[L'Afrique de l'Ouest fait face depuis plusieurs semaines à une épidémie de fièvre hémorragique en partie due au virus Ebola qui a fait plus de 110 morts, changeant les comportements et provoquant une mobilisation internationale pour enrayer sa propagation.Le 20 mars, les autorités guinéennes ont annoncé qu'une maladie fébrile non identifiée déclarée en janvier dans le sud de leur pays y a fait plus de 20 morts, les poussant à envoyer des prélèvements pour examen dans des laboratoires de référence en France et au Sénégal.]

BURUNDI :

RWANDA :

Rwanda: Young African Scholars Opine About Genocide
By Kenneth Agutamba/allafrica.com/13 April 2014

There is a famous saying that 'creating a fight between the past and present only kills the future.' However, as Rwanda marks twenty years since the 994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the nation is clearly creating harmony between history and the present in order to build a more desirable future for generations to come.

Kenneth Agutamba sought the opinions of young African post-graduate scholars from across the continent currently studying in Beijing, China, on Rwanda's recovery process through unity and reconciliation.

Simon Matingwina, Zimbabwean

The commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi two decades later is an opportune moment to reflect on the lessons for Africa and indeed the world in order to effectively respond to conflicts.

A major lesson is a need for collective security to respond to African crises; Africa needs to operationalise the AU standby military force in order to swiftly respond to conflicts. How long shall we stand aside and watch?

Since the genocide in Rwanda there have been several wake-up calls for Africa such as Libya, Mali, and Central Africa Republic among others. These cases have clearly demonstrated that without our own capable continental military force, Africa will remain dependent on external powers who are guided by their interests in making decisions to or not to intervene. France's own position twenty years ago is being a clear example.

As we commemorate and pray for the souls of the people who lost their lives in Rwanda, it is time to overcome our manufactured differences and unite to take our rightful place as the leaders of a future world. Rwanda will always be a source of inspiration to all of us in Africa.

Olawale Hamzat, Nigerian

As a young boy growing up in one of the suburbs of Lagos, Nigeria, news of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi appeared as a fairytale. It couldn't have happened, I thought - the horrendous killings, grief and pains of the survivors were simply inconceivable.

Twenty years on; Rwanda has gradually picked herself up from the ruins; the will to pursue national reconciliation, heal wounds and advance common interest has been on the front burner.

Rwanda has since presented itself as a model for development - a leading light for other African countries and indeed the rest of the world that in-spite of our differences; we can find a common hope and destiny.

It no longer matters who's Tutsi, Hutu or Twa, the resolve of the people to identify as Rwandans has overcome the myopic shade of tribal and ethnic divergence.

As a Nigerian, the staggering ethnic diversity of my country has remained our source of unity and equally that of friction in recent years; but lessons that resonate from Rwanda's experience should inspire mutual tolerance, peace and reconciliations in many warring communities across Africa.

Post-genocide Rwanda has showed us that peace and development is assured, not with the number of troops and peace keepers but through the resolve of the people to genuinely forge a common path.

Jane Mwangi, Kenyan

We stand with our Rwandan brothers and sisters when we say "Tuko Pamoja." The UN and major powers such as France need to get on the right side of history and apologise for their failure to try.

I was nine years-old when the genocide occurred, barely able to make sense of it. It was not until I joined Daystar University, a private Kenyan institution with a sizeable number of Rwandan students that I was able to put a face to the dark episode that our East African neighbours had to live through.

I came to acquire a great admiration for my Rwandan friends; for instead of dwelling on the painful past, they decided to focus their energy on a positive present all the while striving for a more robust future. To me this nation is more than just a symbol of courage, but also a sort of Achilles' heel for the global community.

The Genocide against the Tutsi is a unique case, the most atrocious of the 20th century and as we commemorate its 20th anniversary, this not only gives room for reflections on the past but on a more confident future.

Faridah Namukasa, Ugandan

What is shocking about the Genocide against the Tutsi is that as the situation escalated from worse to worst, with hundreds of thousands of lives being butchered in cold blood; the world scandalously stood by to watch; twenty years on, no amount of explanations can ever vindicate from the guilt of not trying.

We failed to act, regional and international bodies, with the United Nations (UN) at the fore of failure, left Rwandans to face fate. While death is for us all; none of the over a million people who perished in 1994 deserved to die the way they did, at the hands of cruel machete wielding youthful militia high on opium of hatred cultivated in them by leaders; priests and elders, an irony that baffles logic.

Twenty years on, the Genocide against the Tutsi should be a tabernacle for governance lessons for world leaders and particularly African governments, from which to reminisce and formulate policies that promote peace and inclusiveness without falling prey to the divisive policies of former colonial powers.

I congratulate the current government for its overwhelming success in curtailing all possible tendencies and actions that are aimed at causing neo-racial divisions and conflicts and greatly encourage all African leaders to take Rwanda's impressive rebirth as a model.

Tanyala Constance Mwilima, Namibian

Africa's modern day conflicts are manifestations of the remnants of selfish policies by former colonial powers that bred ethnic divisions and tribal conflicts on the continent.

Like many other countries on the motherland, Rwanda and Burundi bear testimony to the devastations of war but worst still, bear the greatest impact of ethnic divisions that led to ethnic cleansings of minority tribes.

The Genocide against the Tutsi and the Herero Genocide in my country, Namibia, should serve as a reminder to Africa and the world that the sacrifices of our African brothers and sisters who have perished should not be in vain but serve as a reminder for a past that should never be repeated.

To the people of Rwanda and the Rwandan Government, today we commemorate not only the past but also celebrate the present achievements of national reconciliation and hope for a bright future of more progress, peace and stability. Viva Rwanda, Viva Africa.

Jibril Abdul Wahab, Ghanaian

Exactly five years after the discovery of the Nazi death camps, the world witnessed the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda - a systemic and ruthless attempt at the eradication of an ethnic group. The extermination of the Tutsi almost succeeded, thanks largely to the world's failure to respond and today, we remember with guilt, the demise of a million innocent lives that we would otherwise have saved.

While we can dish out blame in dozens; the best tribute we can pay to the cherished lives that were lost to the indescribable brutality of the genocide is to address what I prefer to theorise as 'the triad of negligence and mal-governance'-elements that plagued the then government.

From the altar of communication perspective where I stand, I will argue that the media did not only fail to exercise its social responsibility mantra at the peak of the crisis but also scandalously fuelled the outrage. The voice of a responsible media stripped from the 'Gutter Press' will be a best tribute the media can pay to the dear lives we lost to the genocide.

To the United Nations (UN), the 'world watchers', little I will say except to orient readers about the famous statement by the former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali that, "Frontline"; "The failure of Rwanda is 10 times greater than the failure of Yugoslavia. Because in Yugoslavia the international community was interested, it got involved. In Rwanda nobody was interested."

So what are we memorialising? The loss of lives, many will say, to which I surely concur but I will not also hesitate to dedicate another reason; a call to duty especially to the multitude of actors whose negligence may plunge another society into such a human massacre. God forbid though!!!

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

HIV-infected nurse in Uganda is accused of spreading HIV, raising concerns about stigma
by: RODNEY MUHUMUZA , Associated Press/ April 13, 2014

KAMPALA, Uganda — Goaded by journalists who wanted a clear view of her face, the Ugandan nurse looked dazed and on the verge of tears. The Ugandan press had dubbed her "the killer nurse," after the HIV-infected medical worker was accused of deliberately injecting her blood into a two-year-old patient.

The 64-year-old nurse, Rosemary Namubiru, was charged with attempted murder, denied bail and sent to jail in an unusual case that many here saw as a horrifying example of the lax hospital standards believed to be prevalent in this East African country.

But in the course of her trial — on the revised charge of criminal negligence — the nurse is attracting sympathy and emerging as the apparent victim of rampant stigma in a country that until recently was being praised as a global leader in fighting AIDS and promoting an open attitude toward the disease.

The nurse, while attempting to give an injection to a distraught child on Jan. 7, accidentally pricked her finger with a needle, according to AIDS-Free World, an international advocacy group that has been monitoring the ongoing trial. After bandaging her finger she returned to administer the injection, apparently using the contaminated needle. Uncertain about whether the same needle was used, the child's mother "became concerned about the possibility that her child had been exposed to HIV," the group said. After a test showed the nurse was HIV positive, she was arrested and prosecutors argued against giving her bail on the grounds that she posed a grave danger to the public.

If convicted, the nurse faces seven years in jail and would be the first Ugandan medical worker to be sentenced under a colonial-era law against negligent acts likely to lead to the spread of an infectious disease.

The child who may have been exposed to HIV was given post-exposure treatment and will be tested again for HIV in coming days, according to lawyers and activists familiar with the case.

Namubiru's trial has consequences for the rights of people with HIV and AIDS, say AIDS activists in Uganda and abroad. Uganda, which achieved global attention in the 1990s for its efforts to stem the spread of the disease, has about 1.5 million people living with HIV out of a total population of 36 million. Activists note that it's virtually impossible to find a Ugandan family that hasn't been affected by the disease since it was first reported here in the 1980s. Yet stigma toward people suffering from AIDS persists, shocking activists.

The nurse's case illustrates "the failure of both the media and the prosecutor's office to act responsibly" and could set "a dangerous precedent and could have grave consequences for the fundamental rights of people living with HIV and AIDS in Uganda and beyond," said AIDS-Free World, in a statement.

Namubiru shouldn't be on trial and her case should simply have been referred to the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Council, a statutory body charged with protecting the public from unsafe nursing practices, said Dorah Kiconco, a Ugandan lawyer who runs a watchdog group called the Uganda Network on Law, Ethics and HIV/AIDS.

"She was working and she got into a bad accident and it should have been treated as such," Kiconco said. "She's on trial because of her HIV status."

Jane Kajuga, a spokeswoman for Uganda's public prosecutor, defended the decision to press charges, saying there's evidence a crime was committed.

The Global Commission on HIV and the Law said the nurse's "life has been ruined. No matter the outcome of the trial, the panorama of ferociously intemperate accusation will haunt her and her family forever."

Uganda's HIV rate has been rising in recent times, confounding officials who succeeded in reducing the prevalence from 18 percent in 1992 to 6.4 percent in 2005. Now the rate stands at 7.3 percent, according to the most recent survey by Uganda's Ministry of Health. Ugandan health officials say more married couples are getting infected, in part because of what campaigners have dubbed a "sexual network" in which married people keep secret lovers. Billboards in Kampala, the Ugandan capital, urge couples to "put your love to the test" by testing for HIV.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni last year publicly tested for HIV in a bid to spark similar action among reluctant Ugandans. Although being HIV positive no longer spells a death sentence, even for poor Ugandans, public knowledge of one's HIV-positive status can destroy a life. A Ugandan man who worked in the presidential palace as a gardener recently accused his bosses of firing him after they discovered that he was infected with HIV.

Ugandan Maj. Rubaramira Ruranga, one of few officials who have publicly revealed they have HIV in a bid to discourage stigma, said the case against the nurse proves that "stigma still rages on" in Uganda.

"If I were her I would be very angry, I would feel isolated and I would feel dejected," he said. "She was brutalized."

Westgate attackers may have passed through Uganda: police

Date: Apr 14, 2014/AFP

KAMPALA - The group of Islamist gunmen who stormed the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi last year, killing at least 67 people, may have entered Kenya from neighbouring Uganda, a senior police official was quoted as saying Saturday.

Uganda's police chief, General Kale Kayihura, cited intelligence reports indicating that Uganda had been used as a transit stage. He added that Uganda was also still at risk of attack.

"Even intelligence shows Westgate attackers passed through Uganda," Uganda's government spokesman, Ofwono Opondo, quoted the general as saying during a high-level meeting this week of security chiefs and senior government officials.

"Uganda is being used as a transit route by the terrorists who bomb Kenya," he added. "We must ensure there is no disturbance in Kampala."

Somalia's Al-Qaeda-linked Shebab claimed responsibility for the Westgate attack, saying it was a warning to Kenya to pull its troops out of southern Somalia, where they are fighting the extremists as part of an African Union force.

Ugandan troops are also fighting as part of the AU force, and in 2010 Shebab bombers killed at least 76 people in restaurants in the Ugandan capital.

The Westgate gunmen, believed to have numbered just four, were all killed in the siege. Four men are currently on trial in Nairobi on charges of providing them with logistical support, although it has been unclear precisely what route they took to Nairobi.

AFP

Uganda: How Kicking Out Umeme Hurts Uganda

By Melina Platas Izama, /The Independent (Kampala)/ 13 April 2014

MPs have generators and other coping resources if the energy sector fails but their voters and industrialists could incur ruinous costs

Parliament's recommendation to cancel the Ugandan government's contract with the country's main electricity distributor, Umeme, has reinvigorated the debate over the company's performance, as well as issues of sovereignty and national interest. The debate has been characterised by both misunderstanding and misinformation, sprinkled with a dash of deceit.

Umeme bears the brunt of the Ugandan public's frustration with power supply, but both the assignment of blame and the debate are myopic; Uganda's most severe challenges in the energy sector do not lie with Umeme.

In fact, the Umeme debate is a costly distraction from the sector's most pressing issues.

The cancellation of Umeme's contract would be very costly for the country and ordinary citizens who would suffer most. The question is why, considering Umeme's record of relatively impressive performance, is the company being hounded out of the Ugandan market? What will investors in capital-intensive sectors like energy, infrastructure and the nascent oil and gas sector, make of politicians' overtures to a policy of re-nationalisation?

Umeme; small part of energy sector:

When then-electricity public utility, the Uganda Electricity Board (UEB) was "unbundled" in 2001, three main arms of the sector; generation, transmission, and distribution, were created. They now run distinct successor companies.

Distributors, Umeme, are responsible for making new connections to the electricity grid, maintaining and repairing existing connections, and billing customers for electricity consumed. Because Umeme deals directly with electricity users, both individual and industrial, it becomes the public face of the energy sector. But Umeme only controls a portion of it. Without effective power generation, distributors are useless.

Thus, the generation sector is where much of the action, and much of the cost of lectricity, lies. Generation contributes at least 70% of the costs included in the electricity bill each customer receives. Uganda's energy generation potential is enormous, as the country is blessed to be the home of the Nile River, which provides massive hydropower potential. Much of thecountry's existing power generation infrastructure is old, however, and the delay of much needed hydroelectric projects has translated into higher costs.

Owen Falls Dam, now known as Nalubaale power station, was completed in 1954. During the colonial period, the Uganda Protectorate, with her advantageous positioning at the source of the Nile, was seen as the most promising generator of power in the region, although the British colonial government focused on developing industry in Kenya. The Owen Falls Dam, therefore, was originally designed in large part to supply Kenya. Owen Falls fell into severe disrepair in the 1970s, and was operating at less than half capacity when the National Resistance Movement came to power in 1986.

Investments in the past two decades, including the long-delayed Bujagali project, in addition to an expansion of Owen Falls, with Kiira power station coming online in 2003, have increased generation capacity. But generation remains below potential capacity and, with Uganda's rapidly growing population and economy, additional investments, such as those being made at Karuma, are required to ensure demand does not outstrip supply.

Like Owen Falls Dam, much of the existing electricity distribution system also dates back to the 1950s. This network relies heavily on open-wire cables. Open-wire cables are relatively inexpensive to install, but prone to damage and outages caused by short-circuiting. Corrosion of uninsulated conductors can also make maintenance quite costly. Trying to distribute power through an outdated network is like trying to fetch water with a reed basket: inefficient at best. This is just one of the challenges distributors face in Uganda, and distributors are tasked with maintenance, updating, and extension of the network.

After years of high losses, low collections and generally poor management of power distribution, the government of Uganda signed a support agreement with Umeme in 2004. At the same time, UMEME obtained a supply license and distribution license from the Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA), a lease agreement with the Uganda Electricity Distribution Company Limited (UEDCL), and a power sales agreement with Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Limited (UETCL).

Umeme is thus like a building manager hired to collect rent from already unhappy tenants. While the manager can change the odd light bulb and maintain the cleanliness of the property, he should not be held accountable for the dilapidated condition of the landlord's property. But holding Umeme accountable for failures that are sector-wide, both historical and contemporary, is exactly what parliament is trying to do. The public is quick to follow suit, because it is Umeme that comes knocking at their door to collect.

But let's interrogate the key concerns raised by parliament. Key components of Umeme's contracts and negotiations, and those which are under most intense debate currently are a) buy-out provision in the case of early termination of contract, b) the escrow account, and c) performance targets.

Key points in the Umeme debate:

The buyout provision:

The buyout provisions cater for three types of termination: government initiated, Umeme initiated, and "natural termination". In each case, the government of Uganda pays Umeme.

In case of the first, the Ugandan government pays Umeme a percentage of un-depreciated investment capital. It pays between 106% and 120% of Umeme's net investment, depending on the year of contract termination. This payment includes compensation for future profits that government has forced Umeme to forego. In the case of the second, the government pays between 80% and 94% of net investment, again depending on the year of contract termination. Finally, in the case of the third, government pays 105% of net investment.

The Parliamentary committee that recommended termination of the Umeme contract described the concessions as "lopsided" and the buyout provisions as "abnormal". It made no reference to similar or related contracts elsewhere in Uganda, or beyond.

In fact, governments, especially in countries with high political or financial risk, must provide assurances on the security of investments in order to attract investors. Further, providing compensation for future profit foregone in the case of government default is standard practice. This kind of insurance policy, in the form of buyout provisions, is common for other investments in Uganda and in the sector in particular, including Bujagali.

Moreover, the investments made by Umeme, or any other distributor for that matter, are largely investments made in Uganda. These investments will continue to benefit the country even if Umeme is gone. To illustrate the point, consider this analogy. Imagine you own a large plot of land but have been unable to manage it. You have therefore hired someone with technical and financial expertise to invest in the planting and harvesting of your crop, say, maize. Your investor provides fertiliser for the soil, installs an irrigation system, and even constructs a processor. The land that had once sat fallow is now productive and profitable, thanks to her efforts. She takes home a portion of the profits, but also shares profits with her partners and stakeholders (including you) and increases the availability of nutritious food for the community.

Assuming you wanted to take over her now profitable business, would you simply throw her out?

Probably not. You would repay her at least for the equipment she had installed on your land, and perhaps other less tangible investments. After all, they are investments made on your land that you will continue to benefit from. If you did go ahead to remove her without compensation, you would certainly have a very difficult time finding anyone to take her place. Word of your reputation with investors would spread fast.

In the absence of a buy-out clause in your contractual agreement, investors would not want to invest in your land or your power sector. Buy-out clauses are essential to attracting investment. Such provisions are especially critical in countries like Uganda that, for reasons fair or unfair, are considered medium or high in terms of political risk.

An argument can be made that the terms of the buy-out could have been better for the Ugandan government, but the simple fact is that the government agreed to these terms. An analogy again clarifies the point. Assume you were to sell your plot of land and agreed with a buyer on a price. If you later learn that you could have gotten more money for your land, something you would have known if only you had done proper research, the mistake can only be yours. You would have no basis for demanding more money from your buyer. Parliament is right to question the process through which contracts are drawn, but a mistake on the part of government, if indeed one was made, cannot itself be grounds for terminating the contract.

The escrow account:

Like the buy-out agreement, the escrow account reduces the risk that investors will incur losses imposed by government. The escrow account provides a source of revenue for Umeme to draw upon in the event that government defaults on electricity payments to government entities. Indeed, government has defaulted numerous times, demonstrating the importance of such a provision.

Historically, a lot of government public utilities have failed because of government non-payment for services. By December 2012, for example, government institutions owed National water & Sewerage Corporation (NW&SC) about Shs40 billion.

The Ministry of Defense, police, and prisons are the main consumers of electricity on the side of government, and also the primary defaulters. After Umeme shut off power to police due to non-payment in 2012, police responded by impounding Umeme vehicles.

The performance targets:

Another complaint leveled against Umeme by parliament is under-performance. Umeme negotiates performance targets with the Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA), and these targets are re-negotiated every seven years. The first negotiation was in 2005, and the most recent was in 2012. The targets and figures listed in the ad-hoc committee report are outdated both because they include information only until 2011 and also because the targets themselves were renegotiated two years ago. Umeme's targets for the year 2012, the final year of the first period, and 2013 were the following:

The new targets for 2018 set even higher standards for losses, investment, and operating costs, and thus far Umeme is on track to achieve them. Losses today are at an all-time low of 20.5%, and collections nearing 100%, and connections exceed 220,000. The company has also installed 50,000 prepaid meters (Yaka). At least by the standards the ERA has set, Umeme is performing adequately.

Return to 'dark ages'

Having considered some of the main complaints voiced by MPs, let's turn to the consequences of their recommendation - to cancel the contract. The costs of a government-initiated cancellation of the contract are immense and numerous. The cost incurred by government to cover the buy-out payment, amounting to 120% of Umeme's investment to date, is only one such cost. The buy-out payment may in fact represent only a fraction of government's long-term losses.

Cancelling the contract with Umeme necessarily involves replacing the distributor. Having demonstrated willingness to terminate contracts, however, the Ugandan government is likely to have even less bargaining power than with the 2004 contract. Delays will likely ensue, and investors will demand insurance for what they will rightly perceive as a high likelihood that government will renege on its contractual word. These delays will affect distribution in the short term, and far worse service provision can be expected until the next contract is signed and at higher tariffs. Ordinary Ugandans will be literally left in the dark.

Rattling investor confidence not only affects the terms of future contracts with distributors, but also with investors elsewhere in the energy sector, including those investing in power generation.

Karuma is the next major hydropower plant, with expected installation capacity of 600MW. Uganda is counting on this plant to cover her rapidly expanding generation needs. After several years of delays and the collapse of negotiations with Norway's Norpak Power Ltd, Chinese company Sinohydro has been awarded the contract to construct Karuma. However, financial closure has not been reached. If Uganda reneges on the contract with Umeme, it is entirely possible the Karuma project will be delayed even further, in exactly the way Bujagali was. These are delays the energy sector, Ugandans, and Ugandan industries, can simply not afford.

Already, the recommendation of MPs to cancel the contract has likely shaken investor confidence. Umeme itself relies on investors and banks to either invest in or lend money for its operations. If Umeme's future is called into question, it will become more difficult for the company to meet its investment targets. Again, it is ordinary Ugandans who will suffer most.

The focus of the energy debate should not center on Umeme as a company or the particular agreement signed with government, but on policy and planning for the sector as a whole, with special attention to power generation. Umeme is a convenient and popular punching bag, one that politicians have been happy to hold before the public.

These same politicians are now baying for Umeme's blood, but their assault is short-sighted, even from a purely self-interested perspective. Remove Umeme and politicians themselves will take the blows of public frustration at an energy sector that will be on its knees.

Even those who want to replace Umeme - take a close look at the business interests of Umeme's strongest critics - will find themselves facing increased upstream costs. Public anger now will pale in comparison with what will happen if Umeme gets the boot. Distribution would likely collapse and investors across the sector would retreat or demand even higher premiums. The premium on investor risk will affect not only the electricity sector, but also the oil sector where the stakes are equally high.

The ultimate victim of this political witch-hunt is not actually Umeme, but the Ugandan public. That the Ugandan public has been tricked into championing its own future losses is most tragic of all. As parliamentarians park fancy cars in their new parking yard, cut their hair in parliament's new salon to the humming of generators, and enjoy pensions and pay raises that allow them to privately overcome the failures of the public sector, their constituents will be left powerless and Ugandan industries incurring potentially ruinously steep costs.

Having in just three years passed legislation curtailing freedom of assembly, dress, and association, among others, this parliament seems hell-bent on using the remaining two years to take the country back to the dark ages, quite literally.

SOUTH AFRICA :

Towards a more resilient South African energy system
by Glenn Ashton,/bdlive.co.za/ avril 14 2014

SOUTH Africa is supposed to be a developmental state, yet the intentions that inform our national energy policy are at odds with the lived reality of most citizens. President Jacob Zuma's 2011 promise to deliver electricity to every home in the country by 2014 will not be met. More importantly, despite free electricity allowances, many of those connected to the grid find this power unaffordable.

South Africa's approach to power supply remains monolithic and inflexible. Policy has historically been dominated by the parastatal Eskom, one of the world's largest power companies, informed in turn by the interests of its major customers, the Intensive User Group. On the other hand, smaller users such as municipalities, small and medium-sized businesses and private households remain marginalised despite the significant role they can play to help address energy shortages, costs and supply.

Our energy policy is mired in old paradigms. While renewable energy has started to penetrate the market, its impact is limited through compliance with the preferential tender system, rather than open-market competition. Additionally, our grid remains dumb while smart grids are the way of the future.

The global energy market is entering what is referred to as phase change. This is a situation where, due to the complexity of the underlying dynamics, massive changes remain unnoticed until they become so overwhelming they are inescapable. While our energy market is headed toward a phase change, those driving local policy remain blithely unaware of the shifting fault-lines.

This month should see the publication of the most recent update to the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) for electricity, an overdue revision of the 2010-11 IRP. The IRP effectively underpins our national energy policy as it feeds significant updated engineering, economic and comparative data into the political decision-making sphere.

This is important for a number of reasons, not the least of which are the inherent limitations of our current generating system, which remains under serious pressure due to undercapacity, exacerbated by breakdowns and routine service demands. These shortcomings are worsened by continuing delays in bringing Eskom's new Medupi coal-fired power station online.

Medupi was originally meant to begin generating power in 2011. Because of labour disputes, fabrication problems and contractual wrangling, its first units may come on stream this year. It remains unlikely that this controversial project will become fully operational before 2016, despite promises by politicians and a bewildering turnover of Eskom spokespeople. Medupi epitomises the shortcomings of our outdated, monolithic central-planning paradigm.

Yet, despite these challenges an important change to our regulatory system has been shelved. The Independent System and Market Operator Bill was meant to enable independent power producers to enter the market to help address supply limitations. Now this legislation awaits reconsideration when the new administration has settled in after the forthcoming elections.

This bill would have been augmented by amendments to the Electricity Regulation Act that, while not entirely curbing the dominance of Eskom, would have further deregulated the energy market, enabling a more responsive energy supply chain. It is unacceptable that such critical policy initiatives are unilaterally withdrawn from legislative agendas.

Against this background we must consider the implications of embarking on a massive new nuclear power-station build programme. While the nuclear programme is apparently in conflict with the National Development Plan, certain interests in the government insist it must proceed. There are profound consequences attached to pursuing this deeply questionable investment of up to a trillion rand. It would be South Africa's largest infrastructure purchase yet by far.

That amount is more than the current South African national budget. Cost and indebtedness represent only one aspect of this risky path. Couple these to institutionalised corruption and the long lead times inherent to such a deal, and nuclear appears to be a really daunting choice. Viewed against unresolved questions about the relationship between Medupi's Hitachi consortium and Chancellor House, effectively an arm of the governing African National Congress, we have every reason to be concerned. Is this why Eskom has not pursued defaulting contractors, including Hitachi? The nuclear industry must be rubbing its dirty little paws in anticipation.

The Finnish Olkiluoto power station began in 2005. It was scheduled for completion in 2010. Today it is nearly three times over budget and may begin operation in 2016, doubling its original timeframe. The Finnish energy operator and the French builder Areva are engaged in multibillion-euro disputes over who is responsible for delays and costs. The Areva power station in France is also approaching double its cost and delivery timeline. Similar concerns halted new nuclear build in the US due to cost implications. So we go with the alternative of the Russians and Koreans, with all the related baggage? Or perhaps the Chinese? Nukes are clearly a false solution to our power woes, even ignoring the unquantifiable safety, disposal and operational costs and risks.

To consider building a nuclear fleet in the face of these realities represents no more than a politically expedient marriage between de facto institutionalised corruption and an outdated and inflexible national energy policy. But what alternatives have we?

First, South Africa needs to fast-track the more progressive aspects of the IRP. These should certainly include a shift from coal towards gas as a transitional source on the road to a cleaner energy mix. Second, we must legislate to prise open the Eskom-dominated electricity market. Third, energy policy must be revisited transparently, including resilience, phase change and real sustainability. Our fixation on big coal and nuclear must go.

A smarter grid must be prioritised. A breakup of the Eskom monopoly is one option of devolving the grid. The utility is either incapable or unwilling to change or modernise the grid. To accommodate a broader supply base, household, business and other co-generation plants need to be able to supply the national energy pool, a shift that is partially addressed in the stalled independent operator bill.

Facilitating faster and easier market penetration by developmental energy suppliers will level the playing field for these labour-intensive businesses. Most renewables can already compete head to head with coal and nuclear, especially if the destructive externalities of the latter are considered. It is worth noting that the most recent wind energy tender was heavily oversubscribed by investors willing to enter the market at their own cost.

South Africa Inc also urgently needs to leverage some quid pro quo from the unfair partnership between the privileged Intensive User Group members and Eskom. These users enjoy preferential tariffs in exchange for reducing demand during our increasingly regular power crises. Primary producers of steel, aluminium and other minerals ought to supply our market at prices below the international benchmark given the massive indirect subsidies they enjoy. BHP Billiton pays less than a third of the rate of most households, getting some of the cheapest energy in the world. Eskom remains the problem, instead of providing solutions.

The global electricity supply market faces a phase change in how the business works. If South Africa is to become internationally competitive, it must build on its strengths. This requires more than just a cleaner energy system; we need a mix that provides far more resilience and adaptability than our present reliance on fossil fuels and nuclear power is able to provide. This must be guided by a far more transparent energy policy that recognises the shift toward a smarter, more responsive system. It is doubtful whether Eskom, in its present form, can play a positive role in this transition.

Eskom Cuts Winter Repairs to Avert South Africa Blackouts

By Ana Monteiro and Jacqueline Mackenzie/bloomberg.com/ Apr 14, 2014

Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd. will cut back plans to repair plants during the South African winter to ensure the country has enough electricity as the colder months approach, Energy Minister Ben Martins said.

Eskom started rolling blackouts for the first time in six years last month, shutting shops and factories, after it declared an emergency as heavy rains disrupted supplies of coal, which it burns for 80 percent of its power. The company is spending 500 billion rand ($47 billion) through 2017 adding almost 11,000 megawatts of capacity to the national grid and servicing its aging fleet of facilities.

“What we seek to do is to obviate the challenge we had a couple of weeks ago,” Martins said on state-owned SABC television. “We are assuring that as winter approaches, we will not have blackouts; we are ensuring that the maintenance that Eskom has to carry out will be reduced as much as possible over winter.”

As part of its plan to reduce demand for electricity from Eskom’s coal-fired plants, the Energy Department wants consumers to use liquified petroleum gas for heating and cooking, Deputy Director-General Ompi Aphane said.

The country is importing “a huge quantity” of gas from neighbors such as Mozambique to ensure sufficient supply, Martins said.

The Energy Department will make an announcement on the government’s nuclear plans in two months’ time at the latest, he said.

South Africa intends to set up 9,600 megawatts of nuclear-energy capacity as aged coal-fired plants need to be taken out of service from 2020 to 2030, Aphane said.

About 25 percent of Eskom’s 42,500 megawatts of installed capacity has been out of service this year, according to Bloomberg calculations made using the company’s data. One megawatt is enough to power about 200 middle-income South African homes at peak times, Andrew Etzinger, a spokesman for the utility, said on March 7.

Pistorius Cross-Examination Into 4th Day

Associated Press/14042014

PRETORIA, South Africa (AP) — Oscar Pistorius is being cross-examined at his murder trial for the fourth day by chief prosecutor Gerrie Nel.

Pistorius is into his second week of testimony Monday as he attempts to convince a South African judge that he killed girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp by mistake in the pre-dawn hours of Valentine's Day last year.

Pistorius' story has come under intense scrutiny from Nel, who argues that the double-amputee Olympian's version of the shooting on Feb. 14, 2013 is a lie.

Pistorius testified last week that he mistook Steenkamp for an intruder about to attack him when he fired four shots through a closed toilet door in his bathroom. The prosecution says the couple argued and Steenkamp fled to the toilet cubicle screaming before the athlete shot her intentionally.

Why South Africa is (a bit) less violent than you might think

Apr 13th 2014/economist.com

THE trial of Oscar Pistorius, the Paralympic athlete accused of murdering his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp on Valentine's Day last year, has focused the world's attention on South Africa's high crime rates. The judge has yet to rule on whether Mr Pistorius shot his girlfriend deliberately or whether her death was an accident, as he insists. Nonetheless, campaigners have used the story to highlight the violence that many South African women face at home. On average, one South African woman is murdered by her partner every eight hours. How does that compare with the rest of the world?

Globally, about one in every 17,000 people is murdered every year. Most of them are men: women make up only two out of ten victims (and less than one in ten perpetrators). Of those women who are murdered, nearly half are killed by their partner or by another family member, according to figures published last week by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. The global murder rate for women is about one in 37,000 per year. About one in 77,000 is killed by a partner or family member.

Africans face shorter odds. The continent is the second-most violent region in the world (after Latin America), with a murder rate about double the global average. And South Africa is among the most violent spots of all: one in 3,300 citizens is murdered each year, meaning that the country vies with Swaziland and Lesotho for the highest rate on the continent. South Africa's violence is, if anything, more heavily skewed towards men than in most countries. Only 15% of victims are women. In Swaziland and Lesotho, the figures are 22% and 26% respectively. Nonetheless, the murder rate for women in South Africa is more than three times the worldwide average, and the rate of murder-by-partner more than four times.

But things are getting better. Murders have fallen by more than a third since 2000. They seem to have fallen even more steeply for women: the South African Medical Research Council found that between 1999 and 2009 the murder rate among women fell by half. The number being killed by their partner fell too, from one in 12,000 to one in 18,000. Whatever the verdict in the Pistorius-Steenkamp case, expect news coverage to focus on South Africa's high levels of violence. Things are indeed pretty dire. But the truth is that for men and women alike, things are less bad than they used to be.

Nigeria as Africa's largest economy is good news for SA

April 14 2014/iol.co.za/By Ellis Mnyandu

That Nigeria is now Africa's largest economy is the best news South Africa could have hoped for. This milestone not only gives South Africa the most obvious reason to strengthen its ties with a key player growing in clout, but it also affords South Africa the best possible opportunity to reflect on itself.

As forecasts go, Nigeria should be among the world's 15 largest economies by 2050, when its gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to exceed $4.5 trillion (R47 trillion) in purchasing power parity terms or, in other words, on the basis that in relative terms the naira can buy the same basket of goods as the dollar at that particular time.

This prediction came from credit rating agency Moody's Investors Service last week, and it is also shared by Jim O'Neill, a former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, who wrote in a column last week that Nigeria stood a much better chance of being in the top 15 by 2050 than of being among the world's top 20 economies by 2020. That goal, O'Neill said, was too soon to be likely.

And I would tend to agree with him as there remain formidable structural obstacles for Nigeria to overcome in the short to medium term, as is the case for South Africa and many of the continent's other economies. Even so, there could not be a better indication that Africa is on the rise than Nigeria's economic ascent.

Last week, Nigeria completed an exercise to recalculate the constituents of its economy, and the result was news that the country's 2013 nominal GDP was $510 billion, 80 percent higher than previously reported.

On that scale, Nigeria became a front-runner overnight. It now ranks as the 26th largest economy in the world, surpassing not only South Africa ($356bn: 2013), but Austria, Venezuela, Colombia, Thailand, Denmark, Malaysia and Singapore.

So in many ways, Nigeria's ascent to the top of the economic league in Africa marks an important development for the African continent as a whole. For the first time, there is now the clearest sign of the changing economic fortunes in this part of the world.

Though many remain sceptical about Africa's true economic potential, there is a growing body of evidence to show that those who underestimate Africa's prospects do so at their own peril.

And this brings me back to South Africa.

I do not subscribe to the notion that Nigeria's gain is South Africa's loss. Africans do not believe that Africa's prosperity will come about as a result of some popularity contest between countries.

In fact, this point was reiterated by Gill Marcus, the governor of the SA Reserve Bank, when she said recently that the issue was "how do we use our different strength to benefit Africa as a whole".

South Africa has often talked about the need to build linkages that will lead to a more integrated Africa, from Cape Town to Cairo. But now, Nigeria has also come into full view, which means that the emerging future requires South Africa to pursue a more multi-dimensional approach in engaging with the rest of the continent.

This approach begins with recognising that South Africa's future is inextricably linked to that of Africa. That is how Rob Davies, the Minister of Trade and Industry, put it last week.

With a population of 170 million and oil reserves estimated at around 37.2 trillion barrels (or roughly 28 percent of total African reserves), it should be no surprise that Nigeria has turned out to be the largest economy in Africa.

More than anything, Nigeria represents an important catalyst to fuel the emergence of a more dynamic economic landscape on the African continent.

From what I hear, it sounds as if South Africa understands what is at stake and its role in bringing about this dynamism. Moreover, it appears as if South Africa also recognises the opportunities that are inherent in Nigeria's economic rise.

And to be sure, this past week I sat down with Davies for a conversation on his tenure, and in his remarks he hinted that South Africa could even possibly begin pushing for Nigeria's inclusion into multilateral institutions such as the Group of 20 (G20) in order to strengthen Africa's voice in the global governance structures.

If that happens, it would be the smartest thing to do. In fact, Africa should not have to wait for 2050 before Nigeria joins South Africa in the G20.

Even with its displacement from the top, South Africa's economy remains about three times larger on a per capita basis, its regulatory institutions remain the best on the continent, and its financial markets and banking institutions are deemed to be the strongest in Africa.

What that really means is that, going forward, South Africa and Nigeria will have to find ways to compliment each other's strengths and find ways to draw from the experiences of others to tackle the perennial problem of chronic corruption, an all too present problem in both countries. Everything else should then follow from that.

TANZANIA :

Tanzania Leader Wary of Backlash as Gas Super Tax Considered
By David Malingha Doya and Paul Richardson /bloomberg.com/Apr 14, 2014

Tanzania may reconsider the proposed introduction of a super-profit tax on natural gas production after gold miners criticized a similar measure considered by the government three years ago, President Jakaya Kikwete said.

"We have not taken a final decision yet," Kikwete, 63, said in an interview on April 11 at his office in Dar es Salaam, the country's commercial capital. "It's something we are aware of that may create a lot of concerns and jitters and may probably have negative effects. We'll look into that carefully."

Tanzania’s government may levy windfall taxes and royalties in addition to corporate and other income taxes, according to a draft natural gas policy published in November. The state also plans to take an unspecified share in gas production projects, according to the policy.

Tanzanian lawmakers in June 2011 approved a 42.9 trillion-shilling ($26.3 billion) economic development plan funded with a super-profit tax on minerals, saying the country needed to derive more benefit from its natural resources. The government estimates the value of gold exports from the East African country increased to $1.5 billion in 2010, or 7 percent of gross domestic product, from $500 million five years earlier. Annual government revenue from sales of the metal remained at $100 million.

The country’s proposal of a super-profit tax on mines sent shares in African Barrick Gold Plc (ABG), the nation’s biggest producer of the metal, to a record low in June 2011. The government has not introduced the levy.

Ostrich Head

“It has got its own effects we have got to be cognizant of,” Kikwete said. “We cannot just play ostrich and bury the head in the sand.”

Tanzania has an estimated 46 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves, discovered by companies including Statoil ASA (STL) and its partner Exxon Mobil Corp., and BG Group Plc (BG/) working with Ophir Energy Plc. (OPHR) The government expects gas reserves to increase after it offered eight new blocks for exploration in its fourth bidding round, for which the petroleum agency is receiving applications until May 15.

Statoil and BG will build the country’s first liquefied natural gas plant at a location they will announce by the end of May, according to Kikwete. “They are now working on the land rights over the property,” he said.

Kikwete said he expects the gas industry to “definitely” become the leading contributor to the country’s gross domestic product, overtaking gold production. Tanzania, Africa’s fourth-largest gold producer, has no proven crude reserves and all of the gas the country produces now is consumed locally.

Infrastructure Projects

Tanzania needs money to pay for the $1.23 billion Mtwara gas-pipeline project, expansion of the port at Dar es Salaam, building of a $10 billion port at Bagamoyo, and new roads and railways as it targets becoming a middle-income country by 2025.

The government plans to use some of the proceeds from the gas industry to create a sovereign wealth fund, which will partly finance the national budget.

The Tanzanian cabinet will by October send to Parliament a proposed law that will establish the fund and define its structure and uses, Kikwete said. The central bank will probably manage the fund, he said.

Windfall Money

“With our gas discoveries and the prospects of getting windfall money, the challenge is how to use that money judiciously,” Kikwete said.

East Africa’s biggest economy after Kenya is projected to expand 7.4 percent this year from 7.1

percent in 2013, Finance Ministry Permanent Secretary Servacius Likwelile said in a Feb. 11 interview.

The nation's vision to become a middle-income country could be achieved earlier than 2025, if it rebases economic-growth data, Kikwete said. Tanzania currently uses 2001 as the base year for measuring its GDP and 2007 for the household budget survey, according to Kikwete.

"It's a discrepancy," Kikwete said. "Tanzania will re-base to clear the discrepancy, and reflect the change in the structure of the economy over the past 14 years," he said.

Road travel in Tanzania: for better or for worse?

By Prof. Dr. Wolfgang H. Thome, eTN Africa Correspondent/Apr 14, 2014

The announcement by the Tanzania National Roads Agency (TANROAD) Chief Executive Eng. Patrick Mfugale last Friday, that the national road agency has plans to tarmac all highways across the country by 2019 at the latest, has immediately triggered the alarm bells among conservationists, who see the declaration of intent as a clear signal that their fears of the Serengeti Highway eventually being tarmacked regardless of present government assurances, are entirely justified.

While the decision by the East African Court of Justice on a permanent injunction to build any sort of road or highway, paved or unpaved, across the migration routes of the great herds, is still pending, work outside the national park towards the park boundaries is going on unabated and has raised suspicion levels once again that no matter what the government has said or what the court will rule, this road will eventually become reality, even if it will irreparably damage the Serengeti.

Sources in Dar es Salaam tried to get TANROAD to comment with specific reference to the planned Serengeti Highway and if that one too was covered by the announcement but bad weather and the weekend break made it impossible to get a feedback by the time this article was uploaded.

Tanzania: Govt Vows to Contain Banana Wilt Disease

14 April 2014/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)

THE government is committed to eliminating the wilt disease, which is currently attacking banana plantations in Kagera region, by the end of the year, Kagera Regional Commissioner, Mr Fabian Massawe, has said.

"Banana is not only a staple food in the area, but also a commercial crop highly depended on by the majority of the people in the region.

So, this decease has an adverse effect on the people's economic well-being, hence the need to contain it without delay," the RC said at a press briefing in Dar es Salaam over the weekend.

He was reacting to concerns raised by Mabibo Beer, Wines and Spirits Limited Executive Chairman, Mrs Bernadetha Rugemalira, over the lack of serious strategies by the government to contain the decease which was leading many citizens in the region to poverty.

She pointed out that the disease had seriously affected the lives of the people in the region and was making them poor, considering its importance as both a commercial and staple crop.

"The government should intervene and take appropriate measures to prevent the spread of the disease," appealed Mrs Rugemalira.

In response, Mr Massawe said the regional government was taking concrete measures to address the situation, adding that to begin with it had embarked on providing education to the people about handling the disease including uprooting the affected banana stems and burying them.

"We have allocated a timeframe of six months from now for every citizen to take due steps on the matter. Collective responsibility is called for," he said, warning that any farmer found with a diseased plant in their farm would be prosecuted.

The RC further warned that irresponsible local leaders, in particular ward and villages executives, would lose their jobs.

He was however upbeat that, with the positive response the government was getting from wananchi, the disease would be eliminated.

Banana wilt disease, better known as mnyauko, has been affecting banana plantations in the region, causing the plants' leaves to dry completely, resulting in the banana stalk failing to produce fruits as required.

No cure for the disease has so far been discovered. The disease also attacked other regions in Uganda and Rwanda, but the two countries managed to contain it when farmers decided to stand firm and learned how to contain it.

KENYA :

Turkey To Help Kenya Modernise Its Police Force
April 14/BERNAMA-NNN-KBC

NAIROBI, April 14 (BERNAMA-NNN-KBC) -- The Turkish National Police will soon start support programmes to upgrade the ability of the Kenya police force to keep the country safe as part of wider commitments on security and defence reached by the two governments, which include closer cooperation on the stabilisation and reconstruction of Somalia.

This follows a pact entered into by Kenya and Turkey that would see the two forces establish links that would benefit Kenya. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Security Cooperation between the Kenya Police Service and the Turkish National Police is one of the nine agreements signed when President Uhuru Kenyatta made a State visit to Turkey last week.

In addition to sharing of skills between the police forces, Turkey will support upgrading and modernisation of Kenya's security forces as it tackles threats posed by terrorism.

Most of the agreements signed were on business but security was a core issue for President Kenyatta and President Abdulla Gul of Turkey. Prior to signing the bilateral agreements, the two presidents discussed regional security matters.

"We have reached a commitment to work closely on security and defence," President Kenyatta said, adding that terrorism was a threat to the whole world and must be tackled through a united approach while President Gul said Turkey would partner with Kenya in supporting Somalia as well as other regional issues.

"Turkey is making a big contribution in restoring peace in Somalia and Kenya is also playing a major role and we will work together," Gul said.

While Kenya has deployed its military to stabilise the southern parts of Somalia, Turkey has been channeling massive humanitarian aid, rebuilding roads, hospitals and schools in that conflict ravaged Horn of Africa nation.

In 2011, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyib Erdogan, accompanied by his family and an entourage consisting of Cabinet Ministers and their families, flew on a Turkish Airlines plane to Mogadishu, becoming the first leader from outside Africa to visit Somalia in 20 years.

Turkish Airlines now flies to Mogadishu on a regular basis. Since Erdogan's symbolic visit, Turkey has been setting the pace for the western world in their involvement in Somalia and several nations, including Britain, followed suit when a Turkish embassy was opened in Mogadishu.

President Kenyatta expressed his appreciation of Turkey's role in the search for lasting peace in Somalia.

"Of key importance are the two conferences on Somalia in 2010 and 2012 that Turkey hosted and whose outcomes intensified international momentum to resolve the Somalia conflict," the President said.

"Kenya is committed to working closely with like-minded countries to collectively seek the stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction of Somalia."

He also called on Turkey to support the repatriation and re-integration of Somali refugees who have lived in Kenya for more than two decades. "It is necessary that ways be explored for providing basic infrastructure in the form of water and sanitation, roads, health, as well as support for civic administration in Somalia to enable the refugees to settle down quickly," President Kenyatta concluded.

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Cabinet Secretary (Minister) Amina Mohamed who was instrumental in the bilateral negotiations laying the foundations for the agreements, signed the MoU on security cooperation on behalf of Kenya.

-- BERNAMA-NNN-KBC

Kenya turns to China to boost tourist numbers

Sunday, April 13th 2014/ By Andrew Watila /standardmedia.co.ke

Kenya: Kenya is courting Asian countries to boost plummeting tourism numbers caused by terror attacks, last year’s March 4 polls and security operation jitters. Increased marketing in China has paid off as more than 110 Chinese tourists visited Kenya last Saturday at one go. The tourists were received by Kenya Tourism Board Managing Director Muriithi Ndegwa and hosted at a dinner at Safari Park Hotel. They will visit Nairobi, Masai Mara and Nyeri in the Mt Kenya tourism circuit as part of the plans to boost tourism in counties. Ndegwa said this is one of the biggest numbers of tourist arrivals at a go, adding that terrorism is a global phenomena that affect any nation. He observed that increased number of Chinese visitors has been helped by KTB undertaking a series of activities to market Kenya to the Asian country via road shows. “We have been marketing Kenya to first tier cities like Beijing, Shanghai to create more awareness in the Chinese market. This has also been boosted by CCTV's airing of Kenyan tourism potential," he said. Ndegwa said China is second largest tourist destination for Kenya in Asia, after India, with more than 40,000 Chinese tourists visiting Kenya last year. KTB expects this to grow to surpass 100, 000 by 2016. The event organised by a Kenyan firm Somak Safaris and Global Tours, China, comes at a time when tourist numbers have plummeted owing to insecurity concerns in some parts of the country. Coastal hotels say bookings have gone down due to terror attacks and jitters caused by security operations to flush out radicalised youth. "Tourist numbers reduced during the period to the polls and started picking up in May but the Westgate Mall terrorism attack saw numbers drop again. I don't want to speculate but will release the figures next week," said KTB boss. "Terror attacks affected Bali in Indonesia, London and America in September 11, 2001. What Kenya is doing is commendable to recover the numbers and boost safety of tourists and Kenyans at large." He said Kenya was also exploring ways of promoting cultural tourism and agri- tourism, where visitors can experience the green environment of Kenya's agriculture such as tea and coffee picking. KTB expects the number of Chinese tourists visiting the country to match or even surpass those coming from the traditional tourist source markets of UK, US, Germany and Italy in coming years. The UK, US and Italy are the largest source markets. They contributed 171,000 (UK), 116,000(US) and 81,000 (Italy) of the 1.2 million tourists to Kenya during the last financial year. Other key markets are India (66,000) and Germany (64,000).

TMG buys into Kenya media group for R195m

by Phakamisa Ndzamela/bdlive.co.za/14 avril 2014

TIMES Media Group, owners of the Sunday Times and Business Day, has invested about R195m in acquiring a 49% stake in Kenya's Radio Africa Limited (RAG), a deal that gives the company exposure to television, radio and newspaper assets in East Africa's largest economy.

Times Media CEO Andrew Bonamour said the Kenyan deal was funded through cash resources and that the company still had more available and an appetite to do more deals in Africa. "We now have exposure to fast-growing markets in west and east Africa and backing management teams in those countries ," Mr Bonamour said on Sunday.

The Kenya deal is the fourth broadcast-related acquisition in Africa by Times Media Group in about seven months.

Since September Times Media has spent just over R360m buying into broadcast. In September the company acquired a 32.26% stake in Ghana's Multimedia Group for R144m. In December it bought a 65% stake in local radio station Mpower, which is now called Rise FM, for R6m and in January it bought a 60% stake in Vuma FM in KwaZulu-Natal for R25.6m.

Times Media plans to use RAG, one of Kenya's top three media groups, to further spread its wings in East Africa.

RAG's broadcast assets in Kenya include Kiss FM, Classic FM, Radio Jumbo and Kiss TV. The TV assets will be replaced by a digital terrestrial TV offering.

It is headed by founding shareholders Patrick Quarcoo and William Pike and has minority shareholders.

RAG's newspaper, The Star, is Kenya's third-largest publication in terms of circulation.

Mr Pike and Mr Quarcoo also own Uganda’s Capital radio and Beat FM.

Times Media is looking to buy 49% of RAG’s Ugandan assets, subject to due diligence.

"The Kenyan economy is the biggest in East Africa and this is reflected in its relatively developed media market which takes about 80% of adspend in the region," Times Media said on Friday. "With a population of about 43-million and gross domestic product growth of 4.5% it has scale and the ability to provide a platform for other East African opportunities, especially in Tanzania and Uganda."

RAG is estimated to make R45m normalised earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation for the year ended June 2014. Times Media will acquire existing ordinary shares, new ordinary shares and the acquisition of shareholder loans.

"This can only be good news for everyone concerned," RAG MD Mr Quarcoo said.

Kenya Relieved After Somalia Backs Deportation of its Nationals

Saturday, 12 April 2014/somalilandsun.com

Somalilandsun - The Somalia Government has declared support for the ongoing security crackdown in Kenya but called for humane treatment of those arrested. Somalia ambassador to Kenya, Mohamed Ali Nur said his country supports deportation of illegal migrants, but opposed any attempts to treat all Somalis as suspects. Speaking yesterday at a press briefing in Nairobi, Mr Nur said not all suspects arrested are terrorists and warned against humiliation during screening. "We are in support of the Kenya Government's operation but if our people are harassed we will complain. We want our people not to be humiliated and we are ready to receive them in our country. We want them back to build our nation together," he said. Nur, said the 82 immigrants deported so far, had been in the country illegally and agreed to go back home to build their country, which is rising from war.

"No refugee has been taken out of Kenya without their will. We received a guarantee from the Kenyan Government that no refugee will be taken back to Somalia against their will. I personally accompanied the 82 to Mogadishu and they told me that they hailed from different parts of our country. They accepted that they had no documents allowing them to be here," the ambassador said. Asked whether the immigrants were able to access the capital city and make a life, he said, "We live as a family, a community of people and thus they got help from their families."

He added that the Kenyan Government allowed businessmen and students from Somali in Kenya but only with the right documents. So far, 4,000 people have been arrested on suspicion of being in the country illegally.Â Nur condemned the attacks by Al shabaab in various parts of the country saying that the culprits pose a threat to both Kenyan and Somalian citizens.

ANGOLA :

Angola: Total Launches the Development of Kaombo, an Ultra-Deep Offshore Project

April 14, 2014/businesswire.com

PARIS--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Regulatory News :

Total (Paris:FP) (LSE:TTA) (NYSE:TOT) and its joint venture partners have made the final investment decision to develop the ultra-deep offshore Kaombo project in Angola. With a production capacity of 230,000 barrels per day, Kaombo will develop estimated reserves of 650 million barrels. Following an intensive optimization exercise, the project’s capital expenditure to reach full capacity was reduced by 4 billion dollars to 16 billion dollars, with an expected start-up in 2017.

“With the launch of Kaombo, the upcoming start-up of CLOV and three exploration wells planned in the Kwanza basin this year, Angola remains a priority country for Total” outlined Yves-Louis Darricarrère, President Total Upstream. “While continuing our commitment to develop the Angolan oil industry, Total has significantly optimized the project’s design and contracting strategy in recent months. Kaombo illustrates both the Group’s capital discipline and objective to reduce capex.”

Located approximately 260 km offshore Luanda in water depths ranging from 1,400 to 1,900 meters, the Kaombo project will develop six of the 12 discoveries already made on Block 32. The six fields (Gengibre, Gindungo, Caril, Canela, Mostarda and Louro) cover an area of 800 km2 in the central and southeast part of the block.

The Kaombo development scheme includes 59 subsea wells, connected through around 300 km of subsea lines, to two floating production, storage and offloading (FPSO) vessels, each with a production capacity of 115,000 barrels per day. The two FPSOs will be based on conversions of very large crude carriers (VLCCs) into production units. Associated gas will be exported to the onshore Angola LNG plant.

The Kaombo development includes a substantial level of local content. Over 14 million man-hours of fabrication and construction works will be performed locally in Angolan yards which will be used for equipment fabrication and assembly.

Block 32, offshore Angola

Total is the operator of Block 32, with a 30% stake, alongside Sonangol P&P (30%), Sonangol Sinopec International (20%), Esso Exploration and Production Angola (Overseas) Limited (15%) and Galp Energia (5%).

Total Exploration & Production in Angola

Total has been present in Angola since 1953. In 2013, Total’s equity production amounted to 186,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boe/d). Most of this production comes from blocks 17, 0 and 14. At the end of 2013, Total operated close to 600,000 boe/d, making it the country’s leading oil operator.

Total’s principal asset in Angola, deep-offshore Block 17 (40%, operator), consists of four major zones: Girassol, Dalia, Pazflor (which are all in production) and CLOV, which is currently being developed. The development of CLOV started in 2010 and will result in the installation of a fourth FPSO with a production capacity of 160,000 boe/d, with a start-up scheduled in mid-2014.

In Angola, Total is fully committed to developing the Angolan oil industry by recruiting and training a local workforce. Total is strengthening the local economy through its ambitious “Angolanization” program and technology transfer plan.

* * * * *

Total is one of the largest integrated oil and gas companies in the world, with activities in more than 130 countries. The Group is also a first rank player in chemicals. Its 98,800 employees put their expertise to work in every part of the industry – exploration and production of oil and natural gas, refining and marketing, new energies, trading, and chemicals. Total is working to help satisfy the global demand for energy, both today and tomorrow. www.total.com

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AU/AFRICA :

Ebola en Afrique de l'Ouest, un effrayant virus tueur venu de loin
samedi 12 avril 2014/rtbf.be

L'Afrique de l'Ouest fait face depuis plusieurs semaines à une épidémie de fièvre hémorragique en partie due au virus Ebola qui a fait plus de 110 morts, changeant les comportements et provoquant une mobilisation internationale pour enrayer sa propagation.

Le 20 mars, les autorités guinéennes ont annoncé qu'une maladie fébrile non identifiée déclarée en janvier dans le sud de leur pays y a fait plus de 20 morts, les poussant à envoyer des prélèvements pour examen dans des laboratoires de référence en France et au Sénégal.

Deux jours plus tard, les résultats des analyses révèlent la présence parmi les cas de fièvre du virus Ebola, hautement contagieux et mortel dans 25 à 90% des cas, découvert en 1976 au Zaïre (aujourd'hui République démocratique du Congo).

En quelques jours, l'épidémie progresse du sud de la Guinée vers la capitale, Conakry, puis dépasse les frontières avec des cas suspects signalés dans trois pays voisins: Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali.

Les tests au virus Ebola se sont révélés négatifs pour les cas suspects de la Sierra Leone et du Mali. La Guinée est la plus affectée par l'épidémie de fièvre hémorragique, avec 101 morts sur les 158 cas recensés. Au Liberia, selon le dernier bilan du gouvernement, il y a eu 12 morts sur 25 cas signalés.

En Guinée, les tests ont confirmé que 67 cas de fièvre sur les 158 étaient dus au virus Ebola; au Liberia, cinq cas sur les 25.

Ce virus "se transmet à l'homme à partir des animaux sauvages et se propage ensuite" d'homme à homme, "on pense que des chauves-souris frugivores (...) sont les hôtes naturels du virus Ebola", explique l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS).

Il n'existe pas de vaccin ou de traitement spécifique contre la fièvre Ebola. "Cependant, si les patients reçoivent un traitement pour les infections secondaires et sont bien réhydratés dans des structures de santé adéquates, leurs chances de survie augmentent", souligne l'ONG Médecins sans frontières (MSF), très active sur le terrain.

'Viande d'Ebola'

Pour prévenir toute contamination, plusieurs pays ont élevé le niveau de surveillance sanitaire et pris une série de mesure, le Sénégal allant jusqu'à fermer le 30 mars ses frontières terrestres avec la Guinée, dans le Sud-Est, mesure toujours en vigueur vendredi.

Des dizaines d'experts et humanitaires ont été dépêchés en Guinée par plusieurs organisations internationales.

Cette forte mobilisation s'explique par le fait que l'épidémie est "sans précédent" selon MSF, en tout cas préoccupante selon plusieurs spécialistes. Pour l'OMS, "il s'agit de l'une des épidémies qui représente le plus de défis".

La flambée "n'est pas encore sous contrôle a priori" et "il y a une grande dispersion des patients", a expliqué le docteur Sylvain Baize, chef du Centre national de référence (CNR) des fièvres hémorragiques virales de Lyon (France), qui a posé le diagnostic de l'Ebola en Guinée.

Contrairement à l'Afrique centrale, qui a connu des épidémies meurtrières depuis la découverte de l'Ebola, c'est la première fois que l'Afrique de l'Ouest est confrontée à une flamblée de cette ampleur.

La présence d'Ebola a poussé de nombreux Ouest-Africains à changer de comportements dans leurs routines sociales: ils se serrent moins les mains, ont réduit leur participation à certains évènements avec du public.

Dans certains pays, les habitudes alimentaires ont également changé. En Guinée, le gouvernement a interdit la consommation de chauve-souris jusqu'à nouvel ordre, et le Liberia a banni jusqu'à nouvel ordre toute consommation de viande de brousse.

En Côte d'Ivoire, frontalière de la Guinée, l'agouti - gros rongeur de brousse - et d'autres viandes de brousse ont aussi disparu des menus de plusieurs restaurants suite à des recommandations officielles. Les consignes ne sont pas toujours respectées, comme à Bouaké, dans le centre du pays, où Emile ne cache pas qu'il continue de manger son agouti braisé, qu'il qualifie de "viande d'Ebola".

AFP

At Least 20 Dead After Blasts Rock Nigerian Capital

David Stout/Reuters/14042014

Multiple explosions at a bus station on the outskirts of the Nigerian capital of Abuja on Monday morning have left an estimated 20 people dead. There has been no confirmation of the cause of the blasts.

At least two explosions rocked a bus station near the Nigerian capital of Abuja during rush hour on Monday, killing many commuters at the crowded transport hub, according to Reuters.

A cameraman working for the agency counted 20 dead bodies at the bus station, while witnesses at the scene said that more than a dozen bodies had already been moved.

“I was waiting to get on a bus when I heard a deafening explosion then smoke. People were running around in panic,” eyewitness Mimi Daniels told Reuters.

There has been no confirmation on what may have caused the blasts.

Africa: FG Cries Out Over U.S.$50 Billion Annual Illicit Outflows From Africa
By Omoh Gabriel/allafrica.com/14 April 2014

Nigeria and other African Ministers of Finance at the just concluded IMF/World Bank Group Meetings have urged the multilateral Institutions to help Africa put a stop to the over $50 billion that leaves the continent annually.

Briefing newsmen at the end of the Meetings yesterday, Nigeria Minister of Finance Dr Okonjo_Iweala said AWe, the Group of African Finance Ministers, requested that the Bank and the Fund should look into the issue of illicit financial outflows from the continent.

She also said that Nigeria=s new GDP elicited a lot of interest among participants and even some private sector operators who were coming to say they are interested in investing and one of them, Blumberg Green, has already sent a team to Nigeria that are working with the minister of Agriculture to make Nigeria the hub for grain and cold storage.

She said AWe have persisted in this demand and Africa Finance Ministers are saying based on a finding of a panel chaired by former South Africa President Thambo Mbeki that about $50 billion a year is disappearing from the continent, we asked the World Bank and the IMF to talk to the receiving countries, assist through capacity building and information flow in arresting the ugly development.

AHow is the money going, it goes through, those companies that should be paying taxes and are finding good ways to avoid taxes, something called transfer pricing, their profits are exported to jurisdiction where they pay less tax and we can not tax them.

Pricing; over invoicing and under invoicing of goods and services that they bring into our countries and proceeds of corruption of officials in the continent especially as it relates to natural resources.

Almost every country in the continent has one has mining or the other and the contracts are not favourable to us.

The World Bank and IMF will help in two ways, one is capacity building, you need specialised skills to be able to deal with transfer pricing, over invoicing, and missed pricing.

They will also help through information sharing. Developed countries now have automatic tax information exchange, they get tax information automatically on request, for people operating within their jurisdiction.

Developing countries are not included at the moment in the information exchange program. We are asking that developing countries be included so that we can also get this information. And they should also help us with their authorities to repatriate any illicit financial flow into their countries.@ She said.

Explaining further the acting CBN Governor Mrs Sara Alade said A When companies do transfer pricing, it means that when they import, they import at a higher price than they should have and when they are sending the money back, they send back more than they should have sent.

So, it is across the continent, it is not only peculiar to Nigeria. This applies to different sectors of the economy and it has to do with over-invoicing and tax evasion.

So, the $50billion identified is for the entire African continent. What we have requested for is the World Bank=s cooperation in stopping it and our own capacity too to stop it when we know what is happening.

Dr. Okonjo-Iweala said AThe fact the Nigeria now has a better measurement of its GDP, and the base is stronger was well received, it elicited a lot of interest among participants and even some private sector operators who were coming to say they are interested in investing and one of the is BLUMBERG Green, they have already sent a team to Nigeria that are working with the minister of Agriculture to make Nigeria the hub for grain and cold storage.

They want to invest $250million. They were looking around countries in Africa to see where they could set up the hub.

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