhoods that were once all white are integrated, the homelands are no more. At a Johannesburg mall, black and white shoppers buy sneakers and eat frozen yogurt together without caring that such a thing was once unthinkable. In newly prosperous Soweto, Nelson Mandela's house is a museum crowded with black and white tourists. Outside Pretoria, a black guide showed me around the less-crowded "Great Trek" monument, built in 1937 as a shrine to white Afrikaner supremacy. "It is a difficult history," he agreed. "But we have to know all of it."

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation process, which sought to "restore justice" after apartheid and heal historic wounds, is widely admired and often imitated, and rightly so. Given how bitter the conflict seemed when I last visited — KwaZulu was the scene of a violent ethnic struggle — the relative peace that reigns in relatively integrated South Africa feels miraculous. Unlike so many countries that have been through similarly profound transitions, South Africa retains strong democratic institutions, including high-quality media, decent courts and a well-organized civil society.

But while South Africans dealt brilliantly with the racial and historical legacy of the apartheid state, they have dealt less well with its corrupt economic legacy and the legacy of the security institutions created to repress the majority of citizens. Apartheid was, among many other things, an elaborate system of job protection for poorer whites, guaranteeing them high wages and benefits. Especially in its final years, apartheid offered political insiders, in the words of one economist here, "an almost unchecked opportunity for graft." Members of apartheid police, espionage and military institutions enjoyed almost limitless opportunities to exert power.

Old ways of thinking die hard — and institutions don't die unless you set out to kill them. Certainly the idea that the state exists to protect a privileged group of workers has not disappeared: It lives on in powerful trade unions (now black, rather than white), mass unemployment (still among blacks) and policies designed to discourage investment in the sort of low-cost, labour-intensive factories that have led to higher growth in other developing countries. In recent years, local sheriffs, backed by national unions, have shut down dozens of such factories, to the detriment and anger of employees.

Insider capitalism also lives on, including through an ANC-owned company, Chancellor House, for example, that enjoys privileged access to state contracts and channels its profits to the party. Meanwhile, a group described as the "securocrats" have re-politicized various military, police and intelligence agencies. Nowadays, that means they are loyal to the president, Jacob Zuma, who once was the head of intelligence for the ANC when it was in exile, rather than to ordinary citizens, such as the striking miners police fired upon last year.

The not-surprising result has been a series of scandals in recent years. In 2005, a South African judge found a businessman guilty of soliciting bribes from a French arms company on behalf of Zuma, then the deputy president. A power struggle followed; security agencies launched investigations of each other; the prosecutor's office was weakened in the process and remains leaderless. Despite South Africa's varied and independent media — which have parsed and analyzed this story at length — and the country's decent courts, this story is one of many that have never been resolved to anyone's satisfaction.

There is only one solution to all of these problems, as everyone knows, though not everyone admits: South Africa needs to continue its revolution, neutralize the security state, change its economic policies and, above all, deepen its democracy. Before South Africa's justly admired transition can be considered complete, South Africans must vote for a peaceful transfer of power. This could happen at the next general election, in 2014, or the one that follows. After two decades, the ANC, the undisputed winner of South Africa's transition, will have achieved full success only when it loses.

Washington Post Writers Group

LETTER: Nersa has hurt South Africa

mars 25 2013/bdlive.co.za

BECAUSE no journalist has done the appropriate homework, you have no idea how bad the actual decision by the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (Nersa) really is (Eskom's reduced hike 'bad news dressed as good', March 1).

Nersa clearly lacks the analytic capacity and/or backbone to resist political meddling, and it failed to understand the financial knife's edge on which the electricity supply industry is balanced, and did the populist thing instead.

Nersa decided to give Eskom 8% per annum increases over the next five years.

Everybody celebrates, not realising what they are cheering about.

The ratings agencies will now do some analysis and realise they have a utility with a future cash stream that does not generate enough free cash to service its cost of debt and eventually repay it, so some rerating will start very soon to move Eskom towards junk status.

For the electricity consumer that means a few percentage points of extra debt cost, which they will eventually have to pay.

Nersa has not protected the consumer against this possibility by carelessly ignoring all the effects of its decision.

Before the end of this decade, there is a real possibility that Eskom could be technically bankrupt, with more debt than the value of its assets.

In fact, if the revaluation of the assets by Nersa (to reflect depreciated replacement value) is reversed and generally accepted accounting practices are used, Eskom will be bankrupt some time next year.

One of the big scaremongers during the public hearings for the price review was the Energy Intensive User Group, misrepresenting the future energy prices in competing countries to allege that local industries would not be able to compete if South Africa has cost-reflective electricity prices.

It does, however, know the local issues, and modelled the future of Eskom and asked for 10% per annum increases over the next five years. That would have kept the electricity supply industry on the knife's edge, with survival possible.

Instead, Nersa decided to undercut the request of the biggest users of electricity in South Africa, and in the next few years we'll now all see how Eskom was pushed off the knife to fall on the side of bankruptcy.

Nersa has committed South Africa to another decade of power shortages and economic growth constrained by a lack of electricity.

The current price is not even enough to maintain a sustainable supply of electricity at current

volumes, so kiss goodbye to any reduction in unemployment, with improvements in living standards a distant dream.

And then, just as Eskom starts to really struggle after 2017, watch how liquid fuel, water and sewer infrastructure hit similar constraints with requirements for more money to maintain and grow assets.

Freddy Kay

TANZANIA :

Tanzania: Mbatia - Move Cautiously On Digital Migration

By Alvar Mwakyusa/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/ 23 March 2013

MIGRATION to digital television broadcasting should be halted in regions which are still using analogue technology to enable more Tanzanians embrace the new technology, nominated MP James Mbatia has urged.

The MP, addressing a news conference in Dar es Salaam said that government should consider providing interest-free loans to owners of television stations to enable them acquire equipment for digital broadcasting.

"The decision to switch-off analogue broadcasting countywide denies citizens access to information and this is contrary to Article 18 (b) of the constitution," Mr Mbatia, who is also NCCR-Mageuzi National Chairman said.

He said many people currently are unable to watch television as they cannot afford decoders and those who have acquired them are subjected to poor TV signals. Tanzania became the first country in the East African Community to start a gradual switch-off of analogue broadcasting.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) set June 17, 2015 as the deadline for analogue broadcasting worldwide. EAC member states had earlier agreed to have their own deadline set at December 31, last year, to prepare the countries ahead of the ITU deadline but so far it is only Tanzania that has started the migration process.

Recently, television owners through the Media Owners Association of Tanzania (MOAT) appealed to government to allow digital broadcasting to run parallel to analogue ahead of the ITU deadline.

Mr Mbatia said the migration to digital has had negative impacts for both operators of TV stations as well as the public, noting that the poor are the most hit. The MP called for massive public awareness of the new technology as well as provision of subsidies for purchase of decoders so that majority of Tanzanians will be able to acquire the devices.

He said the ongoing process to re-write the constitution is likely to be affected since wananchi will not be able to get information over television and thus be unable to participate.

Tanzania: Court Summons Vodacom Boss Over Sh77 Million Execution Proceedings

By Faustine Kapama/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/25 March 2013

THE High Court's Labour Division has summoned Vodacom Tanzania Limited Managing Director, Rene Meza to show cause why he should not be committed to prison for allegedly failure to deposit in court 77m/ -in execution proceedings involving the company's employees.

Registrar of the Court, Mr Mohamed Gwae, issued the summons in question on March 20, this year, requiring the director of the mobile phone provider company to appear in person before him without failure on March 26, this year and should remain in attendance until permitted by the court.

"You're further cautioned that you shall on no account neglect to comply with these summons lest you render yourself liable to a fine or imprisonment," sounds a warning part of the summons.

The Registrar, however, decided to proceed with execution proceedings in the matter while the company, through its advocate, Mr Juma Nyamugaruri, from FK Law Chambers, has filed an application at the Court of Appeal, seeking nullification of orders given by the Registrar on February 6, 2013.

In his ruling given in favour of former employees of the company, the Labour Court's Registrar directed Vodacom Tanzania Limited to deposit in court a sum of 77,973,036/- within two weeks from the date of the ruling.

Already, Mr Nyamugaruri has filed a notice, objecting to the hearing of application by the then employees on grounds that the court has ceased jurisdiction to entertain the case on account of the same matter pending in the Court of Appeal for revision filed on March 5, this year.

In its application before the Highest Court of the land, Vodacom Company is asking judges of the appeals court to call, examine and revise the orders issued by the Registrar in favour of Zawadi Bahenga, Lulu Mkwawa, Hapiness Kabale, Thobias Paul, Johanitha Richard, Iddah Assenga and Anne Mushi.

"The purpose is to satisfy itself (Court of Appeal) as to correctness, legality and propriety of proceedings and orders, which require the applicant (Vodacom) to deposit the sum in court in execution of award of CMA (Commission for Mediation and Arbitration)," the application reads in part. The ex-employees of the company had gone to the CMA to challenge termination of their respective employment services with Vodacom, alleging that correct procedures were not followed.

While pursuing their case before the CMA, the employees had filed another matter at the High Court, District Registry, demanding damages for alleged injuries they sustained in course of their employment, including ear pains and loss of hearing, as a result of Vodacom Company's claimed negligence.

The seven former employees, who were employed as customer services operators, had applied before the Registrar for enforcement of the CMA award, after the Labour Court dismissed with costs the company's application for revision.

Apart from dismissing the application in question, Judge Sophia Wambura had ordered each of the former employees to be compensated an amount, in addition to the CMA award requiring the company to pay them a sum equals to twelve months salary for permanent disabilities caused by poor devises.

She also ordered in her ruling dated January 4, this year, that all labour inspectors "should immediately inspect all devices used by Vodacom and similar companies and relevant measures be taken for companies which will be found to be using gadgets which are below standard."

The judge added, "It is a pity that it is not in record as to what has been done to Vodacom after this discovery. I am afraid that if this is not done, most of our children will end up getting this disability and be terminated, while the companies continue to employ other girls who in the course will suffer the same disabilities."

Already, Vodacom has lodged a notice of appeal and an application for leave to appeal against the said ruling. In the application for revision filed before the Court of Appeal to challenge the execution proceedings, Vodacom alleges that the Registrar has no statutory power to enforce the CMA award.

KENYA :

Kenya Wants Amina Mohammed to Head WTO

By Wambui Ndonga/Capital FM (Nairobi)/23 March 2013

Nairobi — The Kenya government is now pushing for the appointment of former Justice Permanent Secretary Amina Mohammed as the Director General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Through a statement sent by Foreign Affairs Communication Officer Anthony Munyao, the government said that Mohammed was an accomplished diplomat with impressive credentials and a wide experience in multilateral diplomacy.

Munyao noted that the international body had never been headed by an African or a woman and time had therefore come to change the trend. He added that Mohammed fits both categories perfectly because she was well known in international circles and was an experienced negotiator.

"It is noteworthy that neither the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs nor WTO has ever been headed by an African nor by a woman and for this reason, Amb. Mohamed stands a strong chance of being the first ever in both respects," the statement from the ministry said.

Mohammed, who currently works as the Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, promised to set out a clear and focused vision of priorities for the WTO, if Members agreed to elect her as the Director-General.

She is a law graduate from the University of Kiev in Ukraine and the Kenya School of Law. Her work covers 26 years including a broad spectrum of domestic and international assignments.

She rose through the ranks in Kenya's Diplomatic Service from a legal advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the highest level of Ambassador/Permanent Representative at the Kenyan Mission to the United Nations in Geneva.

Mohammed also chaired the General Council of the WTO in 2005, and presided over the selection process of the incumbent (Pascal Lamy) for his first term.

"My vision of the Organisation shall revolve around the imperative of an updated agenda for trade negotiations which is relevant to contemporary challenges in the global economy and the expansion of stakeholders to ensure the relevance of WTO," she said.

Though the position of Director-General of the WTO is not an elective post, international politics

and engagement with WTO member states greatly influences the outcome of the process. In January 2013, Mohamed and eight other candidates vying for the position made their presentations before the General Council of the WTO.

"The other candidates are Roberto Carvalho de Azevedo from Brazil, Anabel Gonzalez from Costa Rica, John Kwadwo Kyerematen from Ghana, Mari Pangestu from Indonesia, Ahmad Hindawi from Jordan, Herminio Blanco from Mexico, Tim Groser from New Zealand and Taeho Bark from South Korea," noted Munyao.

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

Mohamed Mursi warns taking strict measures to protect Egypt

PTI/thehindubusinessline.com/Mar 25

Cairo, Mar 25:

In a stern warning to the opposition, Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi said yesterday that he may be close to taking unspecified measures to "protect this nation", days after deadly clashes took place between Muslim Brotherhood supporters and protesters.

"If I have to do what is necessary to protect this nation I will, and I am afraid that I may be close to doing so," Mursi said in a speech at the opening session of a conference on women's rights.

"I will do so very, very soon. Sooner than those trying to shake the image of this nation think," said the Islamist leader.

"Let us not be dragged into an area where I will take a harsh decision," he warned.

The President's warning came two days after clashes had erupted between Brotherhood members and opponents demonstrating near the Brotherhood Guidance Bureau's headquarters in Moqattam. More than 200 people were injured in the clashes.

Mursi said he would not allow more Egyptian blood to be shed.

Describing the ongoing violence in several governorates between Muslim Brotherhood supporters and opponents, Mursi said, that it had "nothing to do with the revolution, but is violence, riots and attacks on public and private properties".

"All Egyptian blood is precious," Mursi tweeted yesterday.

Political groups had called for protests on Friday to condemn events that took place at the headquarters last week, when a group of Brotherhood members attacked reporters and photographers while covering protests in front of the headquarters.

“Peaceful demonstration is a right for all,” Mursi said, refusing to describe the events as part of the revolution, but instead termed them a “riot”.

Mursi called on all political groups “not to provide any political cover for acts of violence and riot”.

Mursi said that he “will not be happy” if investigations prove to “condemn some politicians”.

“State bodies are recovering and are able to deter violators,” the President said.

“Legal measures will be taken against those who are proved to be involved in violence, whether politicians or media outlets,” he warned.

Mursi vowed to take action against politicians “disregarding their standing”, adding that some used media outlets to instigate violence.

He stressed that instigators would not escape punishment.

“Instigators are participants in the crime,” he said.

Combats au Mali, alors qu'AQMI choisit un successeur à Abou Zeïd

Le Monde.fr avec AFP / 25.03.2013

Après plusieurs semaines d'accalmie, Gao, la grande ville du nord du Mali, a vécu dimanche 24 mars de nouveaux accrochages entre l'armée malienne et des combattants islamistes, qui ont fait sept morts selon des sources concordantes. Le Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (Mujao), l'un des groupes islamistes armés ayant occupé le nord du Mali avec AQMI jusqu'à l'opération militaire franco-africaine lancée en janvier, a revendiqué cette "attaque".

"Un militaire malien, quatre islamistes et deux civils ont été tués dimanche au cours des échanges de coups de feu entre l'armée malienne et les islamistes" survenus dans le nord-ouest de la ville de Gao, selon une source sécuritaire africaine présente sur place. A la mi-journée, la situation était redevenue "calme" à Gao, a-t-elle affirmé.

Selon l'état-major de l'armée malienne, les forces armées du pays et les troupes nigériennes qui les aident ont été "appuyées" par des unités françaises face à la "dizaine d'hommes armés" qui s'étaient infiltrés durant la nuit et avaient tiré près d'un camp militaire dans le sud de Gao.

Le successeur d'Abou Zeïd désigné

Ce regain de violences dans Gao même survient au lendemain de la confirmation par la France de la mort d'Abou Zeïd, 46 ans, précédemment annoncée par le Tchad. Désigné "il y a quelques jours" comme son successeur, un autre Algérien, Djamel Okacha, 34 ans, doit encore être confirmé dans ses fonctions lors d'une réunion de la direction d'AQMI, selon le patron de la chaîne algérienne Ennahar TV, Mohamed Mokeddem.

Djamel Okacha, dont le pseudonyme est Yahia Aboul Hammam, est un proche du chef d'AQMI, Abdelmalek Droukdel, issu du Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat (GSPC). Les deux hommes appartiennent au "Groupe d'Alger", qui désigne les islamistes armés nés dans la région de la capitale algérienne.

Okacha aurait rejoint le Nord-Mali en 2004. Sa présence est également signalée parmi le commando ayant attaqué une caserne militaire en 2005 en Mauritanie. Il serait aussi impliqué dans l'assassinat

en 2009, toujours en Mauritanie, de l'Américain Christopher Legget, qui travaillait pour une ONG.

Le successeur d'Abou Zeïd devrait s'atteler à la réorganisation d'Al-Qaida au Maghreb islamique qui, fragilisé notamment par la mort, à ce jour non confirmée, de Mokhtar Belmokhtar, le commanditaire de l'attaque de janvier dernier contre le site gazier de Tiguentourine, en Algérie.

AQMI menace de nouveau de tuer les otages français

En marge de cette désignation, le groupe islamiste a une nouvelle fois affirmé avoir tué ce mois-ci l'un des otages français entre ses mains depuis fin 2011, Philippe Verdon, ajoutant ne pouvoir garantir la survie des autres Français qu'il détient. AQMI avait déjà annoncé le 20 mars avoir tué Philippe Verdon, présenté comme un "espion", en représailles à l'intervention militaire française au Mali. Philippe Verdon, un géologue, a été enlevé dans la nuit du 24 novembre 2011 à Hombori dans le nord du Mali en même temps que son collègue Serge Lazarevic. Les autorités françaises ont déclaré ne pas être en mesure de confirmer son décès.

"Tous les autres otages sont en vie", précise le groupe dans un communiqué apparemment adressé au peuple français, "mais nous ne pouvons garantir leur survie en raison des attaques menées par votre armée contre les bases des moudjahidine". Quatorze autres otages français sont détenus en Afrique de l'Ouest, dont sept sont retenus prisonniers au Sahel par AQMI et les groupes qui lui sont affiliés.

Al-Qaida nomme un successeur à Abou Zeïd

Le Monde.fr avec Reuters/24.03.2013

Selon des informations données dimanche 24 mars par la chaîne de télévision algérienne Ennahar, Djamel Okacha a succédé à Abdelhamid Abou Zeïd à la tête de la brigade d'Al-Qaida au Maghreb islamique (AQMI). Agé de 34 ans, cet Algérien, aussi connu sous le nom de Yahia Abou El Hamam, est un proche d'Abdelmalek Droukdel, le chef d'AQMI issu du Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat (GSPC). Les deux hommes appartiennent au "Groupe d'Alger", qui désigne les islamistes armés nés dans la région de la capitale algérienne.

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UNE ÉTAPE IMPORTANTE

Okacha succède à Abou Zeïd, dont la mort, annoncée le 1er mars par le président tchadien Idriss Déby, a été confirmée samedi par les autorités françaises. "Cette disparition de l'un des principaux chefs d'AQMI marque une étape importante dans la lutte contre le terrorisme au Sahel", a ajouté la présidence française.

On attribuait à Abou Zeïd l'enlèvement d'une vingtaine d'Occidentaux dans le Sahara ces cinq dernières années, qui ont rapporté plusieurs millions de dollars de rançon à AQMI. Il était notamment jugé responsable de la mort de plusieurs otages étrangers au Sahel ces dernières années, dont celle du Français Michel Germaneau en 2010.

Okacha devrait s'atteler à la réorganisation d'Al-Qaida au Maghreb islamique qui, outre la mort d'Abou Zeïd, aura également été fragilisé par la mort, à ce jour non confirmée, de Mokhtar Belmokhtar, le commanditaire de l'attaque de janvier dernier contre le site gazier de Tiguentourine, en Algérie.

AQMI menace de tuer d'autres otages

Selon l'agence de presse mauritanienne ANI, AQMI a une nouvelle fois affirmé avoir tué ce mois-ci l'un des otages français entre ses mains depuis fin 2011, Philippe Verdon, ajoutant ne pouvoir garantir la survie des autres Français qu'il détient.

AQMI avait déjà annoncé le 20 mars avoir tué dix jours auparavant, en représailles à l'intervention militaire française au Mali, Philippe Verdon présenté comme un "espion". "Tous les autres otages sont en vie", précise le groupe dans un communiqué apparemment adressé au peuple français, "mais nous ne pouvons garantir leur survie en raison des attaques menées par votre armée contre les bases des moudjahidine". - (Reuters)

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Quatorze autres otages français sont détenus en Afrique de l'Ouest, dont sept sont retenus prisonniers au Sahel par AQMI et les groupes qui lui sont affiliés.

Looting and gunfire in captured CAR capital

25 Mar 2013/aljazeera.com

Witnesses report various armed groups carrying out widespread looting as Bangui residents remain in homes out of fear.

Looting and gunfire have been reported across many parts of the Central African Republic's capital city after rebels seized the presidential palace there on Saturday.

Witnesses said on Sunday that gunfire could be heard across many parts of Bangui and that businesses were being looted, including the home of President Francois Bozize's son.

"The situation is rather precarious, most residents are in their homes [because] everything has pretty much been looted," said Amy Martin, the Bangui bureau chief for the United Nations Office of Humanitarian Affairs.

She adding that the looting was done by "a combination of armed elements" as well as neighbourhood residents targeting houses in the diplomatic community.

Sylvanne Omar Pordass, a spokesperson of the Seleka rebels, told Al Jazeera that the president had fled into the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, after rebels took control of the capital.

Government officials also confirmed that Bozize had fled into the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo.

"The rebels control the town," said Gaston Mackouzangba, a spokesman for the president. "I hope there will not be any reprisals."

A foreign ministry official confirmed to Al Jazeera that the rebels had taken control of the national TV and radio stations.

Responding to the latest developments, African Union Chief, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, condemned the rebels' seizure of power and urged members to make a unified, decisive response.

On Monday, the office of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement, saying "he is deeply concerned by reports of serious violations of human rights", underscoring that those "responsible for committing such violations will be held accountable".

He condemned the seizure, calling for "the swift restoration of constitutional order".

The rebels resumed hostilities this week in the mineral-rich former French colony, vowing to topple Bozize, whom they accuse of breaking a January peace agreement to integrate its fighters into the army.

The loose umbrella group of insurgents fought its way to the gates of the capital late last year after accusing Bozize of failing to honour an earlier peace deal to give its fighters cash and jobs in exchange for laying down their arms.

"I think now that Bangui has fallen and the president is out, the citizens are hopeful there will be no more military violence," said Michael Amoah, an African political analyst based in London. "And the current prime minister stays in place; he is the choice of the rebels anyway."

A spokesman for the prime minister, Nicolas Tiangaye, on Saturday called on the rebels to accept talks to "avoid a bloodbath."

Tiangaye, an opposition figure, was only appointed as part of the peace deal brokered between the government and the rebels in January, an agreement that broke down last week.

'No direct threat'

The violence is the latest in a series of rebel incursions, clashes and coups that have plagued the landlocked nation in the heart of Africa since its independence from France in 1960.

France, which already has some 250 soldiers stationed in the Central African Republic, sent in another company of 150 troops to secure Bangui's international airport, a diplomatic source said.

"We have asked our citizens to remain at home. For the time being, there is nothing to be worried about," said the source. "There is no direct threat to our citizens at the moment."

On Sunday, the French presidency said they were determined to protect their citizens in the country and had decided to strengthen their military presence.

The airport, close to the heart of the capital, would be an important exit point for France's 1,200 citizens who live in CAR, mostly in Bangui.

South Africa has sent some 400 soldiers to train Bozize's army, joining hundreds of peacekeepers from the Central African regional bloc. Regional peacekeeping sources said the South Africans had fought alongside the Central African Republic's army.

State radio had announced late on Friday that South Africa would boost its troop presence after Bozize met his South African counterpart Jacob Zuma in Pretoria.

Bidding a fond farewell to Africa's finest griot

by Adekeye Adebajo/bdlive.co.za/25 mars 2013

GRIOTS are fabled storytellers who pass on the history of their people to successive generations. Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, who died on Thursday at the age of 82, was undoubtedly Africa's finest griot.

A member of the Igbo ethnic group, he introduced his people's culture and cosmology to the world through simple prose based on local folklore and oral traditions rich with proverbs. He published five novels, one memoir, five essay collections, five books of poetry, and eight short story collections (including four children's books).

He won the Man Booker International prize in 2007 and the Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1972. The Heinemann African Writers Series, which Achebe advised editorially for 10 years, published about 350 books by writers such as Peter Abrahams, Nelson Mandela, Alex la Guma, Steve Biko, Nadine Gordimer, Mongane Serote and Dennis Brutus.

Mandela famously described Achebe as having "brought Africa to the rest of the world" and noted that "the prison walls fell down" whenever he read Achebe. His fellow South African Nobel laureate, Nadine Gordimer, described Achebe as "gloriously gifted with the magic of an ebullient, generous, great talent". African-American Nobel laureate Toni Morrison noted that his writing had been a liberating education "in a way nothing had been before". After Achebe's death, Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, and fellow writer John Pepper Clark described his work as representing "the domination of the human spirit over the forces of repression, bigotry and retrogression".

Achebe has been described as "the father of the African novel" and his 1958 classic, *Things Fall Apart* (written at the age of 28), has sold 12-million copies and has been translated into more than 50 languages, making him Africa's most widely read novelist. His life mirrored Nigeria's own history: part of the first generation of idealistic intellectuals at the University College, Ibadan, he later worked as a radio producer while writing his books; he served as a roving ambassador for the secessionist "Republic of Biafra" during Nigeria's civil war (1967-1970); returned from self-imposed US academic exile in 1976 as a university professor; served briefly as deputy president of the socialist People's Redemption Party during Nigeria's Second Republic (1979-1983); and returned to another US teaching exile after a car crash in Nigeria which left him paralysed from the waist down. He would never live in Nigeria again.

Achebe's early novels, *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and *Arrow of God* (1964), dealt with the personal tragedies that arose from the clash of cultures between African tradition and intrusive western values imported by colonial mandarins and missionaries. His novels, *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), as well as the 1983 long essay, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, were devastating critiques of a corpulent and corrupt Nigerian political class, which had squandered its bountiful inheritance. Achebe was equally unsparing of Nigerian citizens he felt condoned the excesses of their leaders. He was so disgusted with the state of his homeland that he twice rejected a prestigious national award — in 2004 and 2011.

Like the late Palestinian-American intellectual, Edward Said, Achebe consistently challenged European narratives of Africa for dehumanising its people and denying them their own history.

As he wisely noted: "Until the lions produce their own historian, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter."

In Achebe's celebrated 1975 critique of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, he described the Polish-born Englishman as a "purveyor of comforting myths" and a "thoroughgoing racist" whose work is "a story in which the very humanity of black people is called in question".

As Achebe noted: "Heart of Darkness projects the image of Africa as 'the other world', the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilisation, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality."

He observed that the Africans in the novella are depicted as animals who make "a violent babble of uncouth sounds".

The Nigerian Civil War, in which at least a million mostly Igbo citizens died, left Achebe personally traumatised. His muse deserted him and he did not publish another novel for 20 years.

His memoir, *There Was a Country*, published last year, was a nostalgic and embittered personal history of "Biafra".

Forty years after the end of the civil war, Achebe was still condemning the "genocide" against Igbos and the failure to reintegrate what he considered the country's most enterprising group fully into national life.

The book predictably triggered a firestorm of controversy in Nigeria's cyberspace and print media, with some accusing the author of being an ethnic jingoist. Biafra died, but Nigeria survived. Achebe, however, argued until the end of his life that in that survival still lay the seeds of the country's destruction. As he memorably noted: "The man who brings ant-infested faggots into the hut should not grumble when lizards begin to pay him a visit."

- Adebajo is executive director of the Centre for Conflict Resolution.

Central African Republic president flees capital amid violence, official says

By Catherine E. Shoichet, Holly Yan and Nana Karikari-apau, CNN/March 24, 2013

(CNN) -- The president of the Central African Republic has fled the country's capital and rebels have seized control of the city, a government official said Sunday.

President Francois Bozize crossed into the Democratic Republic of Congo, said Jules Gautier Ngbapo, a spokesman for the government's territorial administration minister. He declined to disclose Bozize's location Sunday.

"The Central African Republic has just opened a new page in its history," said a written statement from Justin Kombo Moustapha, secretary general of the Seleka rebels.

The statement described Bozize as the country's former president and urged residents of the landlocked country to remain calm and prepare themselves to welcome rebel forces.

Word of Bozize's surprise departure came as violence erupted in the capital, Bangui.

Witnesses reported hours of gunfire, and Ngbapo said at least seven civilians were killed as rebels and local residents looted shops.

Some South African soldiers were killed in clashes, according to a statement from the office of French President Francois Hollande. South African officials could not be immediately reached for comment.

A United Nations spokeswoman based in Bangui described the situation as confusing and very tense.

"A number of U.N. offices have been looted as well as residences of some U.N. personnel," spokeswoman Uwolowulakana Ikavi said.

Sounds of fierce gunfire rang out for hours Sunday, she said.

The country has been on edge since rebel fighters pushed their way into the capital.

The wave of unrest started in December, when the Seleka rebel coalition launched its offensive. The rebels accused Bozize of reneging on a peace deal and demanded that he step down.

The rebel group, based in the country's north, managed to take control of several towns and move toward Bangui in the following weeks.

The Seleka and the government brokered a new peace deal in January, agreeing to form a unity government led by Bozize. But that peace deal also fell apart.

On Saturday, about 150 French troops secured the airport in Bangui.

France also asked for an urgent U.N. Security Council meeting to address the crisis in its former colony.

Hollande's office said the French president had spoken Sunday with South African President Jacob Zuma, expressing condolences for the soldiers' deaths.

"They called on all the parties to be calm," the statement from Hollande's office said, "to stop looting and to respect the political accords of Libreville," where leaders signed a peace deal in January.

The African Union condemned the Seleka rebels' renewed offensive and also announced a travel ban and asset freeze against political and military actors involved in violating humanitarian rights or the January peace agreement.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, U.N. officials in the Central African Republic were preparing to evacuate.

U.N. staff on the ground in Bangui are not allowed to leave the compound, Ikavi said, and non-essential staff will be evacuated or relocated once the security situation allows.

"As a human being, I am afraid," Ikavi said. "No one can stay calm when you hear heavy shooting not far from the place that you are staying."

CNN's Jennifer Deaton contributed to this report.

CAR President flees rebel advance

AAP/March 25, 2013

CENTRAL African rebels seized control of the capital Bangui as the president fled, but they promised to respect a January peace deal that provides for elections within three years.

Looters and armed gangs roamed the streets of the city and there were casualties as South African troops clashed with the rebels.

But after the fighters from the Seleka rebel coalition occupied the presidential palace Sunday they declared victory.

Seleka coalition leader Michel Djotodia told Radio France Internationale (RFI) they would respect the terms of a peace deal signed with the regime of Francois Bozize, the president they have just overthrown.

Opposition figure Nicolas Tiangaye, appointed prime minister of a national unity government formed as part of that deal, would remain in the post.

"I met Mr Tiangaye. We have spoken with him," said Djotodia.

They would also hold free and fair elections within three years, as set out in the deal, he added. And he had not ruled out keeping some ministers from Bozize's clan in the government.

"We are not here to carry out a witch-hunt," said Djotodia.

Rebel fighters resumed hostilities last week in the former French colony after they accused Bozize of reneging on the terms of the latest peace deal.

The rebel fighters moved into the capital overnight Saturday and on Sunday clashed with South African troops stationed there. South African Brigadier General Xolani Mabanga told the SAPA news agency there had been casualties, but he was unable to provide any figures.

The South Africans had been posted in Bangui to support the poorly trained, ill-equipped government troops.

Armed men roamed the city Sunday, looting homes, shops, restaurants and offices - including the premises of the UN children's agency UNICEF.

"They break down the doors and loot and then, afterwards, the people come and help themselves too," said Nicaise Kabissou, who lives in a central district.

"There's looting all over town," said a diplomat in the city of around half a million residents. Electricity supplies had been cut earlier in the weekend.

The International Committee of the Red Cross reported that injured people were flooding hospitals and medical centres in Bangui and requested secure access to the capital.

The whereabouts of Bozize, who himself seized power in a coup in 2003, remained a mystery.

One well-placed source told AFP he had left the country in a helicopter, but did not disclose his destination. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius confirmed only that he had fled Bangui.

Seleka first launched its offensive in the north on December 10, accusing Bozize of having failed to

honour an earlier peace agreement.

They swept south, seizing a string of towns along the way and defying UN calls to stop before halting within striking distance of Bangui.

Negotiations brought an end to that offensive and led to the January peace deal concluded in Libreville.

Colonel Djouma Narkoyo, a rebel commander on the ground, said Saturday the rebels were ready to meet with regional African leaders on the crisis - but they would not negotiate with Bozize.

Bozize's legacy after a decade in power is a country riddled with corruption and mired in poverty, despite abundant natural resources that include uranium, gold, oil and diamonds.

The state, which has a population of about 4.5 million, has been unstable since its independence from France in 1960.

It endured a notoriously brutal period under self-declared emperor Jean-Bedel Bokassa, who was overthrown in 1979 in a French-backed coup.

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

CHINA/AFRICA :

Trade relations in focus before China's Xi gives Africa speech

By Fumbuka Ng'wanakilala and George Obulutsa/Reuters/ Sun Mar 24, 2013

DAR ES SALAAM |

(Reuters) - China's trade ties with Africa will be under the spotlight on Monday when President Xi Jinping outlines his country's relationship with the continent, which Beijing is increasingly turning to for both its resources and as a market place.

Xi's tour of Africa on his first overseas trip is seen as a reflection of the strategic importance of Africa's oil and mineral resources to the world's second biggest economy.

But while seeking to build on expanding economic relations, China's new leader faces concerns in Africa that the continent is being stripped of its raw materials for export while spending heavily on finished consumer goods from the Asian economic powerhouse.

Africans generally see China as a healthy counterbalance to the West's influence but, as the relationship matures, there are growing calls from policymakers and economists for a more balanced trade deal.

One of Xi's main aims could be to ease local fears China was in Africa purely for its resources, said James Shikwati, head of the Nairobi-based Inter Regional Economic Network think tank.

Gratitude for Chinese no-strings aid to Africa is increasingly tinged with a wariness about its intentions.

"China has been giving us a lot of development support, but they obviously want something in return," said university student Lisa Mgaya in Dar es Salaam.

"We should be careful with China."

LONG HISTORY OF CONTACTS

Chinese interest in Africa goes back centuries. In 1414 admiral Zheng He sailed with a fleet down the east coast of Africa to Malindi, on a voyage to proclaim the strength of China. He famously brought home a giraffe, astonishing the Chinese court.

Six centuries later, China is focused less on African exotica and more on energy and minerals. The east African seaboard is hot property after huge gas discoveries in Tanzania and Mozambique. Oil strikes have also caught China's eye.

Xi arrived in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's commercial capital where he will deliver his speech, on Sunday and signed more than a dozen trade and cooperation deals with President Jakaya Kikwete's government.

The agreements included plans to co-develop a new port and industrial zone complex, a concessional loan for communications infrastructure and an interest free loan to the Tanzanian government. No details were given on the size of the loans or the monetary value of the projects.

He then travels to South Africa for a summit of leaders of the world's major emerging economies, known as the BRICS, on Tuesday and Wednesday, and could endorse plans to create a joint foreign exchange reserves pool and an infrastructure.

The proposal underscores frustrations among emerging markets at having to rely on the World Bank

and International Monetary Fund, which are seen as reflecting the interests of the United States and other industrialized nations.

Nigeria's central bank governor, Lamido Sanusi, wrote in the Financial Times this month that the trade imbalance between China and Africa was "the essence of colonialism" and cautioned the continent was vulnerable to a new form of imperialism.

China will be keen not to be perceived as an imperial master.

"The legacy of (the) West is the feeling that Africa should thank them, and that Africa should recognize that it is not as good as the West," said Zhong Jianhua, China's special envoy to Africa. "That is not acceptable."

Xi's African tour ends in the Republic of Congo, from where China imported 5.4 billion metric tons (5.9 billion tons) of oil last year, just 2 percent of its total oil imports, but potentially the source of a lot more to feed its booming, energy-hungry economy.

(Additional reporting by Ben Blanchard in Beijing; Writing by Richard Lough; Editing by Stephen Powell)

China media: Xi Jinping in Africa

25 March 2013/bbc.co.uk

As President Xi Jinping starts his tour of Africa, media in China dismiss concerns over "colonialism" and exploitation on the continent.

Xi Jinping's visits to Russian defence sites and his talks with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on Saturday, followed by his arrival in Tanzania, are the lead stories on China Central Television, People's Daily and other major media outlets.

Guangzhou-based 21st Century Business Herald says a key highlight of Mr Xi's visit is China helping Tanzania build a port connecting the African country to Chinese, Middle Eastern and European markets.

Referring to the port project, Xu Guangyu, senior adviser of the China Arms Control Association, tells Hong Kong's Ming Pao that the Chinese navy will need to set up supply bases as it ventures further out in the world in future.

Antony Wong Dong, a Macau-based Chinese military watcher, also tells Ming Pao that China is likely to wait for a period of time before letting naval ships dock at the port to allay concerns about Chinese military expansion in the Indian Ocean.

Global Times hits back at a Financial Times article by Nigerian central bank governor Lamido Sanusi calling on African countries to "wake up to the realities of their romance with China" and see China as a competitor capable of colonial-era exploitative practices.

"His article is full of loopholes, but it also reminds us that public opinion surrounding China-Africa relations environment has become increasingly complex," the newspaper comments.

Besides financial aid in return for energy and resources, China should do more to help African economies to develop independently, it adds.

In Outlook magazine, Prof Mei Xinyu, a researcher at commerce ministry think-tank, calls Mr Sanusi's logic "absurd".

He points out that Chinese companies would be less likely to import equipment and staff if Africa was able to deliver on technology, reasonable costs, quality, service, adequate technology and equipment, and a skilled labour force.

Strategic axis

Rounding up Mr Xi's visit to Russia that ended on Sunday, China Daily says the relationship between the two countries is "now in its best shape for years" and that Beijing regards ties with Moscow as a "priority" for its diplomacy.

In response to international concerns over Beijing and Moscow aligning as a strategic axis, Xinhua news agency says China and Russia have independent foreign policies and suspicions over their co-operation are "ill-grounded and completely unnecessary".

"Beijing never seeks to foster a strategic partnership with Moscow at the expense of ties with any other country, but it has zero tolerance if its core interests are infringed, just as Moscow does," the agency stresses.

Xinhua welcomes a "significant breakthrough" reached between Russian natural gas giant Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corp on Russia providing 38bn cu m of natural gas to China per year starting 2018.

"Pricing disagreements" lasting over a decade resulted in repeated delays to the pipeline project.

Before Mr Xi headed for Moscow, China signed framework agreements with Russia to buy the latest 24 Su-35 fourth-generation fighter jets that are "the closest to being fifth-generation", China Central Television reports.

China will also commission four jointly-built diesel-electric super-quiet submarines. The submarines will be designed by the Chinese navy and two will be built in Russia and the other two in China, CCTV adds.

Following international media reports that the Chinese navy will join US-led Rim of the Pacific multinational naval drills next year, Oriental Morning Post says the Chinese military has not yet officially confirmed the news.

A team of Chinese observers went to Rimpac in 1998, but media reacted angrily last year when Beijing was not invited to attend the Rimpac drill around Hawaii, which included navies from Japan, Russia and India.

Electoral reforms

Controversy over electoral reform has flared up again in Hong Kong after National People's Congress law committee chairman Qiao Xiaoyang cited a three-stage test that could disqualify any candidate of the "opposition camp" who "confronts" the central government from running for chief executive in 2017, Oriental Daily News reports.

"Firstly, the nomination committee will decide. Then the voters in Hong Kong will decide. Lastly, the central government will decide whether to appoint [the candidate] or not," South China Morning Post quoted Mr Qiao as telling pro-establishment lawmakers in Shenzhen at a closed-door seminar

yesterday.

Beijing-backed newspapers Wen Wei Po and Ta Kung Pao say Mr Qiao's remarks were an insurmountable "bottom line" directed at the opposition camp and "Western anti-China forces" not to disrupt Hong Kong's electoral process.

Independent daily Ming Pao says most Hong Kong residents are not against the central government's patriotism requirements for the chief executive, but they object to pre-election political screening.

It calls on the government to start its planned public consultations on electoral reform as soon as possible to avoid tensions escalating.

Apple Daily, an outspoken critic of the communist party, accuses Mr Qiao and other central government officials of "wantonly interfering" in Hong Kong affairs.

Backgrounder: Basic facts about China-Africa ties

Xinhua/By Agencies/2013-3-25

China and Africa, though geologically far apart, have enjoyed a profound friendship, which has stood the test of time for the past 50 years or so.

The following are some key facts about the development of China-Africa relations:

In May 1956, China and Egypt established diplomatic relations, marking the start of a new stage of relations between China and Africa.

After Egypt established ties with China, many other African nations followed suit. At present, 50 of the 54 countries on the continent have entered diplomatic relations with China.

From the end of 1963 to the beginning of 1964, late Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai visited 10 African countries, which was a milestone in China-Africa relations.

During the visit, he put forward five principles for China's ties with Africa and eight principles for Chinese assistance to foreign countries, laying a solid foundation for the development of friendly relations and cooperation between China and Africa.

Since the 1980s, China-Africa relations have withstood the test of changing international circumstances and continued a strong momentum of development.

In May 1996, then Chinese President Jiang Zemin paid a visit to Africa, during which he raised a five-point proposal on advancing friendly relations of lasting stability and comprehensive cooperation between China and Africa toward the 21st century, namely "sincere friendship, equal treatment, unity and cooperation, common development and embracing the future." It opened a new chapter in China-Africa relations.

In the 21st century, enhancing China-Africa cooperation has become the consensus shared by both sides.

In October 2000, China and Africa proposed a new type of partnership featuring long-term stability, equality and mutual benefit at the first ministerial conference of the Forum on China-Africa

Cooperation (FOCAC), held in Beijing.

To push China-Africa relations to a higher level, China issued its first African Policy Paper on Jan. 12, 2006, announcing to the world China's intention to develop a new type of strategic partnership with Africa, featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchange.

At the FOCAC Summit held in Beijing in November 2006, the Chinese and African leaders agreed to establish a new type of strategic partnership between China and Africa.

During the meeting, then President Hu Jintao also announced a package of aid and assistance measures to Africa.

In July 2012, the fifth ministerial conference of FOCAC was held in Beijing with an aim of deepening the new-type China-Africa strategic partnership.

At the opening ceremony, Hu announced a series of new measures aimed at supporting Africa's peace and development and promoting the new type of strategic partnership. This injected new vigor into the development of China-Africa relations.

Currently, the two sides are actively pursuing follow-up steps of the conference, particularly in the key areas of investment and financing, aid, African integration, people-to-people exchanges, and Africa's peace and security.

INDIA/AFRICA :

India committed for Africa's development, says PM

March 25/ (IANS)/deccanherald.com

New Delhi,

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Monday said during his meeting with African leaders at Durban he would reaffirm India's "strong and enduring commitment" as a steadfast partner for inclusive development in Africa.

The prime minister, in his statement ahead of departure for Durban to attend the two-day fifth summit of BRICS nations, said the summit will be the first such on African soil. The event begins on March 26.

"The 'Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialization' between BRICS and Africa will be an important theme of the Durban Summit," he said.

The prime minister is attending the summit of nations of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa on the invitation of President Jacob Zuma of South Africa, with whom he would be holding a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the summit.

He is to hand over the BRICS chair to South Africa at the Durban summit.

"Given India's long-standing and close friendship with Africa and our growing economic partnership with the continent, including through the India-Africa Forum Summit mechanism, I

look forward to the dialogue that BRICS leaders will have between themselves and, in a special retreat, with a large number of distinguished African leaders who are coming to Durban," the prime minister said.

"I will reaffirm our strong and enduring commitment as a steadfast partner for inclusive development in Africa and for advancing our common interests in international forums." The BRICS nations together command nearly 26 percent of the world's geographical area, and 43 percent of the world's population as well as 17 percent of global trade.

India and Africa have witnessed a five-fold increase in their trade volume in the past seven years at \$65 billion and are aiming to take it to \$100 billion by 2015, up from earlier planned \$90 billion target.

In 2011-12, exports from Africa to India stood at \$43 billion, and imports from India stood at \$23 billion, with Africa's exports being double those of India.

As part of India's growing partnership with African countries, New Delhi hosted the India-Africa Project Partnership conclave earlier March.

Over 900 delegates, including seven heads of state or government and more than 80 senior ministers and parliamentarians from 45 African countries participated in the meet. The three-day event was organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in association with Export-Import Bank of India.

The African continent has been the second fastest growing region in the world in the past decade. Its GDP (gross domestic product) recorded a growth rate of seven percent in the last decade. It is set to grow at five percent.

From a collective GDP of \$1.6 trillion in 2008, its GDP is set to grow to \$2.6 trillion by 2020.

India had extended 150 Lines of Credit worth \$5.2 billion to African countries. Among the projects India is involved in Africa are a rural electrification plant at Burkina Faso, cassava plantation in Cameroon and a cement plant in Djibouti.

India has also been providing assistance to African countries under its Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, which is a manifestation of South South cooperation.

BRAZIL/AFRICA :

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