



[A senior civil servant says at least 36 people have lost their lives and over 2,000 families have been displaced in three weeks of flooding in Kenya. Andrew Mondoh, the second-in-command at the Special Programs Ministry, said on Thursday that heavy rains have led to “the loss of 36 lives... property and infrastructure” and the flooding has displaced “2,393 households”. “The government is currently distributing food and non-food items (among the flood-affected people),” Mondoh added.]

BURUNDI :

RWANDA :

**Jeff Duncan: Gun registry like Rwanda**

By KATIE GLUECK/[politico.com/4/11/13](http://politico.com/4/11/13)

Rep. Jeff Duncan on Thursday likened a national gun registry to the Rwandan genocide in a Facebook post that began with his opposition to expanded background checks.

“Ask yourselves about a National gun registry database and how that might be used and why it is so wanted by progressives,” the South Carolina Republican wrote. “Read about the Rwandan genocide, the Hutu and Tutsi tribes. Read that all Tutsi tribe members were required to register their address with the Hutu government and that this database was used to locate Tutsi for slaughter at the hands of the Hutu.”

“I use this example to warn that national databases can be used with evil consequences,” he added later in the post.

Duncan opened his Facebook post arguing that “Expanded background checks and gun show requirements would have had NO effect on stopping Aurora, Sandy Hook or Tucson. Nor would they have any effect on the violent gun-crime in Chicago.”

He instead called for a tough approach to crime and greater discussion of mental health issues, as well as of “Liberty.”

Duncan’s comments came as the Senate voted on Thursday to move forward with a debate over gun legislation. Universal background checks look to be a key issue after Sens. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) found a bipartisan compromise on the issue. Some Republicans have expressed concern that record-keeping that could be involved with background checks might lead to a national gun registry.

“To blame the firearm, or a certain size magazine, or type of ammo - for the tragedies that have occurred in this nation is like blaming the knife used to kill Nicole Brown Simpson or the machetes used to slaughter a million Tutsis in Rwanda,” Duncan wrote.

Allen Klump, Duncan’s spokesman, pushed back when asked whether it was appropriate to invoke genocide in a political debate.

“I think the congressman wrote rather extensively on this topic,” he told POLITICO. “I believe if anyone reads what he wrote in its entirety, it’s absolutely clear he was addressing concerns with a national gun registry. He also makes clear why he used that example.”

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

SOUTH AFRICA :

**Zimbabwe cash transfer service growing in South Africa**  
by Tawanda Karombo/bdlive.co.za/avril 12 2013

HARARE — Standard Bank says it has processed more than R1m in cash transfers to Zimbabwe since launching a money transfer service in partnership with OK Zimbabwe in December.

South African banks are expanding their product portfolios to capitalise on the growing number of expatriate Zimbabweans working and living in South Africa who have to send most of their earnings back home to support their families.

First National Bank (FNB) this week launched a mobile-based money transfer service in partnership with OK Zimbabwe, the biggest retail operator in Zimbabwe.

Banks and telecom firms in Zimbabwe are also rapidly developing technology-based ways of transferring money using smartphones. Analysts told Business Day that this is geared at mopping up the money in the informal sector in a country that has an unemployment rate of about 80%.

"The real-time money transfer (to Zimbabwe) solution was introduced in December last year, and since inception we have processed transactions with a value of over R1m," said Standard Bank South Africa head of channel design and development Itumeleng Monale.

Economists say these earnings from relatives and friends in South Africa are "sustaining the Zimbabwean economy in some way", although it is difficult to measure the effect of such earnings as most of these are repatriated using informal channels.

FNB said this week that research showed that about 1.9-million Zimbabweans living and working in South Africa remit about R6.7bn a year back to Zimbabwe.

"The growth we have seen in the four months since introducing the product shows that it is clearly meeting an important need.

"There is good growth in first-time users, but what is even more encouraging is the high proportion of repeat users, in excess of 70%, who are making use of Instant Money International to regularly send money to Zimbabwe," Ms Monale said.

However, nearly 20% of this amount is spent on getting the money into Zimbabwe, a cost that is considered high.

Nonformal channels of sending money to Zimbabwe present risks and the costs are even higher.

"This solution is incomparably safer and more reliable than most informal methods, such as using a friend or taxi driver, to carry money in cash on their behalf," Ms Monale said.

Standard Bank said transfers cost R50 per transaction, with users able to send up to R1,000 per transaction.

FNB said its money transfer service from South Africa to Zimbabwe costs up to R45 for R100-R1,000, and R70 for R1,001-R1,500.

### South Africa helps to understand life, the universe and everything

by Derek Hanekom/bdlive.co.za/avril 12 2013

SOUTH Africa's prolific evidence of the origins of life on earth has shed significant new light on how life on our planet has evolved over millions of years. Through our increasing mastery of the two disciplines of palaeontology and astronomy, we are fast becoming the world's leaders on unveiling the mysteries of the past — how the universe came to be, what made us what we are today and what significance this knowledge may have for our decisions about our future.

We made our mark in the field of palaeontology when an eminent scholar from Wits University, Prof Lee Berger, and his team made the remarkable discovery at the Cradle of Humankind of two fossil skeletons of a previously unknown hominid species, now known as *Australopithecus sediba*. These early ancestors of ours lived in the area about 2-million years ago. The painstaking research undertaken to ensure the success of this project speaks volumes about the calibre and dedication of

our scientists.

On Thursday, Berger and his team had six more articles published in *Science*, one of the world's most prestigious journals, coinciding with the launch of the Palaeosciences Centre of Excellence.

Last year, on Africa Day, South Africa was announced as the host country for the lion's share of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope, one of the great science projects of the 21st century. This project is so huge that the SKA central computer will have the processing power of about 100-million personal computers, and the dishes of the SKA will produce 10 times the data of present global internet traffic. It will serve as a giant magnet for science in South Africa. The SKA will be far more sensitive than any existing telescope. It will enable scientists to address fundamental, unanswered questions about our universe, including about the formation and evolution of stars, galaxies and quasars and the nature of gravity and dark matter, and it may even answer the perennial question: is there intelligent life out there?

While astronomy explores the universe and the very distant past, the discipline of palaeoscience aims to reveal the history of life on earth — our small part of this universe — over a period extending from deep time to our recent past, but over a period long before there was written history. The answers to these questions cannot be obtained from written records but have to be interpreted from rocks and sediments.

The palaeo- and evolutionary sciences are the only disciplines able to provide reliable information on past biodiversity. They are thus key to understanding not only the development and history of life on earth, but are becoming increasingly important in improving our understanding of the effects of climatic changes and catastrophes on the biodiversity of our planet. This is particularly relevant as the world grapples to understand the current biodiversity crisis in the light of what has been labelled the "sixth extinction", in which more than 50,000 species become extinct every year, and the causes and mechanisms that drive biodiversity change. The rich fossil and archaeological record we have in South Africa makes us one of the few regions in the world offering tangible and comprehensive records of the past and thus the possibility of understanding both past and present changes in biodiversity. Indeed, at least three of the recognised five major global extinctions of the past 500-million years are represented in the rock record of South Africa.

Because of the antiquity of South Africa's rock record and the fact that South Africa has fossil-bearing rocks of all different ages — from the oldest evidence of life on earth more than 3.5-billion years ago to the relatively recent emergence of modern humans and culture — South Africa has a huge competitive advantage over other countries when it comes to unravelling the history of life on earth. In fact, this unique antiquity of our rock record makes South Africa the only country to boast all of the following: the oldest evidence of life on earth; the oldest multicellular animals; the most primitive land-living plants; the most distant ancestors of dinosaurs; the most complete record of the more than 80-million-year ancestry of mammals; and a remarkable record of the origins of humans and their earliest technological achievements over the past 4-million years.

This uniquely rich and extensive fossil heritage, coupled with the internationally competitive palaeontological, palaeoanthropological and archaeological research undertaken in South Africa, means the story that we have to tell on the development of life is of great international significance. In fact, it is not possible to write a comprehensive text on the development of life on earth without referring extensively to South Africa's fossil record.

Informed by the recently launched South African Palaeosciences Strategy, we have established a Palaeosciences Centre of Excellence, which is hosted by Wits University together with its partners, the University of Cape Town; Iziko Museums in Cape Town; Albany Museum and Rhodes

University in Grahamstown; the National Museum in Bloemfontein; and Ditsong Museum in Pretoria. It will be a hub of groundbreaking multidisciplinary research, with programmes that map the history of life on earth through the fossil record.

It will simultaneously explore the driving mechanisms of biodiversity changes through time. Because of the public's fascination with ancient history and the importance of understanding the mechanisms for biodiversity change through time, the centre will run an extensive public outreach programme, assisting in providing a context for understanding the present biodiversity crisis. The programme will create the storyline for palaeo-tourism initiatives in an effort to provide much-needed employment.

Palaeoscience is a relatively new discipline — there is still a lot to learn and discover. Just last night, we learnt of new groundbreaking and internationally significant fossil discoveries, and there are more in the pipeline.

The six studies by Berger and his multidisciplinary team of more than 100 scientists, academics, professionals and technicians from South Africa and around the globe describe how *Australopithecus sediba* walked, chewed and moved. The research indicates that *Australopithecus sediba* appears to be mosaic in its anatomy and presents a suite of functional complexes that are both different from that predicted for other australopithecids, as well as that for early *Homo*. This study will have implications for interpreting the evolutionary processes that affected the mode and tempo of hominine evolution and the interpretation of the anatomy of less well-preserved species. Research on several individuals from the Malapa site in the Cradle of Humankind continues, with more than 300 early human ancestor remains discovered in recent months amid the remains of hundreds of fossilised flora and fauna, truly making South Africa a global hub for palaeosciences research.

In the famous words of the late Prof Phillip Tobias: "Africa gave the world humanity, and that is no small thing", but the spread of humanity around the world and burgeoning global population growth has had a profound effect on our natural resources and presents us with the greatest of all challenges: what do we need to do to ensure a sustainable future for humanity?

As the SKA seeks to understand the ancient origins of the universe, the Palaeosciences Centre of Excellence will expand on this theme and answer fundamental questions about the origin of life on earth, the development of ecosystems and understanding mass extinctions and their causes.

- Hanekom is minister of science and technology.

**LETTER: South Africa keeps legacy alive**

[bdlive.co.za/avril](http://bdlive.co.za/avril) 12 2013

THE debate about apartheid and its legacy (Zuma takes swipe at Manuel on apartheid, April 11) needs to go to what government itself can do.

For example, to change the spatial arrangement of apartheid cities is indeed a huge task. Surely, though, areas where the state and its allies have direct power should have changed dramatically.

I think of the ways that black working class people are treated in state hospitals, how their children are handled in schools, how the police treat protesters, how official secrets are handled and how foreign Africans are treated by official agencies.

Here the question must be: why it is that the relationships of apartheid continue to be recreated, 20 years after its collapse? We should instead have been seeing the gradual but systematic and conscious reshaping of the apartheid legacy.

Crispin Hemson

TANZANIA :

### **Tanzania: Bukoba Airport Rehabilitation Nears Completion**

By Meddy Mulisa/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/12 April 2013

Bukoba — THE Bukoba Airport which has been under rehabilitation is expected to be opened next month, the Tanzania Airport Authority Bukoba Regional Manager, Mr Julius Mlungwana, has disclosed.

Rehabilitation of the airport which started in June, 2009, and scheduled to have been completed by October, last year, was delayed because of some logistical problems.

Mr Mlungwana told the 'Daily News' that an Italian construction company was finalizing a 1.7km tarmac runway to allow jet engines to land at the airport. Currently, only propeller engines can land at Bukoba Airport. United Construction Company Ltd (UNICO) was the main contractor and the Bukoba Airport would cost a total of 3bn/- upon completion.

"The last phase will involve construction of a modern terminal building. The new airport has been expanded to 1,600 metres to accommodate bigger aircrafts to land in Bukoba.

After rehabilitation, the Bukoba Airport would accommodate ATR 42 aircrafts with the capacity to carry 40 to 50 passengers compared to smaller aircrafts currently landing at the airport with only 8 to 12 passengers," he said.

Meanwhile, the Tanzania Airport Authority (TAA) has paid a total of 675m/- compensation to 16 people to pave way for expansion of the Bukoba Airport, it has been disclosed.

Mr Mlungwana noted that the funds have already been disbursed to the respective individuals and companies who were affected by the exercise. "A total of 675m/- has been paid to 16 individuals and companies to pave way for expansion of the Bukoba Airport. The affected people have already received the compensation but TAA is not responsible for allocating them new plots," he said.

He further said that a few individuals who had not received their payment would be paid soon as the government was solving the issue.

### **Tanzania: Transport Minister Concedes New Commuter Tariffs**

By Alvar Mwakyusa/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/12 April 2013

Dodoma — AS new tariffs for commuters, upcountry buses and train through the central railway become effective today, Transport Minister Dr Harrison Mwakyembe, has supported the rates and warned operators against overcharging.

Likewise, Dr Mwakyembe expressed concerns that people using public transport have been complaining whenever the government announces a slight increment in fares but still allow to be overcharged by operators without taking any actions.

"I am disturbed that there are some people who have been complaining on the slight increase of 100/- for adults and 50/- for students while the same people have been charged between 500/- and 1,000/- and not doing anything," he explained.

Dr Mwakyembe made the remarks here yesterday while addressing a news conference regarding the new tariffs. He was flanked by top officials from the Surface and Marine Transport Regulatory Authority (Sumatra) as well as the Sumatra Consumer Consultative Council (Sumatra- CCC).

Sumatra had on March 28, this year, announced new tariffs for public transport which will be applied starting today. Through the new rates adults will have to pay 400/- and students 200/- for a route of 15 kilometres.

"After the new rates were announced there were complaints from some sections of the public and the government decided to inquire from responsible organs on whether the announcement followed proper procedures and we were satisfied with the process," the minister explained.

Commuter operators had in April 12, last year, applied to Sumatra for a hike in fares by 149 per cent. If Sumatra heeded to the application then commuters would have to dig deeper in their pockets to the tune of 872/- from 300/-.

However, following public hearings and consultations the transport regulatory authority settled at the 400/- rate for a 15-km route. Likewise, upcountry bus operators had in September last year applied to Sumatra for new rates proposing a rate of 42.7/- per km for ordinary buses from 30.67/- per kilometre as well as 67.61/- from 45.53/- for semi-luxury buses.

After discussions, Sumatra settled for 36.89/- per kilometre. Another application was by the Tanzania Railway Limited (TRL) which applied for an increment of between 25 and 50 per cent and Sumatra approved for an increment of 44.1 per cent.

### **Kenyan Politician Charged With Money Laundering In Tanzania**

11 April 2013/Sabahi (Washington, DC)

Kenyan politician and businessman Donbosco Ooga Gichana was charged with money laundering and conspiracy in the Kisumu resident magistrate's court on Tuesday (April 9th), Tanzania's The Citizen reported.

Gichana, 34, is accused of depositing more than 7.9 billion Tanzanian shillings (\$4.9 million) in forged US Treasury checks in Arusha between November 2009 and August 2010. He then allegedly used his accounts to make payments while the checks passed through the forgery process.

The accused did not enter a plea because the magistrate's court does not have jurisdiction to try his case. He was remanded to police custody until April 18th, when his case will be heard again.

Gichana faced trial in the Kenyan High Court in 2011 for stealing over 96 million Kenyan shillings (\$1.1 million) from a city bank, but the case was stopped because he and his co-accused began to transfer the money back.

Gichana unsuccessfully ran for office in the Kitutu Chache South Constituency in Kenya's March 4th elections.

### **Tanzania: Pension Fund Suffers Sh6.5 Trillion Loss**

By Alvar Mwakyusa/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/12 April 2013

Dodoma — THE CONTROLLER and Auditor General (CAG) has raised a red flag over the performance of the Public Service Pension Fund (PSPF), revealing that it suffered a loss of 6.5trl/-.

"The fund is on the brink of failing to sustain itself if the government does not intervene," the CAG, Mr Ludovick Utouh, said here. Mr Utouh issued the warning while briefing journalists on various audit reports he had earlier presented before the National Assembly as required by the constitution.

According to the CAG, an actuarial evaluation conducted by Genesis Actuarial Solution Limited, which presented its report on June 30, 2010, showed that the fund was performing poorly.

"In addition to poor financial performance, I also realized that the pension fund had issued loans to public and private institutions under the guarantee of the government to the tune of 67.2bn/- without interests," he explained.

The institutions which owe the pension fund include the Higher Education Students Loan Board (HELBS) with a loan of 54.6bn/- and Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) -- 6.6bn/-. Others are Tanpower Resources, a company linked to former President Benjamin Mkapa and former Energy Minister Daniel Yona which owe PSPF a loan of 5.42bn/- as well as Tanzania Pharmaceutical Industry (TPI) -- 435.057m/-.

Directors of TPI include Regional CCM Chairman of Dar es Salaam Mr Ramadhani Madabida and his wife who is also Special Seats MP, Ms Zarina Madabida. Meanwhile, the CAG has described as 'unfortunate' the decision by the Speaker of the National Assembly to disband the Parliamentary Parastatal Organizations' Accounts Committee (POAC) and merged it with the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

"The reasons for establishing POAC are more valid today than it was then, it would be a miracle for PAC to accomplish just a half of its responsibilities," the CAG warned. He stressed that there is still a need for a parliamentary oversight committee to supervise public organisations which are increasing each year.

As of February 28, 2013, the CAG conducted audits on 126 public institutions for the financial year 2011/2012 out of 176 institutions that his office is required to audit.

KENYA :

### **Three weeks of flooding kills 36, displaces over 2,000 in Kenya**

presstv.ir/2013/04/11

A senior civil servant says at least 36 people have lost their lives and over 2,000 families have been displaced in three weeks of flooding in Kenya.



Andrew Mondoh, the second-in-command at the Special Programs Ministry, said on Thursday that heavy rains have led to “the loss of 36 lives... property and infrastructure” and the flooding has displaced “2,393 households”.

“The government is currently distributing food and non-food items (among the flood-affected people),” Mondoh added.

“Several parts of the country especially the coast and Western Kenya regions have been affected by flooding, following an increased heavy downpour countrywide,” the Kenya Red Cross Society said in statement on Wednesday.

At least 14 people were wounded and six others were missing, the statement added.

“Most of the rainfall in the country is expected during the peak month of April except over the coastal strip where the peak is expected during the month of May.” the Kenya Meteorological Department said earlier this week.

“Generally enhanced rainfall is expected over the western highlands, Lake Basin, the central Rift Valley, and the central highlands including Nairobi in March and April. It is, however, expected to be generally depressed in May,” it added.

MAM/MHB

### Kenya: Delays Mire Kenya's Farm Subsidy Programme

By Bosire Boniface/Sabahi (Washington, DC)/11 April 2013

Garissa — Complicated bureaucratic requirements and the delayed import of government-subsidised fertiliser have caused Kenyan farmers to postpone this year's planting of crops, potentially putting the food security of the country at risk.

The Kenyan government's first subsidy programme in more than ten years was intended to help farmers offset their costs of purchasing maize seeds and fertiliser, but the programme has been mired in problems, according to Kipkorir Menjo, director of the Kenya Farmers Association (KFA).

Problems began when the government was late in finalising the procurement of imported fertiliser, he said. On March 21st, former President Mwai Kibaki ordered the treasury to release 3.34 billion shillings (\$39.4 million) for the procurement of fertiliser and maize seeds, but the rainy season had already started.

"Because the fertilisers are to be imported, the presidential orders should have been made before the start of the planting season to allow transportation to far-flung farmers," Menjo told Sabahi, adding that the directive should have been made at least two months earlier.

"These are among the barriers that are affecting food production now," he said. "The rainy season started in late March and by now most farmers should be preparing for the weeding session, but most farmers have not yet planted because they are relying on the cheap seeds and fertiliser."

Subsidies and delays:

Under the subsidy programme, farmers can buy 50 kilograms of diammonium phosphate (DAP) for 2,500 shillings (\$30), whereas the same amount would sell on the open market for 4,600 shillings

(\$54). But in order to take advantage of the subsidy, farmers must qualify for it through a complicated application process, Menjo said.

Growers and other agricultural industry stakeholders are required to fill out an application at a National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) regional office, wait for officials to make a decision, go to an authorised bank to pay the subsidised price upon receiving approval, then head to one of the NCPB-run depots to pick up their consignment of seeds and fertiliser, he said.

The problem is that during each step in the process, farmers often have to travel far to reach NCPB offices and deal with long waits, Menjo said, which compels some farmers to buy fertiliser at market prices.

Easing these requirements could help offset the initial delay and ensure timely planting to secure the country's food security, he said. In addition, the government is still a long way off from shipping in enough DAP to meet farmers' demand, said Osinde Obare, a Kitale-based reporter for The Standard newspaper.

Slowing delivery even more is the system of centralised distribution, he said, adding that the government should establish depots at the county level so farmers can collect consignments of seed and fertiliser faster. NCPB depots around the country began to sell the first 200,000 bags of fertiliser April 1st, Obare said.

"As of April 2nd, the Kitale NCPB depot had only received 2,620 bags of the subsidised DAP fertilisers against a demand of more than 100,000 bags," he told Sabahi. "Some areas considered the breadbasket of the country [have] yet to receive their consignment, which threatens planting season."

"The [first] consignment will enable farmers to start planting as we wait for another consignment of 500,000 bags of fertilisers to arrive at the port of Mombasa in the coming week," he said, adding that the government set aside 2.7 billion shillings (\$32 million) to buy the fertiliser.

Worth the wait?

Jerita Ontita, 45, was among many farmers in Kitale awaiting delivery of DAP. "We are getting the government [subsidised] fertilisers at half the retail price, but we would like the government to speed up the delivery," she said. "Normally our land is prepared ready for planting at the signs of rains in late March, but until now most of us have not planted because we have not bought the fertilisers," she told Sabahi.

"Even after fulfilling all the conditions, one has to join long queues," said Ernest Too, 47, a farmer from Uasin Gishu county. "At the end of it all, you do not get the quantity of fertiliser you paid for or you are told there is no fertiliser."

NCPB, the government agency entrusted with distributing fertiliser and seed, is reviewing procurement procedures to ensure efficiency, according to the agency's managing director Gideon Kirwa Misoi.

Misoi said it took an unexpected amount of time for the government to advertise the tender to suppliers, and then to procure the fertiliser. "But these are teething problems that we will address for future planting seasons," he told Sabahi.

Regarding the steps that farmers must complete in order to receive the subsidised price, Misoi said

they were necessary to deter unscrupulous traders.

"The procedures may be viewed as hectic, but we want to ensure [that] real farmers get the fertilisers at the subsidised rates," he said. "In the past, we have witnessed scenarios where traders pose as farmers who buy and then sell [the fertilisers] to real farmers at inflated prices."

### Kenya: KQ Receives First Fully Owned Cargo Jet

By Margaret Wahito/Capital FM (Nairobi)/ 11 April 2013

Nairobi — Kenya Airways (KQ) has received its first fully owned cargo plane to tap into the growing trade volumes in Africa and strengthen its freight business. The Boeing B737-300 is the first of four passenger aircraft owned by the airline which were identified for conversion into freighters in October 2012.

The converted freighter will operate in Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa with the planned destinations being Juba, Luanda, Bangui, Douala, Yaoundé, Kigali, Entebbe, Dar-es-Salaam, Kinshasa and Bujumbura.

The introduction of the new freighter jet is set to help the airline capitalise on the cargo business as it seeks to contain the surge in demand for cargo services in some of the regional routes where it operates the much smaller Embraer jets which have less cargo capacity.

"We are excited to take delivery of this new freighter jet, which will be a perfect addition to our cargo fleet. This freighter jet will go a long way into giving us a larger share of the growing cargo trade segment across the regions we operate in as well as increase revenue from cargo services which has a significant impact in our business." Kenya Airways CEO, Titus Naikuni, said.

Under its 10-Year Growth Plan, Kenya Airways plans to have 12 freighters in its fleet by 2022. The converted freighter is also expected to present value addition through expansion of flows from China to other Africa points.

The conversion involved extensive structural work that included strengthening the floor, frames, door cut-out and installation of a new cargo door and surround to withstand heavier cargo loads and accommodate large freight pallets and containers.

Aircraft mechanical and electrical systems was also be modified to suit the aircraft's new mission as a freighter.

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

### Investors must look past the headlines on Africa

by Will Pollen/bdlive.co.za/avril 12 2013

THE two headlines that starred in The Economist's famous about-turn — from 2000's "The Hopeless Continent" to 2011's "Africa Rising" — have framed the highly dogmatic debate about the credibility of Africa's recent economic growth. While headlines are polemic by nature, problems emerge when the content itself is bereft of balance and nuance.

Those who write off the idea of "Africa Rising" as an exaggeration that pays scant regard to the infrastructure deficit on the continent and the lack of strong manufacturing sectors make the mistake of comparing Africa to western developed markets rather than considering different avenues of development. Moreover, they fail to understand that what is being argued is that Africa is showing signs of development rather than claiming to be the finished article.

Conversely, those who have propagated the image of Africa as a region that is undoubtedly experiencing comprehensive economic transformation have been just as guilty in failing to provide an account that presents the true diversity on the continent.

As often is the case, accuracy in this dispute lies somewhere in the middle of the two conflicting narratives. Although there are risks to be mitigated, there are also significant opportunities that can be very successful with the right approach.

The positive messages coming out of Africa can often be country-, city- or even sector-specific. When relying on a fact-based conversation on Africa's economic potential, one can see that while some markets may be immature, there are others that offer compelling propositions to any investor with the right approach.

These impressive markets have been cultivated by a formula of improved macroeconomic policies, entrepreneurial nous and innovative partnerships between multinational companies and local co-operatives. The cocoa industry in Ghana, for example, was moribund for many years and almost collapsed in the 1980s. However, a number of key reforms, such as price liberalisation and the creation and maintenance of important infrastructure, as well as structural factors, such as the rise of global cocoa prices, have led to Ghana's cocoa sector becoming world-renowned for its quality.

A similar story has taken place in certain areas of Ethiopia's manufacturing sector. At the turn of the century, Ethiopia's shoe-making market was flooded by cheap Chinese imports.

However, now the local industry has reclaimed its market share and is even exporting its domestically produced shoes to developed countries. In the light of fierce international competition, the sector was able to reinvent itself by improving the quality of its products, marketing and management. This change owed itself, again, to liberalisation but, more important, to those indigenous entrepreneurs who set up new enterprises that could compete internationally as well as in partnerships between multinational firms and local Ethiopian companies to ensure the transfer of skills.

These two examples highlight compelling opportunities that have presented themselves as a result of improvements in macroeconomic policies, as well as the emergence of local entrepreneurs providing innovative solutions to new and pressing challenges.

These examples also illustrate that Africa is not one market.

It is made up of 54 countries, each of which has significant regional diversity, as well as diversity across economic sectors. While there are examples of sectors that have thrived and have great potential to flourish, there are also, as with any rapid-growth market, sectors that are stagnant. However, there is a general trend towards better macroeconomic policies in Africa and the

cultivation of more business-and investment-friendly environments.

The challenge for investors now is to navigate the landscape so that key opportunities are identified and that risks are mitigated.

With increasing economic stability and investment incentives in place for those looking to do business in Africa, there are many opportunities within certain sectors. Further, investors today must look past the divisive headlines and take the time to truly understand the markets in Africa.

Doing this will not only allow them to fully understand the nature of the compelling investment opportunities Africa offers, but it will also provide a basis on which companies can successfully operate on the continent.

- Pollen is the director of Invest in Africa. This article first appeared in This is Africa.

### Fossils suggest possible new candidate for human ancestor

April 11, 2013 /UPI

COLLEGE STATION, Texas, April 11 (UPI) -- A collection of prehuman skeletons discovered in South Africa has anthropologists saying it may be time to reconsider mankind's evolutionary path.

International researchers studying fossil remains of a puzzling pre-human species from 2 million years ago say evidence of how they walked, chewed and moved suggest they may be a new candidate for a direct human ancestor.

Experts have long considered *Homo habilis* as the most likely precursor to *Homo erectus*, the immediate ancestor to modern humans, but paleoanthropologist Lee Berger of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, say his research suggests another possible lineage, through a species dubbed *Australopithecus sediba*.

*Au. sediba*'s dental structure suggests it was distinct from *Au. Afarensis*, a class of East African hominins that includes Lucy, a famed prehistoric skeleton discovered in 1974 considered an example of the species from which all prehumans developed.

Researchers say *Au. sediba* could be considered a "ghost lineage" completely divorced from Lucy and her East African contemporaries but which shows a number of surprisingly humanlike features.

"Everywhere we look in these skeletons, from the jaws on down to the feet, we see evidence of the transition from australopith to *Homo*," Darryl de Ruiter, a professor at Texas A&M University and co-author of one of the papers on *Au. Sediba* studies, said in a statement. "Everywhere we see evidence of evolution."

"*Au. sediba* looks more like *Homo* than any other australopith known," de Ruiter said in an e-mail to The Verge, "and for this reason represents an excellent candidate ancestor for the genus *Homo*."

Berger acknowledges there is still uncertainty in the evolutionary lineage, but the new findings could lead the search into new avenues.

"We thought we knew how this part of human evolution worked, and *sediba* comes along and says, 'Here's another option.'"

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

**G8 ministers remain deadlocked as violence escalates in Syria**

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Human Rights Watch accused government of indiscriminate bombings of civilians

The ministers – from the US, UK, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, Canada and Russia – remain divided with London and Paris pressing for the lifting of the arms embargo on the rebels while Russia and Germany are firmly opposed and the US straddles the fence.

The impasse persisted as Human Rights Watch charged Syria with indiscriminate and in some instances deliberate aerial bombings of civilians, slaying 4,300 since last July when the air force joined battle with the rebels seeking the ouster of president Bashar al-Assad.

In its 94-page report, HRW said, “The aim of these airstrikes appears to be to terrorize civilians from the air, particularly in the opposition-controlled areas [in the north] where they would otherwise be fairly safe from any effects of fighting.”

Unlawful strikes

The group’s team investigated 52 sites at which 152 people were killed and produced evidence of 59 allegedly unlawful strikes.

Among the sites where the team conducted interviews were four bakeries where civilians were targeted in breadlines eight times and two hospitals struck seven times. No military targets were said to be near the sites.

War planes and helicopters were also said to have dropped “imprecise and inherently indiscriminate” bombs on civilian areas. HRW deemed the attacks “serious violations of

international humanitarian law” and accused those responsible of “war crimes.”

Clashes were reported in Deir al-Zor in the east, Aleppo in the north, and the suburbs of Damascus while up to 57 people were slain during an assault on the rebel-held town of Sanamein in the southern province of Deraa, the opposition Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported.

At least 26 civilians were said to be among the fatalities in the strategic town, located near the Jordanian border where rebels had hoped to establish a staging area for bringing in reinforcements, supplies and arms.

CHINA/AFRICA :

INDIA/AFRICA :

BRAZIL/AFRICA :

**SA has big role to play in BRICS: O'Neill**

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South Africa has a important role to play within the BRICS grouping, both as a gateway to the continent and as a catalyst for African integration, Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill told the tenth annual conference of the African Venture Capital Association in Cape Town this week.

O'Neill, the man responsible for coining the original acronym BRIC, to stand for the fast-growing developing economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China, had previously criticized South Africa's inclusion in the grouping, based on the country's relatively smaller population and economy.

On Tuesday, news agency AFP quoted O'Neill as saying that South Africa "has a big role to play [within the grouping] and probably quite a responsibility in being some kind of genuine gateway to helping the rest of Africa become more successful".

Referring to the agreement reached at the 5th BRICS summit in Durban last month, to establish a BRICS development bank to help finance infrastructure programmes in the BRICS and other developing countries, O'Neill said this was "probably the first real sign that this grouping has managed to do something together".

According to AFP, O'Neill was bullish about Africa's growth potential, saying it was "one part of the world that has got a very high growth rate that is accelerating", and pointing to an Africa growth forecast of six percent this decade.

If Africa could improve its technology, education and governance standards, as well as strengthen its trade and infrastructure links - and here was the role South Africa could play - "then my

goodness me, it is not only the next decade [that is going to be Africa's], it is going to be the next three or four," O'Neill said.

SAinfo reporter

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