



(Le Caire - Onze personnes ont été tuées et 30 blessées dimanche en Egypte, au moment où le pays marque le quatrième anniversaire de la révolte de 2011 qui chassa Hosni Moubarak du pouvoir, selon un média d'Etat.)

BURUNDI :

RWANDA :

Michigan State, Rwanda collaborate on helping women in agribusiness

By Associated Press/January 25, 2015

EAST LANSING — Michigan State University and the University of Rwanda are teaming up to start a degree program aimed at helping women in the East African nation get a stronger foothold in agribusiness.

The first students begin classes in February in the capital of Kigali under the master of science program, jointly developed with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

"Agriculture is vital to the people and economy of Rwanda, and many of those involved in agriculture are women," said James McWha, vice chancellor at the University of Rwanda. "Their input to the business of agriculture is essential."

McWha said agriculture must adopt a modern business strategy and that everyone involved must learn relevant skills. He said the university program "brings together all the components necessary for a major development of the future of the agriculture and food industries in Rwanda."

Rwanda is the most densely populated country in mainland Africa, about the size of Maryland but with a population of 12 million. Last year, it marked the 20th anniversary of a 100-day genocide in which about 1 million people, mainly members of the Tutsi minority, were killed by majority Hutus.

Officials say they hope the degree program will make a significant contribution to the development of Rwanda's rich agricultural potential. Rwanda's gross domestic product totaled about \$16.4 trillion, or about \$1,600 per capita, in 2013, according to the International Monetary Fund.

According to U.S. government estimates, about 42 percent of Rwanda's economic output comes from agriculture, which employs about 90 percent of its working population. Coffee and tea are the main export crops.

"We really believe this program will give women rich opportunities to share their expertise and play major roles in the country's economic development," Joseph Lessard, economic development director for the U.S. Agency for International Development in Rwanda, said in a statement.

MSU spokeswoman Abby Rubley said the graduate program "prioritizes accessibility to women and midcareer professionals." She said it will incorporate extensive experiential learning opportunities, including required internships, to better prepare students for "leadership and entrepreneurial roles in agriculture in Rwanda."

RDC CONGO :

RDC : l'Assemblée supprime le projet de loi électorale à l'origine des manifestations meurtrières
Le Monde.fr avec AFP/ Le 24.01.2015

L'essentiel

Des manifestants s'opposent depuis cinq jours à une nouvelle loi qui pourrait permettre à Joseph Kabila, président de la RDC depuis quatorze ans, de se maintenir au pouvoir.

Le Sénat, qui devait se pencher ce jeudi sur cette loi, a reporté sa séance plénière à vendredi.

Le bilan des manifestations est lourd : 13 morts selon le gouvernement, et une quarantaine selon la FIDH.

Le président de l'Assemblée nationale en République démocratique du Congo (RDC) a annoncé, samedi 24 janvier dans la soirée, le retrait de l'alinéa controversé du projet de loi électorale, qui a provoqué des manifestations meurtrières cette semaine à Kinshasa.

« Le point de vue que l'Assemblée nationale défend devant la commission [paritaire réunissant des députés et sénateurs] est celui du retrait de l'alinéa » contesté, a déclaré Aubin Minaku. Comme la voix des députés prime, cet alinéa sera purement et simplement rayé de la loi électorale, a-t-il expliqué.

« LE CHANGEMENT DE LA MOINDRE VIRGULE POUVAIT SUSCITER DE MAUVAISES

INTERPRÉTATIONS »

Le 17 janvier, les députés ont voté un projet gouvernemental de révision de la loi électorale dont l'alinéa controversé liait la tenue de la présidentielle à un recensement de la population. Or, un tel recensement pourrait prendre trois ans, ce qui permettrait au président Joseph Kabila de rester au pouvoir au-delà de 2016, alors que la Constitution lui interdit de briguer un nouveau mandat l'an prochain.

L'Assemblée a « évité trop de débats inutiles car le changement de la moindre virgule pouvait susciter de mauvaises interprétations », a ajouté M. Minaku, soulignant qu'il n'y aurait « rien à la place » de l'alinéa retiré.

Vendredi, le Sénat a amendé le texte en imposant le respect du calendrier électoral. Face aux divergences, les deux chambres se sont réunies en commission paritaire pour tenter de trouver un consensus.

UN BILAN LOURD

Selon plusieurs sources, les deux parties peinaient à s'entendre samedi, alors que le vote du texte devait intervenir au plus tard lundi. Selon M. Minaku, il n'a « pas été question de violer la Constitution », « des interprétations ont été faites et vendues à la population » qui, à l'appel de l'opposition, a manifesté violemment de lundi à mercredi, principalement à Kinshasa.

Le bilan des manifestations, qui avaient rapidement viré à l'émeute et au pillage, est lourd : 13 morts selon le gouvernement, et une quarantaine selon la Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme (FIDH) et Human Rights Watch (HRW), qui évoque au moins 21 personnes abattues par les forces de l'ordre.

UGANDA :

Uganda: Ongwen's Dose of Justice

By Stephen Tumwesigye/The Independent (Kampala)/25 January 2015

It is in the best interests of the ICC, affected communities, and Ugandans to have the trial in Uganda

Since the surrender of Maj Gen. Dominic Ongwen in the Central African Republic, many issues have arisen regarding his trial and the pursuit for justice. Commentators of both sides of the divide have outlined compelling arguments as to why the former rebel commander should be tried by either Ugandan courts or the International Criminal Court (ICC).

I am on neither side of the divide and my preposition is a middle ground that would promote the interests of all the parties involved in this justice conundrum.

Although the Rome Statute of the ICC has innovatively introduced the principle of complementarity within the international justice spectrum, one can comfortably say that in referring the situation to the ICC, Uganda demonstrated that as a country we were unable to find and bring the Lord's Resistance Army Commanders to justice. As a result, at this stage when the ICC has issued an arrest warrant and seized itself of the situation, Uganda may not be able to reactivate the principle unless the country convinces the court that we are now able to effectively try such crimes. Many such requests even in the existence of legislation and infrastructure may not succeed before a court that

wants to prove its prosecution power.

Nonetheless, it is possible for the ICC to move the trial from its seat in The Hague where Ongwen has been transferred to a location in Uganda under what is commonly referred to as in situ trials. The Rome Statute notes that trials shall be at the seat of the court unless otherwise decided. The court has considered the issue of taking the court out of The Hague in the Kenyan situation and although the judges were not able to warrant it because of political and other considerations peculiar to the Kenyan situation, it was an important acknowledgement of the possibility.

International law experts argue that although international criminal law may include trials outside the situation country, justice remains most effectively pursued and achieved locally where witnesses, survivors and evidence actually are. Beyond this, there are many advantages that come with a trial in a situation country.

The ICC has been under immense pressure and opposition from the African continent and some of the arguments have legitimately pointed to the fact that the court just focuses on transplanting leaders from the situation countries to Europe for trial. An in situ trial would in effect project the court as a victim-centered and sensitive institution and not an instrument of neo-colonialism as many have pointed out. In doing so, the court would still take charge of the proceedings to ensure impartiality and credibility.

It has also been stated that the ICC is withdrawn from the affected communities, survivors and situation countries. In Uganda the ICC field office was closed because the situation in Uganda was 'inactive' and in the wisdom of the court, there was no need for further outreach. This created a lot of anxiety and unmet expectations among affected communities. A trial held in Uganda would allow affected communities to follow the proceedings, understand the importance of justice and promote accountability and healing.

More importantly though, an ICC trial in Uganda would reignite the debate on the broader question of transitional justice. Whereas, the ICC is modelled on the western style of justice bent on retribution and punishment, there are broader questions that cannot be answered by a court process. One of them is the peculiar circumstance of the blurred distinction between victim and perpetrator. The issue of what happens to a child who is abducted at a young age, is indoctrinated, goes through the stages and becomes a rebel commander may not be explored by the limitations of criminal law. This question can be answered better in a forum that embraces broader truth telling and reconciliation mechanisms which Uganda needs to explore. Although there have been proposals to have a transitional justice policy under the auspices of the Justice Law and Order Sector, the policy has been in limbo for years. This trial may reignite it for the better.

Also of importance is the question of amnesty before the national courts. Although, the ICC disregards any reference to any sort of exemptions and immunities to prosecution, the Ugandan courts still recognise Amnesty as a bar to prosecution. In fact many former LRA commanders, some of whom may have been senior in command to Ongwen have received amnesty under the extended Amnesty Act. All these issues cannot be explored in a one off trial like the one at the International Criminal Court.

The most controversial issue that many commentators leave out is the fact that the conflict in greater Northern Uganda involved two warring factions, the LRA and the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) formerly the National Resistance Army (NRA). Although the ICC considered the situation, it is in doubt as to whether the court actually investigated crimes allegedly committed by the UPDF/NRA. Civil society groups have collected witness accounts of individuals who indicate that they were brutalised by the UPDF. A broader truth telling commission would bring to the fore

these issues and remove the mutual suspicion that exists between the national army and the affected communities.

The question of the causes of the war in Northern Uganda has been explored from many angles but the most prominent has been the fact that the war could have been as a result of the failure of governance in the post-colonial state- that is Uganda. Issues regarding actual and perceived marginalization, regional imbalance and failure of state control have never been explored since the end of the war. This trial in Uganda and the subsequent coverage can lead to an honest conversation on how to fix this governance question lest it resurges into another war.

All the above can only be explored if the trial is held in Uganda. A trial in The Hague risks losing all these issues to the biased narrative of western media that is normally bent on sensationalism, victors' justice, and simplistic reporting without touching the deeper questions.

Skeptics of in situ trials will argue that there might be issues regarding political interference, dangers with witness protection etc. All these can be nipped in the bud through an effective prosecution strategy. Besides, even trials at The Hague are still prone these same issues so it should not be an excuse.

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Uganda: Jittery Exchange Rate Market

By Julius Businge/The Independent (Kampala)/25 January 2015

BoU on a slippery path in attempts to tame further slide of Shilling against bullish US dollar

Uganda's currency market is in turmoil once again, and the business community is feeling the jitters. Since June last year, the value of the US dollar has jumped 16% against a collection of world currencies. Reports indicate that investors are embracing the dollar because the US economy is strong compared to other nations. Usually, fast-growing economies have rising currencies due to capital inflows.

Mid-this month, the exchange rate hit Shs 2,900/2,910 to the dollar, a level it last neared at the end of 2011, when it traded at Shs 2,910/2,920. At the time, inflationary pressures hit a 30% - the highest since 1993.

In the last few weeks, the shilling has lost 4.1% of its value and prompting the Central bank to intervene twice to pour dollars into the market as of Jan.15. Comparatively, the unit lost about 10% of its value in the whole of 2014.

Apparently, even Bank of Uganda (BoU) appears to be powerless to deal with the slide. In an email on Jan. 14, Christine Alupo, the BoU director for communications, told The Independent that the depreciation of the Uganda shilling is partly explained by the global strengthening of the US Dollar coupled with the strong local demand for foreign currency from the manufacturing, energy and telecommunications sectors.

"Negative sentiments about the prospects for the exchange rate, which are not fully justified by economic fundamentals, have also contributed to the depreciation," Alupo said. She added that BoU views the recent fall in the value of the shilling as "excessive" and that BoU had intervened in the market on Jan. 07 to restore stability by selling dollars.

More intervention is what the business community wants from time to time to prevent a deadly spike in the cost of doing business and further erosion of profits. "The depreciation of the shilling has already destabilized our business," says Everest Kayondo, the chairman of Uganda's largest trading body - Kampala City Traders Association (KACITA). "Our profits are being swallowed up by the depreciation of the shilling and some of our members have suspended imports waiting for the shilling to stabilise," he added.

Kayondo said it would not make sense to increase the price of goods and services affected by the dollar's appreciation largely because Uganda's consuming community is not flexible. "When you increase the price, they will not buy," he said. "It is tricky," he added, before appealing to BoU Governor Emmanuel Tumusiime-Mutebile for more intervention. "Our brother Mutebile should not print more money for elections because this will worsen the situation," Kayondo said.

The Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), which sets exchange rates for tax purposes every month, has also responded to the dollars trend. In the last four months of this year, the revenue body has adjusted the rates to match with the depreciating trend of the shilling. The shilling Vs US dollar rate for imports has increased to 2, 772 in Jan. 2015 from 2, 632.40 in September; 2, 635.58 in October; and 2, 673.26 in November. Practically, this added cost is what Kayondo says must be passed on to the consumers if they were flexible. "Sometimes you have to lose profits and keep your customers instead of sending them away," Kayondo said.

The impact of the depreciating shilling however, has not yet been reflected in the national inflation figures. Uganda's headline inflation fell to 1.8% in the year ending December, 2014 from 2.1% in the year ending November 2014, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), said on Dec. 31. The reduction was as a result of reduced food prices in the markets surveyed by the statistics body. However, core inflation - which excludes food, electricity and metered water, and the target for BoU - rose to 2.7% from 2.3%. BoU has pointed out that core inflation will remain in the range of 5% in the medium term. Will this happen at this time when the shilling is continuing to lose value against the U.S dollar?

In his analysis, Stephen Kaboyo, the managing director at Alpha Capital Partners, a financial services and consulting firm, said a weak shilling under the current circumstances is likely to affect import prices, which also means higher production costs and the result will be inflationary pressures. "Overall this is undesirable for the economy," Kaboyo, who is former director for currency stability at BoU, said in an interview.

He said the shilling has taken a significant beating in the last couple of months largely on account of a weak balance of payment position. The country is running a larger current account deficit, with the import bill rising significantly in the second half of 2014. "A current account deficit is technically a key factor in determining the value of the shilling," Kaboyo said, adding that this is coupled with the global dollar strengthening against all major and emerging market currencies as a result of the US economic recovery. These two primary factors have driven the shilling to trade at near record lows, Kaboyo said.

Uganda's current account deficit has reached \$1.8b (Shs 5.2 trillion) or 6.6% of the country's total economic production, which is slightly over a quarter of the country's budget for FY2014/15. Experts say this level is worrying. According to reports from the Finance ministry, Uganda's imports of \$7.8b during the current financial year have outstripped exports by \$2.5b (Shs 7.3 trillion) contributing to a scarcity of hard currency and exerting pressure on the exchange rate.

Although BoU has tried to intervene to save the shilling, Kaboyo said the unit has so far defied a

liquidity mop up and intervention by the Central bank to continue on a declining trend.

The general sentiment has been negative - catalyzed by panic buying, anxiety and BoU's action of disbursing dollars at the time the shilling is undergoing depreciation pressures. The problem with panic buying though is that while a few may make some money, it also culminates into panic selling, and the majority make losses in the process. BoU knows the time for panic selling will also come and until the market re-adjusts to an equilibrium exchange rate.

The market however appears to have interpreted the crisis to mean that BoU may not be keen to aggressively manage market volatility because of the need to safeguard reserves and the objective of reserve building in order to meet government capital spending requirements for the various infrastructural projects. Whereas Kaboyo argued that a depreciating shilling theoretically may not be a bad thing because of the pricing advantage for exporters, this time round low export revenues may offset this advantage.

A global trend:

Uganda will take a little comfort from the fact that other countries are also having their own share of the exchange headache as almost all the major currencies are swimming against the tide thanks to the strengthening of the US economy. Among the factors giving the dollar the edge is the fact that the US is increasingly gaining from its oil resource, which has a major impact in reducing the US trade deficit. US oil imports have declined from 60% ten years ago to 35% in 2013. This year, imports will drop further to 21% thanks to the rising domestic oil production. This means that it is easy to speculate that it is better for an investor to withdraw from other currencies and invest in US dollars in line with a perception that one would be making more money. It is a spiral.

Indeed, the dollar is up 16% against the Japanese yen since mid-2014, 18% against the Euro since June 30 and nearly 20% against the Brazilian Real since June. That is nothing compared to the Russian ruble, which has lost 96% against the dollar, and the Russian economy is effectively sliding towards a recession.

This current crisis has raised questions in Uganda and beyond as to whether Central banks have the balls leave alone the capacity to handle a bullish US dollar to prevent the looming high cost of doing business and inflationary pressures, which could undermine the health of their economies. From the look of things, even with the best efforts, it's a tall order even for our own Central bank, despite being the best in the region.

Going forward, Kaboyo said he does not see any reprieve from the fundamentals, as we are beginning to see a level of Shs 2,950 as a fair value for the currency because of the bearish shilling dynamics in the market.

The only solution, experts say is in sending out more exports as it will still be difficult to stabilise the weak shilling if the country is not supplying enough exports on the market to bring in dollars. Given this state of affairs, other factors constant, government should invest in building the export sector through boosting production and value addition to be able to increase tax revenue and creating more jobs.

Project to End Human Trafficking volunteers help Uganda

By Chris Togneri/triblive.com/Sunday, Jan. 25, 2015

Their eyes spoke to Maranie Staab more than their words.

“Their situation is hard, but they are so strong, so resilient,” Staab, 27, of Regent Square said of her recent trip to Uganda with the Pittsburgh-based Project to End Human Trafficking in Oakland. “They are some of the strongest, most beautiful people I have ever met.”

Staab and other volunteers with the nonprofit organization traveled to Uganda in December to raise awareness about human trafficking and help communities better respond to the ongoing crisis.

“We tell people that they have rights,” said Mary Burke, a professor of psychology at Carlow University in Oakland and the project's founder and director. “This is a huge issue, and it is still happening today.”

Project volunteers work with some of the thousands of children who were abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army, which kidnaps boys and turns them into soldiers and turns abducted girls into sex slaves, Burke and Staab said.

Staab, an aspiring photojournalist who works as a global sales and client manager for Xerox Services, documented the trip for the project.

Her images are often closely cropped portraits, she said, because “their faces are so striking. Their eyes tell their stories.”

In one village, she approached a woman named Hanifa, whose husband poured acid on her, leaving Hanifa scarred and disfigured. The attack left her unable to breathe through her nostrils because they melted together, Staab said.

“I told her that I would love to photograph her. I told her she is beautiful,” Staab said. “She wants people to know her story. She wants to change history. She took the most violent thing and turned it into a beautiful thing.”

In the village of Opucet, the project installed a well. Villagers gathered to watch the work, Staab said, then wept when water began to flow, providing them with their first clean source of water.

The well cost \$7,000; the Penn Hills Rotary donated the money, Burke said.

Staab recalled a small girl she and Burke encountered on a hike. The girl was sitting on a dusty mat. As Staab approached, she tried to hide in an oversized jacket. Only her leg, broken and encased in a cast, was visible. A makeshift crutch made of a stick with a plastic water bottle on top sat within arm's reach.

The girl's mother explained that a crutch would cost \$7 — a fortune in Uganda's poorest villages. Burke gave them the money.

“It gives you a renewed appreciation for everything, and I mean everything,” Staab said.

Volunteers will return in June to continue work on a school house in the village. The foundation is laid, but they need more donations to complete the structure.

Staab's photos will be displayed in September at Square Café in Regent Square. She hopes her work inspires others to get involved.

“If used correctly, photography can change the world,” she said.

SOUTH AFRICA :

Anti-immigrant riots rock South Africa

CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA, Associated Press/January 26, 2015

Johannesburg — South African authorities have re-established order — for now — in Soweto and other Johannesburg townships, after a week of looting of foreign-owned shops and violence in which four people were killed.

The 19-year-old mother of an infant who died after being trampled by a mob during the looting said she was accidentally caught in the street chaos. Some witnesses, however, said the mother was herself pillaging when she was knocked down with her baby strapped to her chest.

The dispute about the baby boy, Nqobile Majozi, echoes conflicting stories about what motivated some of the worst unrest in Soweto and nearby areas since protests swept the same districts before white racist rule ended in 1994. The casualty toll was higher during mass rallies and bloody, apartheid-era crackdowns, but the new upheaval raises concerns about anti-immigrant sentiment, the frustration of the poor and the government's handling of social tensions.

In a separate incident, a truck carrying livestock overturned on a highway in the Johannesburg area last week, and people carrying knives and buckets descended on the injured cattle and slaughtered nearly three-dozen for their meat, according to Eyewitness News, a South African media outlet. The driver alleged that people on a bridge threw objects at his vehicle, causing it to crash.

Such episodes reflect the predicament of South Africa, a regional hub with gleaming infrastructure projects where many people nevertheless feel marginalized by high unemployment, a lack of opportunity and a gap between rich and poor that is starkly visible in leafy, spacious suburbs, on the one hand, and the shacks and so-called “matchbox” homes of the townships where blacks were confined under apartheid.

Soweto came under the world's gaze in 1976 when it erupted in student-led protests. Parts of it are relatively affluent today, as malls, gyms and new homes attest. But poverty is still widespread. The violence there started Jan. 19 in an area called Snake Park when a Somali national allegedly shot and killed a 14-year-boy who was among a group of people attempting to break into his shop.

Crowds hit the streets, targeting immigrant-owned shops in riots recalling anti-foreigner violence in 2008 that killed about 60 people. President Jacob Zuma, who was attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, instructed his government to restore order. Police arrested more than 160 people. Several people had been fatally shot by this past weekend, when the unrest abated.

The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa urged the government to approve hate crimes legislation that it said would curb a culture of “impunity.”

TANZANIA :

Tanzanian 'adulterer' beheaded, body parts cooked

Jan 26, 2015/therakyatpost.com

The attack took place on Friday night in the southern Katavi region of the east African nation, local police chief Dhahiri Kidavashari said, naming the dead man as 31-year old Richard Madirisha.

DAR ES SALAAM, Jan 26, 2015:

A local leader in Tanzania was attacked and beheaded by a gang of men, who then cooked some of his body parts, allegedly following accusations of adultery, police said on Sunday.

The attack took place on Friday night in the southern Katavi region of the east African nation, local police chief Dhahiri Kidavashari said, naming the dead man as 31-year old Richard Madirisha.

"Five people stormed Madirisha's room wielding machetes, beheaded him, chopped off legs, hands and genitals," Kidavashari told AFP by telephone on Sunday, adding there were reports implicating Madirisha with acts of adultery.

"The assailants later cooked the chopped off body parts outside the house," he added.

Three men are being questioned by police, Kidavashari said.

Kenya - Tanzania tourism "war" - officials agreed to meet in February

eturbonews.com/26012015

Following recent "countermeasures" taken in December last year when Kenyan authorities stopped Tanzanian-registered tour vehicles from entering the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA), a meeting between the two countries' tourism ministers was convened last week to attempt to resolve the long-simmering row over access.

The meeting initially ended in an impasse, agreeing only to meet in the coming weeks which was giving each side the opportunity to prepare a wider agenda before Kenya, as a gesture of goodwill, easing access to JKIA through which an estimated 40 percent of tourists visiting Tanzania arrive in East Africa and then also depart.

Information emerged from Nairobi on Saturday that the two countries will meet on February 5 with the venue still to be confirmed. Both sides are said to be working feverishly on a comprehensive wish list but also an agenda of grievances, which suggests that the February 5 meeting will only be a first of many as several agenda items are controversial at best and insurmountable at worst.

Following the re-opening of the common border in late 1984 – Tanzania had unilaterally closed the border to keep Kenyans out of the country after the collapse of the first East African Community (EAC) – several modalities were agreed upon for tourism businesses to operate cross border safaris. Initially, tour companies were to exchange safari clients at the border of Namanga or Taveta, although this was later relaxed, permitting Kenyan registered cars to actually drive on to the Tanzanian towns of Moshi and Arusha and drop off their clients at the respective hotels. From there, however, Tanzanian safari companies took over the transport. In the other direction, Tanzanian safari operators, and notably shuttle busses from Arusha to Nairobi, were able to drop off their clients for the Kenya portion of a safari, at such towns like Voi or Nairobi, unless they opted for the exchange at the border.

Access to national parks by Kenyan-registered safari vehicles remained contentious, though privately-registered cars from Kenya were usually permitted into the parks as long as it was for a private safari and not a commercially-sold trip. Private vehicles were also able to cross, with prior permission, from the Serengeti into the Masai Mara while commercial traffic over this previously thriving border post was banned under the 1985 agreement between the two countries.

The demand to open the Bologonja border once again for all traffic is thought to be high on the agenda of the Kenyan delegation to reduce driving time and make East Africa safaris more user-friendly. Several regular sources in Nairobi even suggested to voluntarily refrain from day excursions and accept that vehicles entering at Bologonja must exit at a different border point such as Namanga after completing visits to the Serengeti, Ngorongoro, Lake Manyara, and Tarangire.

While many Tanzanian officials mistakenly believe that this change in border traffic is a purely Kenyan demand, international tour operators have in fact pushed for this change as they anticipate cost benefits besides making safari itineraries more convenient for their clientele who are presently subjected to plenty of back and forth should they opt for a safari covering both countries.

"I hope that Bologonja will appear high on our agenda," said a regular Nairobi-based source before adding, "None of the arguments advanced hold water why this border post should remain closed for commercial traffic. Even now, the same traffic runs up to Lobo but after a huge detour via Namanga and then has to go back the same way - a colossal waste of time for tourists. Environmental concerns? My a****! We burn a lot more fuel operating safaris via Namanga than would be the case if Bologonja were open. If no progress is made though, we still have the option to stop access to JKIA again. It is sad that this affects safari tourists, but if this entire East African Community thing has any meaning, these issues must be resolved. Look how far the Northern Corridor cooperation has gone in a year, simply because everyone involved has seen the benefits to work hand in hand. We no longer have to pay for work permits when operating into Uganda or Rwanda. We have a common tourist visa for all three countries, and after a slow start it has begun to sell. We have had our phone tariffs aligned and even air transport has eased among the three. Why not expand these gains to the other two EAC members as well?"

Tanzanian operators, however, are adamant that they would be swept away by what one Arusha-based source called "The Kenyan avalanche" if the country were to permit unfettered access of vehicles and personnel to the Tanzanian parks. For the same reason, Kenyans are, and in fact Ugandan safari airlines as well, kept out of the park airfields and equally have to drop off their passengers at one of the approved entry point airports where Tanzanian airlines are then supposed to fly the final leg into the parks.

To make matters worse, Tanzania last weekend banned the distribution of East Africa's premier regional weekly newspaper, the EastAfrican which has been on the market for the past two decades. Allegations of having failed to register the paper which is published in Nairobi were instantly rejected by the Nation Media Group which candidly alleged ulterior motives and ill intent by the Tanzanian authorities. The paper had run several spicy stories about corruption and other ills in the Tanzanian government and ahead of the upcoming elections later this year, it has long been suspected that the government in Dar es Salaam will use less carrot and more stick methods to brow-beat independent media houses into toeing their line or else face retaliation.

Added a Kigali-based source, wading into the thick of the present political debate and current affairs: "We remember how they expelled thousands upon thousands from Tanzania into Rwanda. Those poor people, many actually Tanzanian citizens, lost much of their property. They were driven like livestock out of their homes and across the border with little warning. Senior officials in Tanzania grabbed from them, leaving them homeless and in poverty. We remember well how the

Tanzanians hosted several times delegations from the FDLR [Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda] which are mortal enemies of our state based in Eastern Congo. Those killer militias continue to wreak havoc and have ignored a UN directive to disarm in early January. Tanzania went like rabid dogs after the M23 militia, because those guys were rumored to be a Rwandan and Ugandan proxy militia. But now, when it comes to doing the same with their South African buddies to the FDLR, they are nowhere to be seen. They played host to the FDLR leaders, what agenda do they have. Of course, when the media exposed such schemes they lashed out at them. We hope that the elections will bring some fundamental change of direction because otherwise we cannot think of them as partners in the EAC but of a fifth column aiding and abetting our enemies."

What started out as a tit-for-tat spat between Tanzania and Kenya may well spiral further and strengthen the resolve of the Northern Corridor cooperation countries to move even closer together. Stark choices await no doubt, and the upcoming elections, as mentioned previously, will very likely create a scenario that cooler and more collected minds will be swept away in the maelstrom of electioneering and populist utterances, none of which will actually help to resolve the fundamental differences of opinion which led to the ban on Tanzanian vehicles accessing JKIA in Nairobi.

KENYA :

Kenya: State House Disown Alfred Keter, DPP Orders Probe As MP Claims Officials At Weighbridge Wanted a Bribe

By George Murage/The Star (Nairobi)/25 January 2015

State House has supported a directive by Keriako Tobiko that MP Alfred Keter be investigated after he was secretly filmed insulting public servants and invoking the President's name.

Presidential spokesman Manohar Esipisu said: "In appearing to intimidate the public officers, Mr Keter makes a number of claims about other public and State officers at State House, Nairobi. These claims are untrue and amount to nothing more than name-dropping."

Nandi Hills MP Keter stormed the Gilgil Weighbridge in the company of URP Nominated MP Sunjeev Birdi to demand the release of a truck detained for lack of a permit.

The duo allegedly demanded that officers from the Police Service and Kenya National Highway Authority (KeNHA) release the truck.

The truck is owned by Birdi and was impounded because it had no permit to carry wide load on Kenyan roads.

Nakuru County Commander John Koki confirmed the incident but said it was a KeNHA not a police matter.

According to the SGS deputy officer in charge of the weighbridge, Edward Fondo, heavy equipment requires an exception permit from KeNHA.

Fondo said that after the truck, which was ferrying heavy equipment, including a crane, was inspected, it emerged that the driver had no permit.

The driver called the MP, who had just attended the Jubilee Alliance retreat in Naivasha, and he

arrived at the station breathing fire.

Director of Public Prosecutions Tobiko has asked the police to summon the two MPs and ordered that the police present an investigation file on the issue within a week for action.

The DPP made his directives after video footage emerged on social media in which Keter was captured insulting the police, KeNHA officials and private contractors who man the weighbridge, for detaining the lorry.

The two MPs claimed that President Uhuru Kenyatta, Comptroller of State Houses Lawrence Lenayapa, Rift Valley Regional County Commissioner Osman Warfa and chairman of Parliament's Administration and National Security Committee Asman Kamama and others wanted the truck released.

"When State House Comptroller calls that is the President communicating. Ten MPs have called and you can't answer the call. Who are you waiting to hear from? God?

"Let me tell you, we are the government. We are the ones who legislate for this country. And we can break the law when we want."

A voice is heard telling the two MPs that their role is to enforce the law and that is why the government has deployed them to man the weighbridge.

To which Keter retorts: "Okay, we shall then reverse the law".

And then he threatens to go back to Nairobi to ensure the officers are sacked.

"I am going to meet the President himself to make sure you people leave here."

National Assembly Majority Leader Aden Duale disowned the two MPs yesterday and supported the DPP's order for investigations.

"The Government does not condone corruption, coercion or intimidation in the name of State House or President Uhuru Kenyatta. The relevant institutions should take action on any misconduct involving any of our members," Duale said.

Keter recorded a statement on Sunday at the CID headquarters. He told Press that the officials had asked for a Sh20,000 bribe to release the truck. The driver also claimed they were asked for a bribe by the officials.

ANGOLA :

Africa's Second Biggest Oil Producer Has Resorted To Painful Austerity Measures
Estelle Maussion, AFP/Jan. 25, 2015

Luanda (AFP) - With oil prices collapsing over 50 percent in the past six months, Angola -- Africa's second-largest oil producer -- has had to introduce austerity measures and overhaul its budget to deal with a severe drop in expected revenue.

"We will go through a difficult time now because the government cannot afford to implement the budget they had adopted for the year," said Jose de Oliveira, an independent consultant in the oil sector.

Angola draws about 70 percent of its income from its oil resources. A price collapse like this, with supply outstripping demand, means a big revenue hit for the government.

The country's budget was adopted late last year and, for the first time since the end of its civil war in 2002, the government planned to spend more on public services than on defence and security.

But that was based on the assumption that a barrel of oil would sell for \$81. Today, that figure has plunged to less than \$50.

"Some public spending will be cut, including fuel subsidies, projects will be postponed, and the government's fiscal discipline will be strengthened," warned President Jose Eduardo dos Santos late last year.

About 54 percent of Angolans live on less than two dollars a day, according to official statistics released in October.

Dos Santos ran his 2012 presidential campaign on a promise to improve living standards -- promises which may now be thwarted.

- Risk of bigger problems -

"There is a risk of even bigger problems, like being unable to pay the salaries of civil servants, or a drop in the quality and quantity of basic social services, which will affect the poorest the most," said Elias Isaac, director of the Open Society Foundation in Angola.

And with the next general election just two years away, Dos Santos now also runs the risk of social unrest.

"Youth protest movements, which are viewed more and more favourably, are going to increase," said journalism professor and political analyst Celso Malavoloneke.

Demonstrations have been held with increasing frequency in Angola since 2011 and are quickly repressed by the police.

The young people behind these gatherings are demanding the resignation of Dos Santos -- already in power for 35 years -- while denouncing poverty, inequality, a lack of access to water and electricity, and failures in the health and education systems.

Following a brutal civil war which ended in 2002, Angola has seen a decade of strong economic development boosted by its oil reserves -- a wealth that has seen them courted by China, the United States and Europe.

But the 2008 global economic meltdown was a painful hit. Then too the oil price plunged, leading to a stagnant economy, a widening deficit, a rise in unemployment, inflation and a devaluation of the national currency.

"It's very possible that Angolans will again be subjected to a bit of everything now," wrote Carlos Rosado, of weekly newspaper Expansao, in an editorial earlier this month. "The question, is how

much."

In a sense, Angola is better prepared to deal with a shock to the economy than it was in 2008. The country has implemented tax reform, built up its financial reserves and made efforts to expand non-oil sectors of the economy.

But, says Malavolenke, "even if the country is better equipped economically, the situation in the country is more explosive than in 2008. The expectations of the citizens have grown."

AU/AFRICA :

Egypte: 11 morts dans les violences

AFP / 25 janvier 2015

Le Caire - Onze personnes ont été tuées et 30 blessées dimanche en Egypte, au moment où le pays marque le quatrième anniversaire de la révolte de 2011 qui chassa Hosni Moubarak du pouvoir, selon un média d'Etat.

Citant le ministère de la Santé, le site internet du quotidien étatique Al-Ahram indique que 11 personnes ont été tuées et 30 blessées, alors que manifestants et policiers se sont affrontés en marge de rassemblements, notamment au Caire.

Un policier a également été tué dans des heurts similaires dans le nord du Caire, a indiqué le ministère de l'Intérieur, sans qu'il ne soit immédiatement possible de déterminer si ce policier faisait partie des 11 morts annoncés par la presse étatique.

Pour marquer l'anniversaire du soulèvement populaire de 2011, les partisans du président islamiste Mohamed Morsi, renversé par les militaires en juillet 2013, avaient appelé à manifester contre l'actuel chef de l'Etat, Abdel Fattah al-Sissi.

Un bilan précédant faisait état de trois morts parmi les manifestants islamistes, deux dans le nord du Caire et un dans la ville d'Alexandrie (nord).

Dans le centre du Caire, la police a tiré à la chevrotine et fait usage de gaz lacrymogènes pour disperser des centaines de manifestants qui scandaient des slogans hostiles aux islamistes et aux nouvelles autorités et tentaient de rejoindre la place Tahrir, l'épicentre de la révolte de 2011.

Nigeria: Boko Haram s'empare de la ville de Monguno et de sa base militaire

N.Be. avec AFP/le 25.01.2015

Des combattants du groupe islamiste Boko Haram ont pris dimanche le contrôle de la ville de Monguno et de sa base militaire, proches du lac Tchad dans le nord-est du pays, après de violents combats contre l'armée nigériane, a-t-on appris de sources sécuritaires.

«Monguno est tombée, Monguno est tombée», a déclaré à l'AFP un haut responsable militaire sous couvert d'anonymat. «Nous les avons affrontés toute la nuit mais ils ont réussi à prendre la ville, y compris les casernes militaires», a-t-il assuré.

Monguno déjà attaquée en 2013 et 2014

Une autre source sécuritaire a confirmé que les combattants islamistes s'étaient emparés de la ville, située à quelque 130 km au nord-est de Maiduguri, la capitale de l'Etat de Borno, elle-même théâtre de combats dimanche. «C'est vrai, nos troupes ont perdu la ville de Monguno face à Boko Haram. (...) Nos troupes ont dû se retirer après avoir combattu les terroristes pendant plusieurs heures. Ils sont arrivés en force et finalement ont dominé nos hommes», a précisé cette source, ajoutant que l'armée nigérienne voulait reprendre rapidement la ville.

«Nous craignons que les familles de nos soldats ne soient restées bloquées dans les casernes, et évidemment les habitants de la ville, hommes, femmes et enfants, doivent être sauvés», a déclaré ce militaire. «Nous avons aussi de l'équipement de combat là-bas et il serait dangereux qu'il tombe aux mains des terroristes», a-t-il ajouté. Des centaines de combattants de Boko Haram ont attaqué la ville de Monguno avant l'aube, provoquant la fuite de milliers d'habitants terrifiés.

Des experts considèrent que la prise de Monguno constitue un pas de plus des insurgés dans leur avancée depuis les zones reculées du nord-est passées sous leur contrôle au cours des derniers mois. Monguno avait déjà subi le feu du groupe islamiste en mars 2013 et septembre 2014.

Ebola/Sierra Leone: la dette doit être "effacée"

Par Lefigaro.fr avec AFP/le 25/01/2015

La Sierra Leone, pays le plus lourdement touché par le virus Ebola, ne parviendra à se relever "qu'en voyant sa dette effacée" par le FMI, a indiqué dimanche l'ambassadrice de la Sierra Leone auprès de l'ONU à Genève.

"Notre pays ne pourra se relever qu'en voyant sa dette effacée" par le FMI, a affirmé à l'AFP Yvette Stevens, précisant que "d'autres fonds étaient nécessaires" pour relancer l'économie du pays. Avec plus de 10.100 cas dont plus de 3.000 mortels, la Sierra Leone est le pays le plus touché depuis l'apparition en décembre 2013 du virus hémorragique Ebola, devant le Liberia et la Guinée. "Si le monde ne nous aide pas là, alors les paroles concernant l'aide au développement international n'ont aucun sens", a-t-elle ajouté en marge d'une session extraordinaire organisée par l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS) sur les enjeux et conséquences de la maladie. Pour les trois pays les plus touchés, la Banque mondiale a évalué les pertes pour 2015 à 1,6 milliard de dollars, dont l'essentiel pour la Sierra Leone (920 millions), suivie de la Guinée (540 millions) et du Liberia (180 millions).

En Sierra Leone, une récession de 3% est désormais attendue cette année alors qu'une croissance de 8,9% était prévue avant le déclenchement de la crise. Le nombre de nouveaux cas de cette fièvre hémorragique mortelle à plus de 50% est retombé en janvier à son plus bas niveau depuis août en Sierra Leone et en Guinée, voire depuis juin pour le Liberia, selon l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS). En Sierra Leone, 117 malades ont été enregistrés la semaine dernière, contre 184 la semaine d'avant.

Vendredi, la Sierra Leone, comptant six millions d'habitants, a annoncé la levée des mesures de quarantaine. Le président Ernest Bai Koroma a jugé que "la victoire contre Ebola est en vue". "Tant que nous n'avons pas atteint les zéro cas, nous ne devons pas être complaisants", a cependant souligné la représentante de la Sierra Leone à l'ONU.

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

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