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BURUNDI :

RWANDA :

Jewish youth village in Rwanda to host region's largest solar field

By JTA / timesofisrael.com/ February 18, 2014

First utility-scale project in East Africa to help finance projects for Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village

The first utility-scale solar power field in East Africa will be built on land belonging to a Jewish-sponsored youth village in Rwanda.

The nearly \$24 million project was announced Monday by Yosef Abramowitz, the president of Gigawatt Global Cooperatief, which arranged for its financing.

Construction has already started on the solar field on land belonging to the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village. The village for orphans from the 1994 Rwandan genocide was founded by the late Anne

Heyman.

The solar field will feed electricity into the national grid under a 25-year power purchase agreement with the Rwanda Energy, Water and Sanitation Authority. It is expected to be operational this summer.

“It takes a global village to raise a solar revolution,” said Abramowitz, who also is CEO of Energiya Global Capital, Gigawatt’s Israeli affiliate, which provided seed money and strategic assistance for the project.

Abramowitz called the solar field, which will provide an 8 percent increase in the country’s energy supply, “a game-changer for humanity and the environment.”

The youth village is leasing land to the solar facility and will use the proceeds to fund its charitable mission.

“Anne Heyman, our founder of blessed memory, held to a vision in which the village practiced tikkun olam, the Jewish teaching to help heal the world,” said Laurie Toll Franz, the youth village’s newly elected board chair. “In addition to our work with Rwanda’s most vulnerable children, we’re now helping to improve the lives of thousands of people through sustainable electricity generation.”

Heyman died earlier this month in a horse-riding accident in Florida.

Rwanda: African Bank Gives Rwanda U.S. \$40 Million for Power

17 February 2014/East African Business Week (Kampala)

Kigali — The government and the African Development Bank recently signed a finance deal in which Rwanda would get \$40 million for expanding electricity coverage. The money will go towards construction of the 119 kilometre transmission line from Rusumo Power Plant to Birembo substation in Kinyinya, Gasabo district.

Currently Rwanda has 17% of household with access to electricity but by 2018, the target is to raise this to 70%. The plan is to gradually provide the industrial sector, SMEs with adequate but cheap electricity vital for growth.

According to a press release by Ministry of Finance and Economic planning, this was going to help Rwanda achieve a sustainable economic development.

"More employment opportunities will be created with easy access to electricity, plus off farm jobs, which will contribute to industrial development plus reduced production costs because of a reduction on electricity tariffs", Gatete Claver, the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning said. Gives

"This support is going to contribute a lot to Rwanda's aim of achieving sustainable growth plus it will facilitate economic transformation of the country," the AfDB Country Representative Negatu Makonnen said.

Tanzania, Burundi and share the Rusumo Falls hydroelectric power plant and this plant is expected to generate 80 MW which will be equally shared amongst the three countries.

The AfDB has continued to support Rwanda with the Electricity Access Rollout Program with funds equivalent to \$43 million. The bank is financing 23 other projects with \$ 500 million mainly

in infrastructure which covers a 60% of the financing.

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

Close Uganda ties may limit what U.S. does on anti-gay law

February 17/By Sam Sturgis/McClatchy Washington Bureau/kansascity.com

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration faces a crucial diplomatic test in Central Africa, where its strategic ally Uganda is drawing criticism for its military presence in South Sudan and its official hostility toward gays and lesbians.

But experts on U.S. policy in Africa say the administration's denunciation of Ugandan government policies is unlikely to alter that country's behavior and that the United States isn't likely to take stronger steps.

On Sunday, President Barack Obama condemned legislation that would radically curtail the rights of gay and lesbian Ugandans after the country's president, Yoweri Museveni, said he'd sign it. Obama's statement, posted on the White House website, called the bill "a step backward for all Ugandans" and said enacting the legislation "will complicate our valued relationship with Uganda."

The statement followed one a week earlier from State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki that called for the "phased withdrawal of foreign forces" from South Sudan. Only Uganda, which borders South Sudan, has acknowledged having troops there.

Neither statement said how the United States would react if Uganda doesn't change direction, and that worries some analysts.

"I'm both disturbed and not surprised that it doesn't specify any direct measures," J. Peter Pham, the director of the Atlantic Council's Africa Center, said of Obama's comments on the anti-gay legislation, which would impose life jail terms on any HIV-positive individual who engaged in homosexual intercourse. "It will be read by Uganda and Museveni and his advisers as nothing."

Pham said it probably would take the United States threatening to withdraw military assistance to get Museveni's attention. "We've condemned their actions in a number of instances but they've continued to act duplicitously," he said. "The one area where we could, if we really wanted to, send a signal is on the military side."

But that would risk what may be one of the closest U.S. military relationships in the region. Beginning in the 1990s, the United States has built the capacity of Museveni's Uganda People's Defence Force so it could be counted on to help stabilize difficult situations throughout Central and East Africa.

Ugandan troops were the first foreign forces to deploy in 2007 under the African Union Mission in Somalia, known as AMISOM, to combat insurgents linked to al Qaida. The U.S. has contributed

more than \$300 million to the AMISOM mission, according to the State Department, some of which is allocated directly to the Ugandan forces.

Moreover, U.S. and Ugandan military officials are working directly to hunt down Joseph Kony, who's been internationally indicted on war crimes charges in connection with atrocities in many parts of Central Africa.

If the U.S wants to influence events in Uganda, experts said, funding cuts for these military partnerships need to be under consideration.

But the U.S.-Ugandan security partnership appears to trump other concerns.

"Our relationship in Uganda is complicated," said Jennifer G. Cooke, the director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington research center. "We tend to not speak out as forcefully as we should because of the security concerns."

Efforts to reach Ugandan diplomats in Washington, New York and Geneva were unsuccessful. There was no response to an email sent to the Ugandan president's office.

Uganda: Wanted LRA rebel commander believed dead

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA, Associated Press / February 17, 2014

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Uganda's military said it believes a senior rebel commander with the infamous Lord's Resistance Army was killed last year in Central African Republic following an attack by African Union forces, inflicting a serious setback to the rebel group that is said to be in decline amid an international hunt for its leader, Joseph Kony.

Rebel commander Okot Odhiambo —who was the LRA's No.2 commander behind Kony — likely died of his wounds after an attack in October near the town of Djema, one of at least two bases used by African forces in Central African Republic, Ugandan military spokesman Lt. Col. Paddy Ankunda said Monday.

Ankunda said the accounts of LRA defectors provide "a corroborating picture" of Odhiambo's death even though his body hasn't been found. One LRA defector said he saw a badly wounded Odhiambo being carried away by fighters following the attack, and another defector said the commander was missing at a top LRA meeting where he was expected late last year, according to Ankunda.

"There is some truth to it," he said, referring to Odhiambo's death.

The news was hailed in Washington.

"The death of Odhiambo would be a historic blow to the LRA's command structure. It is clear that, despite the regional challenges, the AU Regional Task Force continues to make great strides toward ending the LRA threat," said State Department spokesman William Stevens. He congratulated the Ugandan-led African Union troops "on their continued success in pursuing the LRA's remaining leaders and promoting defections. We believe it is critical that pressure continue to be put on the LRA to prevent it from regrouping."

The United States has about 100 military advisers helping the African Union force of about 3,000 troops from Uganda, South Sudan and Congo to hunt down the LRA.

Odhiambo's death, if confirmed, would be "a huge blow" to the LRA, whose leaders are constantly trying to elude capture in the jungles of central Africa, said Ben Keeseey, the head of the LRA watchdog group Invisible Children. Kony himself is believed to be hiding in Central African Republic, which has been largely lawless over the past year amid sectarian violence in which up to 1 million people have been displaced.

Odhiambo was one of five LRA commanders indicted by the International Criminal Court in 2005 over atrocities committed in a rebellion that started in Uganda in the 1980s before spreading to some parts of central Africa. In the past the rebels have operated bases in South Sudan and Congo, taking advantage of the region's porous borders to elude their hunters.

Odhiambo was a member of the "control altar" of the LRA, a small group of Ugandan-born rebel commanders who planned and implemented the LRA's many atrocities, according to the watchdog group Enough Project. His presumed death means only two of those indicted by the ICC — including Kony— remain at large.

In a rebel group known for savagery that sometimes included chopping off the limbs of victims, Odhiambo stood out for his alleged ruthlessness. His ICC arrest warrant cited one account that described the rebel commander as "the one who killed the most," and he was wanted on multiple counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

At the peak of its military power, the LRA was notorious for recruiting boys as fighters and forcing girls to become sex slaves. Now, amid rising defections and international military pressure, the group is said to be vastly diminished and incapable of mounting large-scale attacks on civilians. Ugandan military officials believe that now the LRA forces don't exceed 500.

SOUTH AFRICA :

South African rescued miners face charges

February 18, 2014/news.com.au

AT least 21 South African miners trapped by debris in an abandoned shaft and later rescued face charges of illegal mining, authorities say.

Ten miners emerged from the mine shaft near Johannesburg on Monday, one day after emergency workers rescued a group of 11, the South African Press Association reported.

The men were in good health and rescue workers handed them over to police.

Emergency workers have said some of the miners who were working illegally were reluctant to come out of the shaft because they feared arrest.

The trapped miners were discovered after police patrolling in the area heard shouting beneath a mine entrance that had been blocked by a large boulder, according to local media.

"We had men who came halfway up the shaft but then turned around. Our rescue members cannot go down the shaft because it is too dangerous," rescue worker David Tshabalala said.

It was unclear how many other miners were still below ground because those who have come out

have not divulged information, he said.

Food and water were sent down to the miners on Sunday.

"We will wait to see what the other miners that have been rescued can tell us and maybe we can negotiate with" the miners who remain underground, said Sugan Moodley, a spokesman for emergency services.

Illegal mining is common in South Africa, a major producer of gold and platinum.

South Africa: Trapped miners 'reluctant to emerge' because of arrest fears

17/02/euronews.com

Despite a big rescue operation, up to 200 illegal gold miners trapped underground in South Africa are said to be reluctant to emerge because they fear being arrested.

Several did come to the surface on Monday morning, thinking police had left the site near Johannesburg. But officers were reportedly hidden and arrests are said to have been made.

"This was a closed shaft," said the Head of Disaster and Emergency Services Management, Moshima Mosiya. "It was closed with concrete slabs, deliberately, so as to prevent people from entering but they have somehow managed to open up a hole in the side."

A dozen or so of the diggers, thought to have been trapped since Saturday morning by boulders falling underground, were rescued on Sunday and are set to appear in court.

The exact number still underground remains unclear.

Illegal mining of abandoned shafts is common in South Africa where informal miners excavate ore to sell, often living underground in dangerous and precarious conditions. Fatal accidents are common, and underground battles between rival groups have also been reported.

South Africa gears up for a bruising election campaign

18 February 2014/theconversation.com

South Africans will go to the polls on 7 May in what promises to be the country's most interesting election since 1994. Commentators are already speculating (wildly, and without any reasonable evidence) that the African National Congress (ANC), which has won every previous election by a landslide, will see its support drop by some percentage, or this or that opposition party will at last make a breakthrough.

One sentiment we hear at each election is that it must be time now for voters to start turning their backs on the ANC. Surely South Africans don't feel like they still owe the ANC something for its role in the liberation struggle, particularly with Nelson Mandela no longer among us? Surely any "rational" voter confronted with the massive socioeconomic inequalities, unemployment, corruption, dysfunctional service delivery and crime might conclude that it is time for something new?

Yet in every election that rolls by, the ANC still manages to win by a landslide. Is there anything to

suggest that 2014 will be different?

The battle for party image

The largest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), polled 16.66% at the last national election in 2009. While this reflected a steady growth of the party's share of the vote in recent elections, it paled in comparison to the ANC's 65.9%. So far, the DA has not been able to shake off its image as a vanguard party of white interests; a recent poll suggested that nearly half of young South Africans believed that it was the policy of the DA to bring back apartheid.

In an attempt to rehabilitate itself, the party launched a "Know Your DA" campaign last year in attempt to detoxify the DA brand. Alongside this, a leaked DA document outlined a more combative strategy of presenting the ANC as akin to the old National Party regime, drawing comparisons between police brutality during the apartheid era and the 2013 massacre of mineworkers at the Marikana platinum mine. The document used crude visual imagery to drive home this point, notably a mock-up of the ANC flag that replaced its traditional green, black and gold with the colours of the old South African flag.

The DA's rebranding efforts recently came to a head when the party announced that Mamphela Ramphele, the leader of a newly formed opposition party, Agang, was to become the DA's 2014 presidential candidate. After five chaotic days, it was declared that Ramphele would not, after all, become the DA candidate. The ensuing acrimony has nearly destroyed Agang and has damaged the DA's reputation, particularly since Ramphele declared that the reason for the spilt was that people in the DA were "trapped in old-style race-based politics."

Dancing to the ANC's tune?

But besides internal squabbles, the DA faces another critical challenge to overcoming the ANC: resources. The ANC can comfortably outspend all of the opposition parties put together. This further inhibits the DA's ability to manage the way its image is portrayed in public, and it is forcing the DA into a series high-stakes publicity stunts.

It was one of these stunts that led to the events of February 12. The DA had organised a jobs march into the centre of Johannesburg, which it had originally planned to end at the ANC's headquarters. The ANC applied to have the march banned, fancifully arguing that its staff and assets would be threatened. An ANC spokesman declared that the DA "are coming armed to the teeth, with helmets, batons, shields. They have even booked places in hospitals. That can only be the actions of a party at war."

After the ANC's application was dismissed by the court, the DA began its march flanked by a large team of private security guards. Meanwhile, ANC supporters lay in wait for the DA's arrival, brandishing bricks and placards and warning that the DA was provoking a reaction. Anticipating a bloody confrontation, the police stepped in and managed to avert a major outbreak of violence. In the end, the DA's march was called off before it reached the ANC's headquarters, and four ANC members were arrested.

One might be forgiven for asking why, when it has such a strong support base, the ANC should react to the DA in such an aggressive and defensive fashion. Surely this just feeds the opposition more publicity? But far from being the work of an ill-disciplined few, I would argue that these violent confrontations are actually a more carefully orchestrated form of violent political theatre. The ANC wants to fight the election on comfortable symbolic terrain, framing it as a battle between a heroic liberation movement and an array of counter-revolutionary subversives disguised as political parties.

All eyes on 2019

In the face of ANC dominance, the DA must develop a clear and appealing political message. The DA's 2009 campaign to "Stop Zuma" no doubt resonated with some sections of the public; it will continue to do so in 2014, given Zuma's low approval ratings and the various allegations of corruption levelled against him. But loyalty to the ANC runs deep, and despite disillusionment with Zuma, research suggests that negative perceptions of individual ANC leaders will not necessarily cut into support for the party.

To make matters worse, the DA's current policy messages are simply not distinctive enough to grab the headlines. Ultimately, the party seems unwilling to embrace a radical socioeconomic agenda that could grip the public's attention and sway the voters it badly needs.

Conversely, the newly formed Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party is attempting to do exactly this, and threatens to wrestle away the public spotlight as a result. The EFF is led by Julius Malema, a firebrand former leader of the ANC Youth League who was expelled from the ANC for ill-discipline. Among its proposals for more radical socioeconomic transformation, the EFF advocates Zimbabwe-style fast track land reform and the nationalisation of the mines – policies that mix together a potent publicity-grabbing cocktail of hope, anger, fear and confusion.

This is not a coherent policy blueprint, and it is unlikely that the EFF will have either the time or capacity to present itself as a credible government-in-waiting before May. On the one hand, it doesn't need to: the EFF's hope is simply to gain enough protest votes this year to lend it credibility in time for the 2019 election. But the party's current leadership might prove too divisive to build a broader coalition against the ANC, and much of the party's agenda smacks of radical nationalist sentiment couched in racial language, rather than a coherent left-wing agenda.

Instead, the most important developments in South Africa's political scene might well emerge from the current turmoil and infighting within the powerful trade union movement.

Since Zuma's accession, the independence of the unions has been eroded by the ANC's factional struggles. As Zuma has sought to extend his control over the unions, he has been increasingly resisted by unionists who resent ANC interference; recently, for example, South Africa's largest trade union, the National Union of Metalworkers South Africa (NUMSA), withdrew political support and funding for the ANC. It has set up its own political school to discuss the need for new political formations and radical socioeconomic alternatives in the face of endemic inequalities, corruption and poverty.

This could herald one of South Africa's most significant political shifts since 1994, as the trade unions have both the political credentials and the organisational muscle to form an alternative political force to the left of the ANC. Such a move will require courage; as we know, taking on the ANC is no easy task, and it could lead to the internal fragmentation of the labour movement. There is also no guarantee that union members would support such a move.

What is clear, however, is that debates within the union movement, and among the left more broadly, could contribute to a far more meaningful discussion about South Africa's long term future: a discussion that must extend beyond the narrow ideological confines of the political pantomime currently being played out in the 2014 election campaign.

TANZANIA :

Tanzania to Destroy U.S. \$50 Million Ivory Stockpile

17 February 2014/East African Business Week (Kampala)

Dar es Salaam — Tanzania's 90 metric tonne stockpile of ivory valued at about \$50 million is to be destroyed.

Tanzania President Jakaya Kikwete was speaking last week in Dar es Salaam while launching an advertising campaign on anti-poaching.

He said burning the tusks would send a signal to poachers that the country was now serious over the slaughtering of its elephants.

This means that Tanzania has now joined other countries like Kenya, Japan, France and the United States that have for long supported destroying ivory stockpiles instead of putting them up for sale through auctions.

This has been a hard time for Tanzania which has for long argued for the sale of the ivory stockpile in order to finance the anti-poaching campaigns including the recruitment of game rangers and help to subsidise personnel salaries.

President Kikwete said it is high time the country suspended any plans for selling the ivory stockpile.

He said this would further the ill intentions of the poachers and further reduce the number of elephants which currently stands at 13,084 from the previous population of over 100,000 recorded in the early 1970s.

He said the country would destroy the entire ivory stockpile in order to intensify the fight against poaching that will also aim to send a severe signal to poachers and deny them market opportunities.

"We will soon start using the high tech of drone surveillance in all our national parks to protect the both elephants and other animals that are been the target in the country like lions and leopards," Kikwete said. He said the country can rely on positive international support.

He said the efforts of the government on anti-poaching would only be realized if there is a total ban on ivory trade throughout the region and the whole world at large.

He also said countries like China, Vietnam, and Thailand should advocate for a 'no ivory buying' campaign to boost anti-poaching efforts.

The President however said that the catchment areas being occupied by the country's national parks were not that easy to combat illegal poaching especially with the country's financial capacity at carrying out anti-poaching exercise.

"Selous National Park is more than 200,000 square kilometres, and this is a great challenge when it comes to fighting against poaching in the country" he said.

Tanzania: Israel Offers Taxation Expertise

17 February 2014/East African Business Week (Kampala)

Dar es Salaam — Israel has invited Tanzania to share experience on the taxation system for the oil and gas sector.

Israel said, they have a vast experience in how to collect tax and share the nation's wealth between the investors and government.

According to Israel's Ambassador to Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Malawi, Gil Haskel, their understanding come from experience they acquired since they discovered natural gas in Leviathan.

Leviathan Natural Gas Field, located in the eastern Mediterranean Sea area, off the coast of Israel, was discovered in December 2010. Production is expected to commence in 2017.

At the time of discovery, the Leviathan gas field was the most prominent field ever found in the sub-explored area of the Levantine Basin, which covers about 83,000 square kilometres of the eastern Mediterranean region.

According to Ambassador Haskel, Tanzania could learn a lot on how to collect tax from the oil and gas marketing companies.

"We want to share experience with Tanzania in the area of taxation... we want to tip them (Tanzania) on at what extend should tax be collected," Haskel told East African Business Week in Dar es Salaam last week during the exclusive interview.

Tanzania expects its gas resources to increase fivefold within the next two years if new finds in east Africa's second-biggest economy prove productive.

It is expected that Tanzania's natural gas resources will rise to 200 trillion cubic feet after the next two years.

Discoveries offshore of Tanzania and Mozambique's waters have led to predictions that the region could become the world's third-largest exporter of natural gas, with the country strategically located for exports to Asia.

The country has previously estimated it has 43.1 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of recoverable natural gas reserves, most of it found offshore south of Tanzania.

Minister for Energy and Minerals, Prof Sospeter Muhongo was recently announced that the exploration companies planned to drill 17 new wells in the country during the 2013/14 (July-June) fiscal year at a cost of at least \$680 million.

While as per the US Geological Survey estimates, the entire Leviathan Basin holds a mean approximation of 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil and a mean of 122 tcf of recoverable gas.

The Leviathan gas field's natural gas reserves are estimated to be about 17 trillion tcf.

KENYA :

Briton 'Had Bomb-Making Instructions' In Kenya
Monday 17 February 2014/news.sky.com

Jermain Grant had a memory stick containing documents about making explosives, a UK policeman tells a Kenyan court.

A Metropolitan Police officer has been giving evidence on the opening day of a British man's trial in Kenya over claims he plotted attacks.

Jermain Grant, suspected of ties to al Qaeda-linked group al Shabaab, was allegedly arrested with chemicals, batteries and switches in December 2011 in the city of Mombasa.

Prosecutors say the alleged Islamic militant planned to use them to produce explosives.

Grant had a memory stick in his possession containing documents about making explosives, said Detective Inspector Stephen Ball.

Mr Ball, who has been helping Kenyan police investigate the case, told a court that jihadist documents and other materials "clearly dedicated to the making of explosives and weaponry" were found on the stick.

The detective said documents contained information on chemicals that could be used to make explosives, and ways of making booby-traps to target government officials, police or bomb disposal teams.

He said: "These files speak for themselves and show the person's interest in the construction of an improvised explosive device, and with the chemicals files show intent to obtain the materials to make such a device."

Grant, a 30-year-old Muslim convert, has been accused of working with fellow Briton Samantha Lewthwaite.

She is the fugitive widow of British suicide bomber Germaine Lindsay, who blew himself up on a London tube train on July 7, 2005, killing 26 people.

Known as the "White Widow", the mother-of-three and daughter of a British soldier is wanted by Kenyan police, and there is speculation that she was involved in last year's Westgate mall siege in Nairobi.

In December 2011, Grant pleaded guilty to charges of being in Kenya illegally and lying about his nationality, for which he was sentenced to two jail terms of two years, to run concurrently.

However, he was acquitted of robbery charges in a separate trial in Nairobi last year. He denies the charges he is facing in his latest trial.

Kenya: Dangote Stirs Up Kenya Cement

17 February 2014/East African Business Week (Kampala)

Nairobi — Competition is heating up in Kenya's lucrative cement sector with the imminent entry of more players, such as Nigeria's Dangote.

Established players, such as La Farge's Bamburi and the East African Portland Cement EAPCC are finding the going tough especially with the increase in capacity at Athi River Mining, another big

producer of the commodity.

In the recent times, a number of Chinese firms have also set up shop in Kenya; manufacturing cement which retails at heavily discounted prices.

This has sounded alarm bells within the industry at a time when the construction sector in Kenya is booming.

There is also the entry of Savannah Cement; a company associated with Lagos based Dangote Group, one of the most diversified business conglomerates in Africa.

The Group's activities encompass cement, manufacturing, packaging and distribution.

Kenya's cement industry is however a complicated affair and is undergoing some structural changes especially during the last three months.

For instance there have been boardroom wrangles at East African Portland Cement.

According to news reports, the Kenyan government halted the appointment of Bill Lay to the chairmanship of EAPCC just hours after his appointment.

The current chairman, Mark Karbolo, went to court to block Lay's appointment, claiming that he still has seven months in office. He added that he would be content to leave after finishing his term, but not to be bundled out as if he had run down the company.

Lay had earlier thanked president Uhuru Kenyatta for giving him the opportunity to serve the country in the capacity of chairman of EAPCC. However, EAPCC's board rejected Lay's appointment as director when the government tried to introduce him late in 2013 as a director to the company.

Not long ago, Athi River Mining Cement had to defend itself against allegations of polluting the environment brought by a lobby group.

Kenya Must Stop Discrimination in Marriage Property Act - UN

Tuesday, 18 February 2014/Press Release: UN News/scoop.co.nz

UN Experts Urge Kenya to Repeal Discriminatory Sections of Marriage Property Act

New York, Feb 17 2014 - United Nations human rights experts today urged Kenya to repeal sections of its Marriage and Property Act which effectively strip women of marital property upon divorce or death of their spouse, unless they can prove they made a contribution to the acquisition of the property during their marriage.

"It is expected that very few women will be able to demonstrate such a contribution under the new provisions, since few Kenyan women have land title deeds in their own names and even less hold deeds jointly with men," warned independent expert Frances Raday, who currently heads the UN Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice.

Calling the provisions "serious retrogressive steps" in the protection of women's equal access to land and property, Ms. Raday stressed in a news release issued by the Geneva-based Working Group, that they are also in violation of Kenya's international and regional human rights

obligations.

"They clearly discriminate against Kenyan women and are squarely at odds with equality provisions enshrined in the Kenyan Constitution."

The Act, which came into force on 16 January 2014, could result in many Kenyan women losing access to the lands where they live and farm. Many rural households in Kenya are headed by women, who rely on the land not only to produce food, but also on the income generated by it to access health care services and educational opportunities for themselves and their families.

"Women will effectively have no security of tenure, or place to live with their children if their husband leaves them or dies, which will also increase their risk of experiencing violence," said Ms. Raday, adding: "The passage of the Act will have a detrimental impact on the right to food, the right to adequate housing and the right to an adequate standard of living for Kenyan women, children and communities."

Ms. Raday's appeal has been endorsed by a host of other UN independent experts, including: Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda; the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter; the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo, and the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik.

"We regret the promulgation of this legislation in its current form and urge the Government of Kenya to repeal discriminatory sections of this Act, and to continue with the country's advances towards full equality between men and women as established in the Kenyan Constitution," the group of experts stated.

According to the new release, the Special Rapporteurs have engaged with the Kenyan Government concerning the provisions of the Act in question, and expressed their readiness to assist the authorities in reviewing and bringing the Act into line with international human rights standards.

Special rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back, in an unpaid capacity, on specific human rights themes.

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

Mali: Farmer Training Aims to Reduce Pesticide Use in Mali

By Jennifer Lazuta/allafrica.com/17 February 2014

Dakar, Senegal — The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization says schools in Mali have been training cotton farmers about how to use natural substances in order to reduce the use of dangerous pesticides by 92 percent, while maintaining normal crop yields. The natural pesticides also may save money.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization found that the introduction of new pest-control methods to cotton growers in Mali "nearly eliminated" the use of toxic pesticides.

The study, which was published Monday by the London-based Royal Society, followed two communities; one that was trained in the use of bio-pesticides, and one that was not.

Project manager William Settle is with the FAO Plant Production and Protection Division. "The outcome of the study, which looked at historical records from the cotton company itself over an eight-year period, showed that in the area in which the training took place ... those farmers reduced their use of synthetic, highly toxic pesticides by more than 92 percent. Whereas compared with another area of the country, not too far away, in which they had not yet conducted farmer training, pesticide use was unchanged."

Cotton is one of the biggest drivers of economic growth in Mali. The FAO says an estimated 4 million farmers grow cotton crops each year and the crop accounts for up to 75 percent of the country's exports earnings.

Settle said that unfortunately, the use of chemical pesticides is not uncommon when it comes to growing cotton.

"Cotton is the major cash crop for several West African countries, including Mali. And it tends to be an open door for pesticides, meaning that the pesticides come into the cotton system often times end up being distributed elsewhere, often times in vegetable systems," he said.

Settle said that some alternatives to chemical pesticides include using extracts from the neem tree, which is commonly found throughout much of western Africa.

The FAO says during the course of the study, farmers collectively saved nearly a half-million dollars by not using chemical pesticides.

Settle said the challenge now is to convince farmers that natural pesticides are just as good, if not better than, chemical pesticides.

"Farmers have the assumption that pesticides are a kind of insurance, that using pesticides are, whether you need it or not, you are somehow ensuring the well-being of their crop. Through farmer field schools we are able to help the farmers demonstrate for themselves that alternatives are possible, and that these alternatives are less costly and less harmful for their health," he said.

Settle said the FAO is working with U.S.-based researchers to help reduce the risk of pesticide usage in Africa and to develop a more cost-effective method of protecting crops.

Five questions answered on Africa's rising economic growth

February 18, 2014 /Source: The Brookings Institution / Author: Amadou Sy

There has been a lot of talk about Africa's rising economic prosperity and whether it is sustainable and deeply rooted in reducing extreme poverty across the continent. So, I sat down to answer some basic fundamental questions that I often get asked about Africa's growth and development.

Why does Africa show the highest growth prospects out of any continent in the world?

There is no doubt that favorable commodity prices have and will be a key driver of growth for sub-

Sahara Africa. The so-called commodity super-cycle has benefited traditional oil exporters, such as Nigeria and Angola, and new ones, like Ghana. Demand for natural resources from emerging markets, especially China, has increased in the last decade and remains important. As noted in the BP Energy Outlook 2035, Africa will remain an important producer of oil and natural gas, accounting for 10 percent of global oil and 9 percent of natural gas production in 2035.

In addition, the continuation of good medium-term policies and structural reforms bodes well for future growth in the region. Africa has “democratized” to some extent, and violence and armed conflicts have decreased in spite of a few hot spots. Half of the world’s future population growth will be driven by Africa (not because of higher fertility, which is declining, but because of longer life expectancy). This trend could lead to a “demographic dividend” of an adult population of 800 million by 2030 (compared to 460 million in 2010). Africa’s rapid urbanization and burgeoning middle class could generate hundreds of millions of consumers.

To sustain its growth, however, Africa will need to continue reducing poverty and inequality, and step up the transformation of its economy. As noted by Dani Rodrik, African countries, unlike East Asian countries, have not yet been able to turn their farmers into manufacturing workers, diversify their economies, and export a range of increasingly sophisticated goods. Moreover, many African countries are joining the resource-rich country club and with it come not only opportunities but also challenges. Good governance will be needed to enable future generations of Africans to benefit from this new wealth. Low global interest rates and high commodity prices have opened a window of opportunity for African countries to reform. This window will not always remain opened, and reform is needed now.

What role does China play in Africa’s economic development?

China’s economic performance shows that a transformational agenda can succeed and lift a large segment of the population out of poverty. Beyond being a benchmark, China has become the largest single trading partner for sub-Saharan Africa, with a 17 percent share of total trade. In comparison, India has a 6 percent share and Brazil, a 3 percent share. The so-called Group of Five (Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates) accounts for only 5 percent of sub-Saharan Africa’s total trade.

China also accounts for 16 percent of total foreign direct investment to sub-Saharan Africa and has become a key investor and provider of aid. There is no doubt that China is interested in Africa’s natural resources (such as copper in Zambia and oil in Nigeria and Sudan), but it is expanding its focus. Over 2,000 Chinese enterprises are investing and developing in more than 50 African countries, and South Africa is the leading recipient of Chinese foreign direct investment.

The key advantage of China in Africa is speed. Chinese firms are able to deliver quickly and work in close coordination with their financial and other national partners. Speed is a big comparative advantage in Africa. For instance, the continent has large infrastructure needs and African policymakers are under pressure to deliver. They are tempted to agree to an offer to build a coal-generated power plant in a couple of years when their population and businesses are getting increasingly disgruntled by sometimes daily power outages. They agree to this at the expense of adopting less polluting technologies.

What are the African countries to which we should be paying close attention?

South Africa has always been a key recipient of foreign investment given the sophistication of its economy.

In addition, natural resource-rich countries in Africa such as Angola and Nigeria will remain a key destination of foreign investment, especially given that the number of resource-rich countries will only increase with recent advancements in offshore oil exploration and extraction. In fact, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe recently visited Mozambique to secure natural gas contracts. Countries in the East African Community, such as Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, are now discovering oil. Metal-exporting countries such as Burkina Faso, Ghana and Tanzania are also attractive.

As a non-natural resource-rich country, Ethiopia has a large population of more than 80 million people, high GDP growth, and a government-led strategy to attract foreign investment in some sectors. Rwanda is a smaller economy but it is growing rapidly and is trying to leverage its membership to the East African Community. In West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire is fast recovering from armed conflict, and Ghana remains a darling of foreign investors.

What are key areas of opportunity to capitalize on for Africa's development?

Large infrastructure projects in Africa need foreign partners. Infrastructure spending in Africa is estimated to reach \$93 billion per year, and tax revenues and other domestic resources will not be enough to fill the financing gap for infrastructure projects.

Information and communications technology (ICT) needs remain high in spite of the rapid growth in mobile phones and mobile banking. Major companies, including Google, Microsoft, Huawei and GE, are betting on the continent and investing in research and development.

The rising African middle class is also attracting investors in the retail sector. For instance, French supermarket chain Carrefour and American big box store Walmart have expanded their operations to Africa. Banking is also attractive given the low financial depth in Africa. Foreign investors are now innovating to focus on urban centers with a high potential for consumer spending. In 2020, the household spending of Alexandria, Cairo, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Lagos will total \$25 billion dollars.

One untapped area is agriculture for major investment. Africa has about half of the planet's arable land and there are potentially large expected returns from this sector, especially if its infrastructure gap is reduced.

Finally, portfolio investments in equity markets, domestic bond markets, and Eurobond markets are increasing and private equity firms are increasingly investing in the region. In 2013, the MSCI African Frontier Market (equity) index was up 28.5 percent and \$10.7 billion of sovereign bonds were issued by capital markets in Africa. There are now five times more sovereign ratings in Africa than there were in 2000.

Is the whole continent progressing or are only a few countries?

The extent to which overall growth is shared by the 54 countries in Africa is quite impressive. This being said, some trouble spots remain. While some fragile countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone and especially Rwanda have been able to move forward from unfortunate legacies of violence and in some cases even genocide, the situation in other countries is worsening, particularly in the Central African Republic and South Sudan (which is oil-rich). In spite of recent progress, the situation also remains fragile in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Mali, and press reports often remind us of the piracy situation in Somalia's Gulf of Aden and terrorist acts by al-Shabab. Even in the north of Nigeria there is violence attributed to Boko Haram as well as piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. There is a need to build an African-owned framework and response mechanism to prevent and resolve violent conflict and crises in the continent.

African efforts to increase economic integration are helping to strengthen regional growth as well. Economic and trade integration across Africa will help foreign investors access larger markets and reduce transaction costs, including costs associated with regional infrastructure projects. African countries are trying to strengthen regional integration through regional economic communities and are negotiating free trade agreements and customs unions with the goal of ultimately having common currencies. We are far from one common African currency for the continent but we are beginning to take some steps forward in this area. The East African Community—which includes Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda—is a market of 150 million people and is set to become a monetary union soon. The former French colonies in Africa all use the same currency, which is pegged to the euro and have common institutions.

What is striking is that there is a consensus in African policy circles that we are witnessing Africa's moment. The challenge will be in implementing the policy roadmap quickly as there is little time left for transformation. The World Bank notes that half of the region's population is under 25 years of age. Each year between 2015 and 2035, there will be 500,000 more 15-year-olds than the year before. The challenge will be to transform this youth bulge into an opportunity.

Source: The Brookings Institution

Amadou Sy

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

C. Africa president asks France to stay till polls

AFP/February 18, 2014

Bangui (Central African Republic) (AFP) - The leader of the strife-torn Central African Republic asked French troops to stay until polls due in early 2015, as unabated sectarian violence wrecked

Paris's hope of a quick exit.

Interim President Catherine Samba Panza's appeal to the former colonial power came three days after France's decision to boost its contingent to 2,000 and on the eve of a review of the CAR's deadly sectarian conflict by the UN Security Council.

"The interim president told us that they should stay until the elections, that is to stay until early 2015," French MP Elisabeth Guigou said in the capital Bangui.

When France launched operation Sangaris in December to prevent mass sectarian killing, President Francois Hollande envisioned a short deployment.

On Saturday however, with a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Muslims in full swing, Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian admitted that the French operation could last "longer than planned".

The French parliament is due to vote on February 25 on whether the 2,000 troops deployed in Central Africa can stay longer than their initial mandate, which expires in April.

The right-wing opposition has asked for clarity on the operation's goals but stopped short of calling for an early withdrawal.

"France cannot handle everything on its own," Guigou, a Hollande ally who chairs the parliament's foreign affairs committee, said after her meeting with Samba Panza.

- 10,000 troops needed -

The European Union has pledged around 900 troops and the African Union has close to 6,000 already on the ground but the continent's mediator in the crisis said more were needed.

"To achieve a nationwide footprint we need an international contingent of at least 10,000," Denis Sassou Nguesso, the president of the Republic of Congo, told French newspaper Le Figaro in an interview.

Major EU powers such as Britain and Germany have refused to commit soldiers, and diplomats say efforts are focusing on smaller countries.

Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja said Monday that Helsinki could contribute up to 110 troops to the EU mission and criticised the slow reaction from the bloc.

"It could be something between 20 and 110... There is no decision on this yet," Tuomioja told AFP after meeting in Paris with his French counterpart Laurent Fabius.

"I would hope that in the future, the EU would be able to come together in a bit more rapid manner."

Amnesty International said last week that the mostly Christian anti-balaka vigilantes were attempting to exterminate the country's Muslim minority.

"'Ethnic cleansing' of Muslims has been carried out in the western part of the Central African Republic, the most populous part of the country, since early January 2014," Amnesty International said in a report.

The anti-balaka -- "anti-machete" in the local Sango language -- militias were initially self-defence groups formed in response to abuses committed by rogue ex-rebels from the mainly Muslim Seleka coalition that seized power in March 2013.

With the remnants of Seleka on the back foot since France deployed its forces two months ago, most of the ongoing violence is now blamed on the anti-balaka's attacks.

Samba Panza, a Christian who took over as interim president last month from ex-Seleka boss Michel Djotodia, has said she was "going to go to war against the anti-balaka".

French and African troops have been unable to prevent mass looting and stem the cycle of revenge attacks.

The International Federation for Human Rights said Monday that several attacks by suspected Seleka gunmen had killed at least 22 people in the western town of Bang since February 13.

Atrocities, the fear of attacks and a lack of food have displaced a quarter of the country's population, while the United Nations and relief agencies estimate that at least two million people need humanitarian assistance.

VIDEO. Vol Ethiopian Airlines: l'avion a été détourné par le copilote

Par L'EXPRESS.fr/ le 17/02/2014

Un vol entre la capitale éthiopienne Addis-Abeba et Rome a été détourné par son copilote et contraint de se poser à Genève, en Suisse. Le copilote, qui a été arrêté, a lui-même enclenché le signal "détournement" pour prévenir les autorités aériennes.

Un avion de la compagnie Ethiopian Airlines a été détourné ce lundi matin et s'est posé en urgence à Genève (Suisse) à 6h, a annoncé l'aéroport de Cointrin où l'appareil a atterri.

Selon le site de la RTS, l'avion, parti de la capitale Addis-Abeba, était à destination de Rome. Il a été détourné par le copilote de l'avion, selon les autorités suisses. L'homme, âgé de 31 ans, a affirmé dans ses conversations avec la tour de contrôle "se sentir menacé" dans son pays et a demandé l'asile politique à la Suisse. Il a déclaré avoir profité de ce que le commandant de bord était allé aux toilettes pour s'enfermer dans le cockpit.

C'est le copilote lui-même qui a enclenché l'alerte au détournement d'avion sur le transpondeur de l'appareil qui permet au contrôle aérien d'identifier l'avion, ont précisé les responsables de l'aéroport.

L'appareil a été escorté jusqu'à Genève Cointrin par des appareils militaires italiens, puis français. Les forces aériennes suisses ne sont pas intervenues car elles ne sont pas opérationnelles la nuit et les week-ends à la suite de restrictions budgétaires et de personnel.

Une fois posé, le pirate a quitté le cockpit par une corde et s'est rendu à la police. Il sera auditionné par la police et la justice mais "techniquement son infraction est une prise d'otages, la peine correspondante pouvant aller jusqu'à 20 ans de privation de liberté", a indiqué un procureur de Genève Olivier Jornot.

Le ministre éthiopien de l'Information, Redwan Hussein a déclaré être "en contact avec le PDG" de la compagnie aérienne Ethiopian Airlines, "pour savoir ce qui n'allait pas chez lui et ce qu'ils savent

de lui".

Aucun passager ni membre de l'équipage n'a été blessé, selon la compagnie aérienne. L'aéroport a été fermé ce lundi matin.

150 Immigrants Storm Spanish Enclave in North Africa

Tuesday February 18, 2014 /laht.com

MELILLA, Spain – About 150 sub-Saharan immigrants managed to enter this Spanish city in North Africa with a massive charge against the border barrier separating Melilla from Morocco.

The barrier was stormed around 6:30 a.m. in the area known as Villa Pajares, between the border crossings of Beni Enzar and Barrio Chino, authorities said.

Involved in the break-in were some 250 immigrants, of whom 100 were nabbed by Moroccan security forces.

In the border-crossing attempt, the immigrants acted in a very coordinated way to be able to get through the barrier and escape capture by the police contingent.

Once the barrier was knocked down, many of the immigrants headed as a group to the CETI center, which takes in immigrants, singing as a chorus, chanting victory slogans and trying to force their way into the center.

The security corps was unable to control them and they finally managed to break down the fence to gain access to CETI, the Spanish central government's delegation in Melilla said.

None of the agents were injured, though at least five of the immigrants required medical aid.

Most of the immigrants involved in this new break-in were French-speakers and many were from a single nation, Cameroon.

Melilla, like Ceuta, both Spanish cities bordering Morocco on the Mediterranean coast, has for months been under extreme migratory pressure that keeps security forces on constant alert.

The last attempt at a big break-in was on Feb. 6 in Ceuta, which ended with at least 15 people dead from drowning in coastal waters as a group of some 250 immigrants tried to enter the city.

CHINA/AFRICA :

Jane Goodall: China pillages Africa like old colonialists

February 18, 2014/AFP

JOHANNESBURG, Feb 18 — China is exploiting Africa's resources just like European colonisers did, with disastrous effects for the environment, acclaimed primatologist Jane Goodall has told AFP.

On the eve of her 80th birthday, the fiery British wildlife crusader is whizzing across the world giving a series of lectures on the threats to our planet.

And the rising world power's involvement on the continent especially raises alarms when it comes to her beloved chimpanzees and wildlife habitats.

During the last decade China has been investing heavily in African natural resources, developing mines, oil wells and running related construction companies.

Activists accuse Chinese firms of paying little attention to the environmental impact of their race for resources.

"In Africa, China is merely doing what the colonialist did. They want raw materials for their economic growth, just as the colonialists were going into Africa and taking the natural resources, leaving people poorer," she told AFP in an interview in Johannesburg.

The stakes for the environment may even be larger this time round, she warns.

"China is bigger, and the technology has improved... It is a disaster."

Other than massive investment in Africa's mines, China is also a big market for elephant tusks and rhino horn, which has driven poaching of these animals to alarming heights.

But Goodall, who rose to fame through her ground-breaking research on chimpanzees in Tanzania, is optimistic.

"I do believe China is changing," she said, citing as one example Beijing's recent destruction of illegal ivory stockpiles.

"I think 10 years ago, even with international pressure, we would never have had an ivory crush. But they have," she added.

"I think 10 years ago the government would never have banned shark fin soup on official occasions. But they have."

'Small window of time'

Her organisation Roots and Shoots, founded over two decades ago to instil conservation values in children, has also become involved in China.

"We work with hundreds of Chinese children, and they are not different from children we work with here. They all love nature, they love animals, they want to help, there's no difference because they're Chinese," she said.

Young people's enthusiasm to change the world is a major reason to hope, for this lady with seemingly inexhaustible energy who can still keep an auditorium hanging on her words for more than an hour.

"These young people will become the next parents, the next teachers, the next lawyers, the next business people and the next politicians, some of them."

"The biggest problem is that people understand but don't know what to do," she said.

"If you have one thousand, one million or eventually several million people all making the right

choice, all thinking about the consequence of their behaviour, then we're going to see big change.”

Another glimmer of hope is “this amazing resilience of nature,” she continued, citing as an example the China’s Loess Plateau on the Yellow River bouncing back after massive soil erosion.

“It was set to be the biggest totally destroyed ecosystem in the world,” she said.

A \$400-million project funded by the Chinese government and international donors introduced better farming methods in the area, which greatly reduced erosion and lifted 2.5 million people out of poverty, according to the World Bank.

“That took a lot of money, but if you look at it now, it’s all green, lush and farmland, and children have come back from the cities. It’s even got a whole area for wildlife,” said Goodall.

“We still have a small window of time to change things.” — AFP

INDIA/AFRICA :

BRAZIL/AFRICA :

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