



(The European Union (EU) has pledged 61 million euros (\$75 million) as fresh support to combat the deadly Ebola disease in West Africa, the European Commission announced Monday. EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, announced the aid during his visit to Guinea from Friday to Sunday, Xinhua reported.)

BURUNDI :

Elections au Burundi: Eglise et opposition dénoncent des irrégularités
le lundi 8 décembre 2014/rtbf.be

Le principal parti d'opposition au Burundi, l'Union pour le Progrès national (Uprona), s'est dit lundi "renforcé" par la prise de position des évêques catholiques du pays qui ont dénoncé la veille des irrégularités dans le processus électoral.

L'influente conférence des évêques catholiques du Burundi a à son tour dénoncé dimanche "beaucoup d'irrégularités" dans l'enregistrement des électeurs en vue des élections générales de 2015.

"L'étape où nous sommes arrivés dans le processus électoral est entachée de beaucoup d'irrégularités", a affirmé le président de la Conférence des évêques catholiques du Burundi, Mgr Gervais Banshimiyubusa, lors d'une messe dans la cathédrale Regina Mundi de Bujumbura retransmise à la radio dans tout le pays.

L'Eglise catholique, reconnue comme la force morale d'un pays catholique à 60%, a constaté, via sa commission Justice et Paix, la distribution de "fausses cartes d'identité", ou qu'il est possible de "se faire inscrire à plusieurs bureaux, (...) avec son passeport, puis son permis", a rappelé l'évêque.

Cette prise de position rejoint celle de l'opposition politique et de la société civile qui ne cessent de dénoncer les fraudes massives depuis le début de l'enrôlement des électeurs.

"Des responsables du parti au pouvoir se promènent avec des sacs remplis de cartes nationales d'identité qu'ils distribuent exclusivement aux membres du CNDD-FDD (le parti présidentiel, le Conseil national pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces de Défense de la Démocratie)", a accusé lundi le vice-président de l'Union pour le Progrès national (Uprona, le principal parti tutsi), Évariste Ngayimpinda, au micro de Radio France Internationale (RFI).

"Des cartes d'identité sont ainsi distribuées en masse aux militants du CNDD-FDD, aux jeunes qui n'auront pas l'âge de voter en mars lors des élections, voire aux étrangers. Au même moment, tout est mis en œuvre pour empêcher les non-militants du parti au pouvoir d'obtenir ces cartes pour pouvoir s'enrôler", a-t-il ajouté.

En conséquence, "le pays se retrouvera avec un fichier électoral qui ne comprend quasiment que les noms des membres et militants du CNDD-FDD inscrits deux ou trois fois", a expliqué M. Ngayimpinda en réitérant l'appel de son parti en vue d'un dialogue avec le pouvoir avant de poursuivre le processus électoral.

L'enregistrement des électeurs pour le scrutin législatif prévu en juin est depuis le début - fin novembre - dénoncé par la société civile et l'opposition, qui pointent aussi irrégularités et fraudes.

Le ministre de l'Intérieur, Edouard Nduwimana, a lui-même reconnu "pas mal d'irrégularités". Mais la Ceni explique n'avoir que des "pouvoirs limités" pour résoudre tous les problèmes.

Malgré ces critiques, la Commission a décidé vendredi de prolonger l'enregistrement de cinq jours, au lieu de le suspendre comme l'opposition le demande.

Selon la Ceni, seuls 2,5 millions d'électeurs avaient été enregistrés jeudi soir, à trois jours de la clôture initialement prévue. L'Institut des statistiques du Burundi estime le nombre d'électeurs à 4,8 millions.

Belga

RWANDA :

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

Uganda maid admits torturing toddler after secret filming

8 December 2014/bbc.com

A maid in Uganda who was secretly filmed beating and kicking a toddler has pleaded guilty to torture.

Jolly Tumuhirwe, 22, was charged in court with the torture of a girl of 18 months. A video of the assault caused outrage when it was posted online.

The child's father, Eric Kamanzi, had installed a camera in his home after noticing his daughter was bruised and limping.

Ms Tumuhirwe asked the court, the parents and Ugandans to forgive her.

The graphic footage, which is taken from a camera hidden in the corner of the living room, shows Ms Tumuhirwe hitting the child when she resists feeding and then throwing her to the floor, beating her with a torch before stepping on her and kicking her.

No lawyer

The footage of the abuse, which was not shown in court on Monday, has been seen or shared thousands of times on social media.

After capturing the violence on film, the girl's father reported the incident to police on 13 November.

Ms Tumuhirwe, who was not represented by a lawyer in court, now faces up to 15 years in prison for the crime or a fine of about \$400 (£260) or both.

One of Uganda's leading advocates offered to represent her but the magistrate denied his request saying he had not formally notified the court.

The BBC's Patience Atuhaire in the capital, Kampala, says the toddler's father broke down in court when the maid said she was sorry.

The magistrate granted the state attorney's request for an adjournment of two days so that she could gather more facts on the case.

After the public outrage that followed the video, police had issued a statement saying the charge of torture would be amended to attempted murder.

But the directorate of public prosecutions was quoted in local media on Monday as saying that investigations were still on-going and the charge remained torture under the Anti-Torture Act.

Our reporter says the courtroom was packed and people were running and craning their necks to have a good look at Ms Tumuhirwe as she was led away by prison officers after the session.

Uganda IDs to Ease Business

East African Business Week (Kampala)/7 December 2014

Kampala — Business people in Kampala are optimistic that the new national identity cards (IDs) now being issued will be helpful in curbing fraud.

This is a first for Uganda.

Last week, the government began distributing the new IDs beginning with the Central Division in Kampala. According to sources, the process will be expanded further afield and involve dishing out nearly 16 million cards to date. President Museveni and his wife, Janet, are the recipients of the first two cards.

There is a common view that with the new IDs official processing of documents to carry out business in Uganda and in the region in general will be much easier.

Ernest Kyeyune who imports goods from Kenya and Tanzania and sells them to different traders in Kampala is hopeful that the acquired national IDs will enable them to move around the East Africa with less difficulty.

"If what they said about the importance of national IDs is put in practice, then I am hoping the long processes of getting a local area introductory letter and other small documents that take a lot of our time and money will be eliminated and we can do business more easily. I also heard these IDs will be working across the East Africa Community without a passport. If that can be true, then there will be a lot of changes in business dealings," he said.

Sarah Nabulenge, a mobile money operator downtown Kampala says with the introduction of national IDs, the fraud that has been taking place in the mobile money service will also reduce.

"Since the mobile money networks have registered the customers, with the national ID, it will be easy to identify the person and be sure that the account they are withdrawing money from is theirs. There are instances where someone comes with another person's phone and withdraws money from it illegally. When the genuine person goes to the mobile money centre, they are told the money was already withdrawn," Nabulenge said

Jacqueline Tumwebaze who owns a boutique in Kampala hopes that the banks will attach more importance to these national IDs and possibly use them while issuing out loans or other services.

"For example, when you want to get a loan in the bank, there are a lot of documents that you are required to have, like a letter of introduction from your local areas and other documents. Getting those documents delay us and cost us money as some local leaders want you to bribe them to hurry the process of getting you these simple documents. With a national ID, it will be easy to identify someone," Tumwebaze said

Pauline Kigongo another trader who imports ladies' perfumes and other cosmetics, said IDs very important especially to some people who move outside Uganda for business.

Soren Hakim, a Ugandan of Somali origins and who has been living in Uganda for the last 20 years with his family and now operates an electronics shop in Kampala said he is eagerly waiting to receive his card. "Sometimes we are treated with ridicule from some service providers because of our colour. They always want to charge you expensively for a service. I and my family were very glad when we were registered as Ugandans and we want to receive our national identities so that we can also enjoy the services like other Ugandans."

However some traders have expressed worries over the possibilities of forgeries. The government has however assured citizens that the cards are very difficult to forge..

Emma Ombaga is worried some people forge them anyway.

"In Uganda it is easy to get any kind of document if you have the money. When someone needs

something, they will go to any levels to get it and these national identities will be taken advantage of and people might end up being fooled more than when we did not have them. If someone presents you with a fake national id and you are unable to detect it, it will be easy to trust this person which might bring up security and fraud issues," Ombaga said

SOUTH AFRICA :

SAfrican prosecutor seeks appeal in Pistorius case

By Associated Press /December 9

PRETORIA, South Africa — A South African prosecutor on Tuesday argued in court for an appeal in the case against Oscar Pistorius, who was acquitted of murder for killing girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp.

Prosecutor Gerrie Nel outlined his objections to the culpable homicide verdict and sentence against the Olympic runner, saying Judge Thokozile Masipa erred in her interpretation of the law. In October, Masipa convicted Pistorius of the lesser charge of culpable homicide and sentenced him to a five-year prison term. He could be released from prison to go under house arrest after 10 months.

“There is a very good prospect that we may convince an appeal court that the shortest possible incarceration in a case like this, my lady, is shockingly inappropriate,” Nel said, addressing Masipa in the same Pretoria courtroom where the murder trial was conducted.

The double-amputee athlete is serving his sentence in a Pretoria prison and was not in court. The two front rows of the public gallery were empty. Those seats had been occupied by family and friends of Pistorius and Steenkamp during the trial, which began in March.

Pistorius fatally shot Steenkamp in his home last year. He said he thought a dangerous intruder was in the house; prosecutors alleged he killed his girlfriend after an argument.

The basis of the prosecution’s argument for an appeal is that the judge incorrectly interpreted a legal principle under which a person should be found guilty of murder if they foresaw the possibility of a person dying because of their actions and went ahead with those actions anyway.

Pistorius’ lawyers had filed court papers asking Masipa to reject prosecutors’ attempts to take the athlete’s case to South Africa’s Supreme Court of Appeal. They said prosecutors’ arguments were flawed and that Masipa had correctly applied the law in the murder trial.

If an appeal is granted and Pistorius is convicted of murder, he would face a minimum of 15 years in prison.

Briton Acquitted in Case of Murder for Hire

By ALAN COWELL/nytimes.com/DEC. 8, 2014

LONDON — In a case that has made international headlines, a South African judge on Monday acquitted a British businessman accused of arranging for his wife to be murdered on their honeymoon.

Shrien Dewani, 34, went on trial in October for the 2010 killing of his 28-year-old wife, Anni Dewani. For three years he resisted extradition from Britain and then argued unsuccessfully in South Africa that he was mentally unfit. He was charged with arranging her murder to resemble a carjacking — a common occurrence in South Africa — in a township outside Cape Town.

In a hearing in Cape Town on Monday, streamed live on South African news websites, Judge Jeanette Traverso said there was “no evidence on which a reasonable court can convict the accused” since the prosecution’s case “cannot pass legal muster.”

The judge said that the prosecution’s evidence fell “far below” the legal threshold for credible testimony and that “the accused is found not guilty.”

Prosecutors said that Mr. Dewani paid 15,000 rand, or about \$1,300, for the killing. The businessman denied charges of murder and kidnapping. His lawyers said the prosecution’s case was so full of contradictions that Mr. Dewani should have been acquitted without having to mount a defense, as is permitted under South African law.

In earlier proceedings, three South African men were given long prison terms for the killing. One of those men has since died of a brain tumor. Their testimony, offered as part of plea bargains for shorter sentences, provided the basis of the prosecution’s case against Mr. Dewani.

Prosecutors argued that the businessman had ordered the murder because he was a gay man forced into marriage by pressure from his family. Mr. Dewani said that he was bisexual and that he and his wife had a loving relationship. He testified that his wife was shot to death when they were carjacked and he was forced out of the car.

Both Mr. Dewani and his wife are of Indian descent, although he is British and she was Swedish. Wedding photographs widely circulated on the Internet show the couple in sumptuous Indian dress.

As Mr. Dewani left the dock, members of his wife’s family expressed outrage at the judge’s ruling. In chaotic scenes, a crowd gathered outside the Western Cape High Court to protest the ruling.

Speaking on live television, Nathi Mncube, a spokesman for the National Prosecuting Authority, appealed for calm, saying, “We must respect the decision of the court, even if we do not agree with it.”

The Dewani trial opened just as another sensational murder trial — that of Oscar Pistorius, the former Olympian — headed toward its conclusion. Mr. Pistorius was acquitted of murdering his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, but was found guilty of culpable homicide, a charge equivalent to manslaughter.

The athlete was sentenced in October to five years in prison. In an appeal set to be heard on Tuesday, prosecutors called the term “shockingly light” because Mr. Pistorius may be released on house arrest after 10 months in a prison hospital wing.

Continue reading the main story Continue reading the main story
Continue reading the main story

Like the Pistorius case, Mr. Diwani’s trial focused attention on South Africa’s post-apartheid justice system, the forensic abilities of the police and prosecutors, and gun crime in a society still haunted by the violence of its past.

Those concerns resurfaced in October when the captain of South Africa’s national soccer team,

Senzo Meyiwa, was shot to death in a robbery attempt at a house near Johannesburg.

According to statistics based on official police figures, South Africa's murder rate ranks among the world's highest, with 17,068 homicides recorded in a 12-month span between 2013 and 2014.

High-profile trials like those of Mr. Pistorius and Mr. Dewani have generated much attention, feeding a perception among outsiders, and some South Africans, that racial minorities are the prime victims of violent crime.

But, Antony Albeker, a South African author, wrote in an Op-Ed article in The New York Times in November, "All the data available suggest that, while per capita murder rates among white South Africans are high by international standards, they are considerably lower than the rates of lethal violence experienced by their black compatriots."

The acquittal on Monday seemed certain to draw some of the same criticism as the Pistorius verdict about whether the justice system is skewed in favor of rich defendants, while the less wealthy face long periods of incarceration before their trials and substantial prison terms on conviction.

Pierre Korkie's body arrives in South Africa

Sapa/ 9.12.2014

The body of slain teacher Pierre Korkie has arrived in South Africa, the Gift of the Givers said on Tuesday.

"The body arrived at 7am and is being taken for a post-mortem," the organisation's founder Imtiaz Sooliman said.

"Yes, Yolande [Korkie's wife] was there. She left to go there at 4.45am. The body was due to arrive at around 5.30am but it was delayed."

The flight landed at the Waterkloof Airforce Base in Pretoria.

Korkie and American photographer Luke Somers were killed during an attempt by US special forces to free them from their Al-Qaeda captors in Yemen in the early hours of Saturday.

Korkie and Yolande were kidnapped by militants in Taiz, Yemen, last May.

Yolande was released on January 10 and returned to South Africa on January 13. The Gift of the Givers helped negotiate her release.

The kidnappers demanded a US\$3 million (about R32.5m) ransom in exchange for Korkie's safe return.

At the time of the kidnapping, Korkie was a teacher in Yemen, while his wife did relief work in hospitals.

- Sapa

TANZANIA :

Africa Travel Association recognizes Tanzania National Parks

Dec 08, 2014 /eturbonews.com

Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) received the 2014 "Development of Responsible Tourism within the Continent" Award from the Africa Travel Association (ATA) at the 39th Annual ATA World Congress, Kampala, Uganda, November 12-16. The distinguished award was presented by Her Excellency Janet Museveni, First Lady of the Republic of Uganda, and Edward Bergman, ATA Executive Director. Ibrahim Mussa, Director of Tourism and Marketing, Tanzania National Parks accepted the award on behalf of TANAPA.

Allan Kijazi, Director General, Tanzania National Parks, in thanking ATA for the Award, said: "Tanzania National Parks is honored to be recognized for our commitment to conservation and sustainable tourism development. TANAPA will continue to preserve the beauty and natural resources of Tanzania's 16 National Parks to share with future generations of visitors from Africa and around the globe."

Established in 1959 with Serengeti National Park as Tanzania's first national park, Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) has expanded to 16 national parks. Conservation of eco-systems in all areas designated as national parks is the core business of the organization. Tanzania National Parks manages and regulates the use of areas designated as National Parks to preserve the country's heritage, encompassing natural and cultural resources, both tangible and intangible resource values, including the fauna and flora, wildlife habitat, natural processes, wilderness quality and scenery therein and to provide for human benefit and enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for future generations.

TANAPA is a member of The Africa Travel Association, the leading global trade association promoting travel and tourism to Africa and strengthening intra-Africa partnerships. Established in 1975, ATA serves both the public and private sectors of the international travel and tourism industry.

ATA's annual events in the USA and across Africa bring together industry leaders to shape Africa's tourism agenda and to stay up-to-date on Africa's latest tourism trends, issues and products.

Tanzania plan to host international conference on social protection

Tuesday, 9 December 2014 /Xinhua

DAR ES SALAAM (Xinhua) -- Tanzania's ministry of finance and partners will organize a three-day international conference on social protection to be held in the country's northern tourist town of Arusha beginning December 15, authorities have said.

A statement issued in Dar es Salaam said the ministry will host the conference in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI) based in South Africa.

"This marks government's commitment to poverty eradication and achieving growth with fairness and justice for all, especially women and children," said the statement.

The statement said the conference, to be officiated by Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete, was aimed at encouraging South-South exchange of knowledge and best practices to support Tanzania's

s efforts in designing policies and programs for assisting the poor and vulnerable including women, children, elderly, disabled and youth to achieve a basic standard of living.

"As Tanzania prepares and works hard to graduate to a middle income status by 2025, the government wants to ensure that its citizens, including the poorest and the weakest, develop their capacities to realize their rights and make Tanzania stronger and a more equal society," it said.

It said that addressing the needs of children especially their nutrition, health and education was critical to helping them grow into happy, productive adults and escape from the inter- generational poverty trap.

The meeting will bring together policy-makers, researchers and practitioners involved in the planning, design, and implementation of social protection programs and systems from Kenya, Uganda, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Ghana, Ethiopia, Zambia, South Sudan and Tanzania.

At national level, the knowledge and experience gained will support the east African country's ongoing efforts to expand its productive social safety net program (PSSN) expected to reach about six million poorest people by mid-2015.

The program provides cash assistance to poor families to send their children to school and seek health care for the mother and the child.

It also provides income opportunities through public works projects and helps families gradually escape from poverty through livelihoods and savings group support. It is one of the largest social protection programs in Africa.

KENYA :

Security Expert Calls Kenya Reply to al-Shabab Attacks Incoherent

Douglas Mpuga/voanews.com/December 08, 2014

Kenya needs more than military options to deal with the terrorist threat of al-Shabab, says a security specialist. He proposes that the government adopt a comprehensive response that includes non-military options rolled out in a way that is national in scope and commensurate to the domestic threats that Kenya faces.

Andrews Atta-Asamoah, a senior researcher in conflict prevention and risk analysis at the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria, told VOA that Kenya's current options are haphazard and incoherent.

A few hours after Somali-based al-Shabab militants killed 36 workers in a rock quarry in northwestern Kenya last week, President Uhuru Kenyatta fired his security minister and accepted the resignation of his police chief. The rock quarry killings were the latest al-Shabab retaliation for Kenya's role in a United Nations-backed peacekeeping force in Somalia.

The Somalia-based insurgents of al-Shabab – listed by the United States and others as a terrorist group affiliated with al-Qaida – began launching deadly attacks on civilians in Kenya when Nairobi sent its own troops to neighboring Somalia to confront the militant Islamist extremists in 2011.

Since then, Kenyan military units have successfully targeted militants' hideouts across Somalia, prompting retaliatory attacks from the terrorists.

Last year, al-Shabab fighters retaliated by killing 68 civilians in a Nairobi shopping mall. In September, the Somali rebels vowed revenge when a U.S. airstrike killed al-Shabab leader Ahmed Godane.

The problem is bigger than national borders

“There is no proof that if Kenya pulls out of Somalia right now, the al-Shabab militants will cease fire,” said Asamoah. “Some of the fundamental causes are homegrown. They are around issues of marginalization and exclusion.” These issues, he added, have to be addressed within Kenya.

Although the militant group's initial demand was for Kenya to withdraw her troops from Somalia, he said, they group now seems to have introduced a religious dimension to what they are doing. He cited the targeting of non-Muslims in recent attacks in the north of the country.

Al-Shabab might also be trying to capitalize on any cracks in the Kenyan community, said Asamoah, who said most attacks were in and around the Kenyan port city of Mombasa.

“If that becomes the trend, then it's going to be a bit more difficult for Kenya to deal with them because the Kenyan society has a lot of fault lines which evidently its grappling with,” he said.

Asamoah also dismissed the idea that Kenya should close its border with Somalia in order to stop cross-border attacks.

“The border is very porous and it's a long border, so the chances of effective closure of the border are something that is really almost impossible,” he said.

Asamoah believes many al-Shabab fighters infiltrate Kenya's borders through approved routes, a condition that suggests the militants already have operatives and sympathizers within Kenya.

Kenya must be more careful about its methods of maintaining security, Asamoah said, because some of the government's actions end up looking like racial profiling. Al-Shabab has taken advantage of issues of marginalization and exclusion, he said, so the government needs to address the issue of fundamental social cohesion in the country.

The Kenyatta administration needs to be pro-active in communicating with various communities and more aggressively engage some of those communities to avoid such criticism.

“Some citizens are dis-engaged from the state and are really providing a cover or some support for what is happening with al-Shabab.”

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

Africa in Spotlight at Meeting of 122 ICC Members

By EDITH M. LEDERER/ Associated Press/Dec 8, 2014

UNITED NATIONS

The International Criminal Court's 122 member states opened their annual meeting Monday with Africa the focus, as the court is roiled by the collapse of the case against Kenya's president and charges that it targets only Africans.

The meeting comes just three days after the ICC's chief prosecutor dropped charges against Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, accusing Kenya of blocking her investigation. And it comes amid fierce criticism by some Africans who say the ICC unfairly targets the continent ? only Africans have been prosecuted since the court's founding in 2002.

Sidiki Kaba, the new president of the Assembly of States Parties, called for reconciliation with all regions, especially Africa. In his inaugural speech to the assembly, he said members of the ICC must change Africans' negative perception of the court.

"The ICC must listen to the recriminations of Africa, which are not all illegitimate or devoid of basis," Kaba said.

"Africa cannot continue to be the only one before the ICC," said Kaba, Senegal's justice minister.

He stressed that Africa "is not against the court," pointing to 34 African member states, the highest of any continent.

The court's chief prosecutor and four judges are Africans. Congo, Uganda, the Central African Republic, Ivory Coast and Mali have all asked the court to investigate alleged crimes, he said.

Kaba said he wants to get all 193 U.N. member states to join the ICC. The United States is not a member.

Kenya's U.N. Ambassador Macharia Kamau said he wanted the assembly to address concerns raised by his government and the African Union.

Kenya has asked for a discussion of the conduct of the court and top prosecutor Fatou Bensouda in the cases against Kenyatta and his Deputy President William Ruto for alleged involvement in the country's 2007 postelection violence. The African Union has not endorsed this proposal but it previously called for an amendment to the Rome Statute that founded the ICC to prohibit the prosecution of sitting leaders.

The collapse of the case against Kenyatta was a new blow to the court's prosecutors, who must rely on governments led by the very suspects they indict. Their office has launched nine full investigations in 12 years ? all of them in Africa ? and has just seven suspects in custody. A further 13 suspects remain at large despite arrest warrants, including Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and warlord Joseph Kony.

Bensouda' said she reserved the right to file charges against Kenyatta again if she got more evidence.

Malaria deaths halved since 2000

09 Dec 2014/aljazeera.com

WHO says death rate fell by 47 percent between 2000 and 2013, while warning that Ebola outbreak threatens gains made.

Malaria deaths have dropped dramatically since 2000 as more people are treated and use more bed nets, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has said.

However, the UN health agency warned on Tuesday that the Malaria treatment process in West Africa risks being reversed by an unprecedented epidemic of Ebola.

On malaria, the WHO said that progress against the mosquito-borne infection remains fragile and West African countries suffering from Ebola are particularly at risk of seeing a resurgence of malaria.

In its annual report on the malaria, the WHO said the death rate from the illness fell by 47 percent worldwide between 2000 and 2013 and by 54 percent in Africa, where about 90 percent of all malaria deaths occur.

In an analysis of malaria's impact across sub-Saharan Africa, it also found that despite a 43 percent increase in population, fewer people in the region are infected every year.

Meanwhile, 13 of the 97 malarial countries reported no cases of the disease last year, including two, Azerbaijan and Sri Lanka, which recorded their first ever zero result.

While access to insecticide-treated bed nets has improved, 278 million of the 840 million people at risk in sub-Saharan Africa still live in households without one, the report said.

"The next few years are going to be critical to show that we can maintain momentum and build on the gains," said Pedro Alonso, director of the WHO's global malaria programme.

He attributed the progress in large part to increasing financial and political commitment, in particular regional efforts to work together to eliminate malaria.

Ebola's 'devastating impact'

On Ebola, the report said that the deadly outbreak has had a "devastating impact" on malaria treatment and the roll-out of malaria control programmes.

In Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, all severely hit by the Ebola epidemic, many inpatient clinics are closed and attendance at outpatient facilities is a fraction of rates seen before the outbreak, it said.

With a major malaria threat in these countries, which together saw some 6.6 million cases and 20,000 malaria deaths in 2013, the WHO called for temporary control measures, including giving malaria drugs to all patients with fever and carrying out mass treatment in areas hard hit by both Ebola and malaria.

"International donor financing is being stepped up to meet the further recommendation that bed nets be distributed to all [Ebola] affected areas," the report said.

Worldwide, malaria killed some 584,000 people in 2013, including some 453,000 children under five years old. Although funding to fight malaria has increased threefold since 2005, it is still only around half the \$5.1bn needed.

Images of disease, poverty tarnish perception of Africa

Mark Copland/thechronicle.com.au/9th Dec 2014

COPLAND: I'm with the singer Adele when it comes to Band Aid 30 and the dusted off song "Do They Know It's Christmas?"

The resurrection of the song is designed to raise funds to fight Ebola in West Africa.

Adele refused to be part of it for a very good reason.

It wasn't that she was against the urgent need for action on Ebola.

It wasn't that she didn't like the musicians who had gathered to remake this born-again smash hit.

It was the way the song portrayed Africa, and in particular West Africa.

This was probably summed up best when Sierra Leone footballer John Kamara lifted his shirt to reveal a powerful message, "We are West Africans, we are not a virus."

A social media campaign has started with a similar message, "We are Liberians, not Ebola".

I was shocked to learn recently that Toowoomba residents who originally came to Toowoomba from Liberia have recently endured ignorant and hurtful comments.

Too often, the images that are used to portray the entire continent of Africa are overwhelmingly negative - starving children, corrupt governments, disease, violence etc.

Of course, this is in the picture, but only part of the picture.

To quote Adele, "That image of poverty and famine is extremely powerful psychologically."

With decades of such imagery being pumped out, the average westerner is likely to donate \$2 a month or buy a charity single that gives them a nice warm fuzzy feeling, but they are much less likely to want to go on holiday to, or invest in, Africa.

If you are reading this and haven't been to Africa, ask yourself why.

One of the highlights of 2014 for me was a short amount of time spent on a holiday in Kenya.

I am sure that the memories I have of a week camping in the Massai Mara national park will stay with me forever.

The beauty and abundance of wildlife was breath taking.

The hospitality and kindness of our Massai hosts was both humbling and inspiring.

Africa's image problem was the topic of a campfire conversation on this trip, one evening.

Our host sighed, "When a terrorist attack occurs in London, tourists arrive on their planned trips the following week.

"When a terrorist attack occurs in one part of one country in Africa, tourists decide they will give the entire continent a miss forever."

This leaves Africa and the visitor all the poorer.

My few weeks in Kenya left me with an impression of a sophisticated, green, vibrant and multicultural society.

In defence of her decision not to join Bob Geldof and the Band Aid crew, Adele described a new movement, "This is New Africa", (TINA). Anybody who has experienced Africa in a positive way is a citizen of this New Africa. Of course we must do all we can to rid the globe of the Ebola virus.

There are a number of aid and development organisations working to bring this about. They need our help.

But the way we view those we are trying to help is as important as the help we give.

Until we see the immense richness and strength that is the continent of Africa, until we start to get to know the inspirational things happening across the continent, and until we truly see Africans as partners in their own destiny and not objects of our charity, our efforts to address inequality and poverty will remain a bandaid.

Funding for statistics in Africa said to be very low

December 8, 2014/ghanabusinessnews.com

A call has been made for increase in funding statistics in Africa. Overall funding for statistics in Africa is said to be low compared to total development funding.

Speaking at the opening of the First Joint Session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Statistical Commission for Africa Monday December 8, 2014, in Tunis, Tunisia, Johannes Jutting of The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) said the overall funding for statistics that comes to Africa is around \$400,000 to \$500,000.

The PARIS21 is an organization founded in November 1999 by the United Nations, the European Commission, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, in response to the UN Economic and Social Council resolution on the goals of the UN Conference on Development.

The conference organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and Statistiques Tunisie, the national statistics office of Tunisia is under the theme, "Strengthening the production of agricultural statistics in Africa for better monitoring and evaluation of CAADP."

The Joint Session is being attended by the Director Generals of National Statistics Office of African Countries, the Heads of departments of statistical units of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Schools and Institute of statistics, AFRISTAT and other Development Partners, to discuss

policy progress of statistics and statistical activities in Africa.

The main objectives of the meeting include:

- (i) to discuss the challenges related to the production of agricultural statistics in Africa;
- (ii) to review the implementation of the African Charter on Statistics and SHaSA as well as the operationalization of the African Union Institute for Statistics and the Pan-African Statistical Training Centre; and
- (iii) to contribute to the formulation of indicators of Post 2015 African Development Agenda.

The conference is also discussing the establishment of the Africa Statistical Institute to train statisticians on the continent. It was reported that Ivory Coast and Tunisia have offered to provide infrastructure for the beginning of the Institute and a call was made for support to start it in 2015.

The conference ends on December 12, 2014.

By Emmanuel K. Dogbevi, in Tunis, Tunisia.

UN/AFRICA :

UN asks more humanitarian aid, citing wars in Syria, Iraq, Africa

By John Zarocostas/McClatchy Foreign Staff/thestate.com/December 8, 2014

GENEVA — The United Nations on Monday called on its members to provide \$16.4 billion in 2015 for refugee assistance, 27 percent more than it requested in its initial appeal for 2014.

Much of the need for humanitarian aid next year is fueled by the civil war in Syria, where the U.N. estimates 12.2 million people, more than half the country's estimated population of 23 million, are in need of assistance.

But 11 other countries also need help, the U.N. said, including the Central African Republic, Iraq and South Sudan, which, when combined with Syria, will eat up 70 percent of the resources set aside to assist people forced from their homes by violence.

"We ask donors for more and more funding for our appeals" every year, said Valerie Amos, the U.N.'s undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief. "But as needs rise, the resources gap is widening."

Syria remains the most pressing problem, U.N. officials said, calling it "the world's largest protection crisis."

The U.N. appeal noted that the growth of Syrians in need of help has been exponential. In June 2012, the U.N. said, the number of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries numbered 78,000. By the end of that year, the number had reached 525,000. Now they number more than 3.25 million.

But Syria is not alone. Antonio Guterres, the U.N.'s high commissioner for refugees, said that the U.N. estimated in 2012 that 23,000 people were displaced by conflict every day. That number grew to 32,000 in 2013, and while not tabulated yet for 2014, it is expected to have grown again.

"Today's needs are at unprecedented levels, and without more support there is simply no way to respond to the humanitarian situations we're seeing in region after region and in conflict after conflict," Guterres said.

The U.N. estimates that it will need \$2.8 billion to help people displaced inside Syria this year, \$3.2 billion to assist Syrians in other countries, and \$1.26 billion to help countries that have taken Syrians in to meet the added expenses of hundreds of thousands of new residents.

For Iraq, the U.N. is seeking \$1.2 billion to assist 5.2 million people in dire straits, including 2.2 million in areas under the control of Islamic State.

The appeal also seeks \$612.9 million to assist 2 million people in the war-torn Central African Republic, and another \$298 million to assist 461,164 Central African Republic refugees who've fled to neighboring countries. The tab for helping 4.1 million people in South Sudan is \$1.8 billion, and \$783.9 million for refugees who fled to neighboring countries.

Then there's \$405.4 million to help 3.8 million people in Afghanistan and \$1 billion to help 4.4 million people in Sudan.

All told, the U.N. said it expects to seek funds for crises in 22 countries worldwide, including a separate appeal that will be made for crises in the Sahel region of Africa.

And the amount is likely to rise. In 2014, the U.N. started by asking for \$12.9 billion, then the largest initial request ever, but by the end will have sought \$17.9 billion to help over 76 million people in 31 countries.

Donors have so far come through with only 52 percent of that amount, Amos said.

US/AFRICA :

US 'absolutely unaware' of South Africa hostage negotiations

Tuesday 9 Dec 2014/3news.co.nz

Questions are mounting over a failed US rescue mission in Yemen that left one US hostage and another South African hostage dead.

The United States said it was "absolutely unaware" that a South African charity had negotiated 56-year-old teacher Pierre Korkie's release - or even that he was being held at the same compound as American photojournalist Luke Somers.

South Africa's official opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), has urged Pretoria to "engage with American representatives to get to the bottom of the circumstances that led to Mr Korkie's death".

"There was clearly a lack of intelligence," DA lawmaker Stevens Mokgalapa told AFP. "The left hand didn't know what the right was doing."

Korkie and 33-year-old Somers were shot by al-Qaeda militants on Saturday when the US commandos carrying out the rescue mission were discovered about 100m from the compound.

Korkie and his wife Yolande were abducted in May 2013 in Yemen's second city of Taiz by members of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

Yolande was released in January after protracted negotiations led by South African charity Gift of the Givers.

But Korkie remained captive for another 11 months and his kidnappers demanded a ransom of US\$3 million (NZ\$3.9 million).

His ordeal was due to end on Saturday, said Gift of the Givers, claiming they had finally secured Korkie's release at a reduced "settlement fee" of US\$200,000 after months of negotiating.

The US intervention came after Somers' captors released a video last week threatening to behead him.

"We had indications, very good indications, that they were going to murder Mr Somers perhaps as early as the next day," a senior US defence official said.

"It was either act now and take the risk, or let that deadline pass. And no one was willing to do that," the official added.

AFP

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

EU announces new support for Ebola combat in West Africa

by fwire/firstpost.com/Dec 9, 2014

Brussels, Dec 9 (IANS) The European Union (EU) has pledged 61 million euros (\$75 million) as fresh support to combat the deadly Ebola disease in West Africa, the European Commission announced Monday.

EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, announced the aid during his visit to Guinea from Friday to Sunday, Xinhua reported.

Of the total assistance of 61 million euros, 11 million euros will go to Guinea and 14 million euros to Liberia, which is expected to help cushion the economic effects of the Ebola outbreak.

Moreover, 20 million euros will be used to redirect a health project, launched in late 2013, in Guinea to address the Ebola crisis.

Also, 11 million euros will be allocated as an Ebola preparedness support fund in some African countries.

The rest of the assistance will be used to prevent violence and mitigate tensions that may arise from the outbreak in border areas of the affected countries.

"Our new pledge will help the countries affected by Ebola to deal better with the multiple challenges that (have) arisen from this crisis," said Mimica.

"We need to make sure that the countries can quickly recover from this crisis and get back on a path of sustainable development," he added.

The Ebola disease is a severe, often fatal illness in humans. It is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads in humans through direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), nearly 7,000 people have died of the disease, mainly in the West African countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia.

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CHINA/AFRICA :

China, S. Africa sign deals in infrastructure, financial cooperation
CCTV.com/12-08-2014

China and South Africa deepened their trade and economic ties over the weekend as the countries reached consensus on a variety of new agreements.

More than 600 delegates took part in the South Africa - China Business Forum, and witnessed the signing of agreements on infrastructure and industrial development and financial cooperation.

South African President Jacob Zuma attended the forum and encouraged more Chinese businesses to invest in his country. China is South Africa's largest trading partner while South Africa is China's only comprehensive strategic partner on the African continent.

Allen Grane: Combating the African Wildlife Trade in China
by Guest Blogger for Elizabeth C. Economy/blogs.cfr.org/December 8, 2014

Allen Grane is a research associate for Africa studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Recently, the Animal Planet aired a documentary entitled "Saving Africa's Giants with Yao Ming." The show, developed in conjunction with the environmental non-governmental organization WildAid, depicts Yao meeting with wildlife conservationists to discuss the future of African elephants and rhinoceroses. The documentary is part of an increased information campaign that includes other celebrities such as the Duke of Cambridge, David Beckham, and Jackie Chan.

This campaign is aimed at stopping the trade of animal products, particularly ivory from elephants and rhino horn. The hope is that Chinese celebrities such as Yao Ming and Jackie Chan will appeal to and educate a vast Chinese market. China is the world's largest market for ivory and, along with Vietnam, is one of the two largest markets for rhino horn. Ivory is typically used for ornamentation while rhino horn is believed to have medicinal qualities; the demand is so great that the current price for ivory is over \$2,100/kg, and rhino horn is over an astounding \$65,000/kg.

The trade of ivory and rhino horn may well determine the future of Africa's elephants and rhino populations. At the present rate of poaching, the populations of both species are unsustainable. The current African elephant population is estimated between 470,000 and 690,000; poachers have killed over 100,000 elephants in the last three years. The population of rhinos in Africa is estimated to be less than 25,000; thus far in 2014, over 1,000 rhinos have been poached in South Africa alone. Many conservationists believe that if nothing is done about this poaching epidemic, the two species may go extinct within the next twenty years.

A recent report from the Environmental Investigation Agency described the extent to which Chinese nationals, and in some cases, Chinese officials are connected to the ivory trade in Tanzania. The report cites interviews with poachers who claim to have sold ivory to officials in the Chinese Embassy. It also links a surge in the Tanzanian ivory market during an official visit from a Chinese naval task force and even claims that members of President Xi Jinping's entourage smuggled ivory out of Tanzania on the presidential plane during his visit in March 2013. Born Free USA, a U.S.-based conservation organization, states, "Chinese illicit ivory traffickers in particular have been arrested across nearly every single African range state, and operate at nearly every point along the ivory supply chain."

Moreover, China's legal market in ivory and rhino horn often ends up providing cover for a larger illegal market. In 2008, under the auspices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe sold 101.8 tons of stockpiled legal ivory to China and Japan. In this sale China received sixty-two tons of ivory. Since then the Chinese government has annually rationed five tons of ivory for the legal market in China. But demand for ivory is much higher than the annual allotment can meet, giving rise to China's sizeable illegal market.

Still, the Chinese government is beginning to change its stance on conservation. In January 2014, the government destroyed six tons of confiscated ivory. In August, the Chinese embassy in Kenya donated \$20,000 to wildlife conservancies. Some of this change may be due to public education by Chinese stars such as Yao Ming and Jackie Chan. In addition, Beijing may be concerned about the role of poaching and the trade of ivory and rhino horn in supporting regional conflicts in Africa. A New Scientist report claims a direct link between the illicit wildlife trade and militant groups throughout Africa, and China has extensive investments in areas that these groups operate in. For example, China is investing over \$6.5 billion into mineral infrastructure in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where ivory helps fund numerous rebel factions. The Enough Project reports that Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), has ordered his men to poach elephants for their ivory in order to fund his rebellion. Along with the LRA, the ivory trade supports militias in both Sudan and South Sudan, two countries where China has heavily invested in oil production and has a vested interest in stability.

Although these initial steps by Beijing are important, since the 2008 ivory sale, the illegal killing of elephants has increased dramatically. The Chinese government can do more. In Africa, the Chinese government could contribute greater funding and provide equipment such as reconnaissance aircraft to help support wildlife services. An example of such a program would be the African Elephant

Conservation Fund established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. At home, despite increased awareness and public campaigns aimed at ending the wildlife trade, wealthier Chinese clientele continue to purchase ivory and rhino horn at record prices. As the United States has found, any legitimate market for wildlife products provides an opportunity for criminals to exploit that market and the animals. Because of this, Washington has instituted legal restrictions such as recent bans on the commercial elephant ivory trade. While it is doubtful that the Chinese government could entirely ban the ivory trade, it could establish stricter laws limiting the size and scale of ivory products and industry. But in order for Yao Ming and Jackie Chan's campaign to succeed, both the government and the people must address the elephant in the room.

INDIA/AFRICA :

BRAZIL/AFRICA :

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