



(African leaders have agreed to send 7,500 troops to fight the Boko Haram insurgency in north-east Nigeria. Samil Chergui, the head of the African Union's (AU) peace and security council, said the decision was made after the council urged heads of state to endorse the deployment of troops from five West African countries to fight the terror group.)

BURUNDI :

RWANDA :

Rwanda: New ITU Secretary General Visits Rwanda

By Edwin Musoni/The New Times (Kigali)/2 February 2015

The Secretary-General of International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Zhao Houlin, last evening arrived in the country for a three-day official visit.

During his visit, Houlin will tour several facilities at the Telecom House in Kacyiru including 4G Innovation Centre, Carnegie Mellon University-Rwanda campus and kLab hub.

He will also hold several meetings with senior government officials and visit the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre.

ITU is an agency of the United Nations responsible for coordinating effective development and use of telecommunications globally.

Upon arrival at Kigali International Airport, Houlin said; "I have heard a lot of good things

happening here. I will be here for a couple of days and I am looking forward to the experience."

The Minister for Youth and ICT, Jean Philbert Nsengimana, said Houlin's visit was his first to the African continent.

He said the visit aims at strengthening ties between Rwanda and ITU.

Rwanda was recently re-elected a member state of the Council of ITU for 2014-2018.

The Council is tasked with policymaking to ensure that the ITU keeps up with the world's rapidly changing telecommunication environment and deciding on administrative issues of the organisation.

President Paul Kagame is the Co-Chair alongside Carlos Slim of Mexico, the brains behind the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, an initiative aimed at accelerating universal broadband access.

The Commission comprises leading figures in the technology industry, governments and the international community.

In 2007 and 2013, Rwanda co-hosted with ITU, the Connect Africa Summit with the last conference resulting into commitments to investing more than \$70 billion in broadband infrastructure in Africa over five years.

Houlin was elected ITU Secretary General in October last year, becoming the 19th Secretary-General of the ITU.

His four-year mandate started on 1 January 2015.

From 2007 to 2014, he served as ITU Deputy Secretary-General, supporting the work of the Secretary-General, principally in terms of day-to-day management, including human resources, financial administration, improving efficiency, and working to help broaden ITU's membership, particularly in terms of academic institutions.

Since its membership to the ITU in 1962, Rwanda has been an active promoter of ITU initiatives through adoption, usage and deployment of technologies for bridging the digital divide.

The Government has invested heavily in ICT as an enabler of socio-economic development.

The country has also maintained its position as one of the fastest growing African countries in ICT- from e-commerce and e-services, mobile technologies, applications development and automation, to becoming a regional centre for training of top quality ICT professionals

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Rwanda: One-Stop Borders Require Financial Services - Officials

By James Karuhanga/The New Times (Kigali)/1 February 2015

While the business community is upbeat about benefits to accrue when Kagitumba-Mirama Hills One-stop Border Post (OSBP) on Rwanda-Uganda border opens in April, there is need to extend financial services to enable people make full use of the new facility.

This was noted Thursday as the Minister for East African Community Affairs, Valentine Rugwabiza, visited the border post to assess progress on the construction of the 24-hour OSBP. The project aims at facilitating easy movement of people and their goods by reducing the time transporters spend clearing goods. It is projected that this will in turn improve intra-regional trade as well as boost revenue collection.

Gerard Mahoro, a customs officer, told the minister that while all is set for the April launch, "the picture will not be complete if basic financial services such as banking and insurance are not here to facilitate trade."

The nearest commercial bank, Banque Populaire du Rwanda, is 10km away in Matimba trading centre while insurance firms such as Corar and Radiant are far away in Nyagatare.

Construction of the OSBP, with \$10.5 million funding from TradeMark East Africa, is at 95 percent. By April, all the infrastructure-customs and immigration offices, police post, customs inspection sheds and warehouse, clearing and forwarding offices will be ready. Also to be built are roads, water treatment and storage tanks, parking yards and staff quarters.

Immigration officials say over 233, 000 tourists crossed this border point in 2013/14.

Rugwabiza urged the people to work together and make full use of this facility.

"Many trucks are soon going to go through here and businesses will sprout. People have to think about the opportunities and must prepare to exploit and benefit fully," she said.

Her remarks were echoed by the Governor of Eastern Province, Odette Uwamariya, who described the OSBP as "an economic pull factor."

OSBPs are designed to reduce time spent in clearing transporters from two hours to less than 40 minutes. "This will have a big impact. We need to start thinking about private enterprises. Apart from the mainstream business perspective, the place will look [a tourist attraction]," Uwamariya said.

Last October, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni launched works to upgrade the 37km Ntungamo-Mirama Hills road to bitumen. Once that part of the major northern corridor road is upgraded to bitumen standard, traffic on the border is expected to more than double.

"We hope business will pick up greatly such that when all big trucks and vehicles start going through here, we will all make more money as the place becomes more vibrant," said Leocadie Batumuliza, who works for a cleaning firm.

"Things seem to be getting better here," said Eric Nsengimana, a Kagitumba resident who was walking to the other side of the border. "I am old now but my children will be better off as more development comes to us. This is really impressive."

James Taremwa, a ministry of trade official, said they plan to build a cross-border market on a two hectare plot some 200 meters from the border.

"This market will link traders with producers in the area so that they exploit local agricultural produce," Taremwa said.

Hannington Namara, TradeMark East Africa country director, said that by the end of the year, the

two bridges at the border will also be completed. Of the total \$10.5 million TMEA package, \$2.4million is for constructing two new bridges, one on each side of the old bridge at the border.

"Time is money and when one wastes a lot of time in clearing and transport logistics this affects profits," Namara said.

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

Uganda: Customs Challenges

By Julius Businge/The Independent (Kampala)/1 February 2015

Only a few months in her job as Uganda Revenue Authority Commissioner General, Doris Akol is desperate to win the hearts and minds of taxpayers. On Jan. 20, she left her capacious office to lead a team of her officials to a visit of traders in Kampala's busiest trading hub, Kikuubo, in Kampala. Of course she expected to hear complaints - taxpayers often have many complaints. She listened as the taxpayers went through a litany of the challenges they face.

Some of the traders indeed expressed their dissatisfaction with URA's e-tax system powered by Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA World). Akol admitted that the ASYCUDA network had issues but added that they were expanding capacity of their servers to manage the challenges.

Earlier, Akol and URA hosted six Ambassadors of the Netherlands to the various countries in the East African Region plus DR. Congo. They wanted to observe and get a report on the performance of key projects or reforms which their country through Trade Mark East Africa had supported. The projects in question include; ASYCUDA World worth \$5.834mn, Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) worth \$0.2mn and Electronic Cargo Tracking System (ECTS) worth \$2 mn.

Speaking on behalf of his colleagues, Alphons Hennekens, the Ambassador to Uganda, expressed satisfaction with the progress the revenue body had made in fostering regional integration. "We will continue to partner with you so that the East African Community becomes a reality," he said.

Richard Kamajugo, the commissioner for Customs at URA, said the ASYCUDA World project, which was rolled out progressively between April, 2013 to December 2014, has seen 98% of total customs transactions and customs revenue collected. As a result, revenue collection has improved so far by 21%; from \$427 mn in October, 2013 to \$778 mn in December, 2014, Kamajugo said. The system has also improved clearance time to an average of 1.1 days compared to over five days before. Improved transparency of customs operations through status notifications during declaration processing, reduced queuing and movements to different customs offices are also some of the benefits. The system has also facilitated the interface with other revenue authorities in the region - Kenya Revenue Authority, Rwanda Revenue Authority, and Tanzania Revenue Authority with the result that the implementation of the Single Customs Territory (SCT) has been achieved thus reducing the number of multiple declarations to just two - at the point of entry in the EAC and at final destination.

On Electronic Cargo Tracking System, the URA bosses told the ambassadors that the tracking system had led to the complete elimination of physical escorts, improved the security of goods in transit, improved staff performance and reduced transit time from eight days to two - resulting in cost savings of US\$400-600 per truck per day.

For instance, between May 9 and Aug. 6, 2014, some 4,214 consignments used ECTS, resulting in savings of almost \$548,000 in escort fees. Also, 22 Ugandan companies had been accredited under the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) project where all customs declarations related to an AEO are given priority clearance, thereby saving time and costs.

Hans Paulsen, the managing director of Vivo Energy, said the reforms have made business easier. "There were challenges in the past when it came to clearing," he said.

Paulsen, whose company imports 100% of its fuel, said, 68% of the trucks crossing the Busia border are petroleum trucks and this is expected to rise because of these reforms.

As a result of implementing these reforms, URA said it had seen an increase in revenue collections by 16% from 2013 to 2014 and an increase of 18% in fuel volumes for period February to July 2014.

Hennekens was positive that reforms at URA would boost trade within the region and have a resultant impact on poverty levels. "Improved regional trade will accelerate the transformation of Ugandan agriculture which is a core element of Uganda's Vision 2040," he said, adding that regional integration contributes to poverty reduction and is an incentive for attracting Dutch investors to the country.

Frank Matsaert, the CEO of TradeMark East Africa, said they are seeing increased trade activity between Uganda and other countries in the EAC as customs reforms are the catalyst that was needed to bring about prosperity to the region.

Come March, businesses transacting at the Busia border between Uganda and Kenya will find it easy to clear their goods entering and leaving the two countries once the construction of Busia One Stop Border Post (OSBP) is completed. Under this arrangement, the two customs will be housed in one single office to handle customs matters. Currently, businesses transacting at this border spend over four hours clearing with the two customs because the latter are housed in different locations, just metres away from one another.

Alex Rubanga, the supervisor for customs in charge of Busia Border, said once the project is completed, they expect clearance to be done in one location and that will cut the time by half. Rubanga said the two customs clear 250 trucks a day - some 7, 500 trucks a month. Kamajugo and Akol assured the visiting Ambassadors that URA is committed to implementing efficient systems and offer value for money, which will go a long way towards making paying taxes simpler for the taxpayers hence improving compliance.

SOUTH AFRICA :

Dewani faces questioning under oath in UK inquest
2015-02-02/News24

Cape Town - A British coroner is considering resuming an inquest into the murder of Anni Hindocha in 2010, meaning that her husband, Shrien Dewani, could face public questioning under oath, according to reports.

Dewani was accused of orchestrating the murder of his wife while they were on honeymoon in South Africa in November 2010. He was extradited from Britain and faced a high-profile trial in the Western Cape High Court, but was acquitted in December 2014.

Anni was living in North London before she married. The inquest into her death was adjourned during the police investigation, but North London coroner Andrew Walker has reportedly e-mailed all of those involved in the case to say he is considering reopening the inquest, The Telegraph reported.

According to the report, Walker has a reputation for asking awkward questions and having an unflinching approach. He has heard a number of inquests into the deaths of British soldiers.

Under oath

Dewani faces being grilled under oath for the first time over Anni's murder, according to The Sun.

Anni's father, Vinod Hindocha, and her uncle Ashok will reportedly meet the coroner on Tuesday, but could not speculate on what the meeting will lead to, the Daily Mail reported.

The family has repeatedly called for Dewani to give evidence and explain what happened. Anni's family were visibly emotional after Judge Jeanette Traverso acquitted Dewani because the State's case against him was not strong enough. They were desperate to hear the full story of the events on the night Anni was shot dead, and said the judge's decision will haunt them for the rest of their lives.

Sudan, South Africa to form joint ministerial committee

Monday 2 February 2015/sudantribune.com

February 1, 2015 (KHARTOUM) – Sudanese president Omer Hassan al-Bashir and his South African counterpart, Jacob Zuma have agreed to form a joint ministerial committee to reinforce economic cooperation between the two countries.

Zuma concluded on Sunday a two-day visit to Sudan where he held talks with Bashir on bilateral relations.

The two sides issued a joint communiqué reaffirming commitment to reinforcing economic relations by encouraging private and public enterprises in both countries to further involve themselves in establishing partnerships to become a model for South-South cooperation.

The two leaders expressed satisfaction with the current level of ties and cooperation between the two countries, stressing their commitment to further promote and strengthen those ties.

According to the communiqué, the two leaders instructed their foreign ministers to complete procedures of establishing the joint ministerial committee between the two countries.

They reaffirmed their support to the United Nations and African Union as important institutions for

consolidating and strengthening regional and international peace and security.

The two presidents also underscored importance of the role played by the sub- regional African organisations in achieving economic integration peace and security and stability in the continent.

They also called on all parties involved in the conflict in South Sudan to show leadership and responsibility to bring the conflict to an end, expressing support and solidarity with African countries affected by the waves of violence and terrorist attacks.

The two presidents discussed development agenda beyond 2015, saying they shared identical views on regional and international issues discussed during the talks.

Zuma praised efforts made by Bashir for creating a favourable climate for achieving peace and stability in Sudan, expressing his gratitude for the support rendered by the Sudanese people during their struggle against the apartheid regime.

Bashir, for his part hailed efforts exerted by Zuma to promote social, economic and cultural conditions in South Africa.

The two presidents also lauded the role played by South Africa's late president Nelson Mandela

After his election in 2009, Zuma said that Bashir is not welcome in South Africa and warned he would be arrested in compliance with an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on ten counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide he allegedly masterminded in Darfur region.

However, South African commentators criticize Zuma's foreign policy claiming he focuses much on economic interests than human rights and democratic principles.

(ST)

South Africa's Power Grid Is 'Stable' Even as Nuclear Unit Lost

2015-02-02/Bloomberg

(Bloomberg) -- An unplanned cut at Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd.'s sole nuclear facility would be covered by other units that are being returned to service, holding off rolling blackouts used to manage South Africa's fragile national grid, the utility said.

Eskom shut Koeberg nuclear power station's 930-megawatt Unit 1 because of a technical fault on the main generator transformer, the Johannesburg-based utility said on Feb. 1. The unit was due to be taken offline for refueling and maintenance on Feb. 9. The plant, which is Africa's only such facility, is north of Cape Town.

"As we speak now the system is relatively stable," Khulu Phasiwe, a spokesman for Eskom, said on broadcaster eNCA Monday. "Other generating units from coal will be brought back to service to supplement power that has been lost."

Last week the electric company held three straight days of rolling blackouts. Eskom expects to implement power cuts almost daily until April after deferred maintenance led to more plant breakdowns, it said on Jan. 15. On average, about 22 percent of the utility's installed capacity of 41,995 megawatts is unavailable because of maintenance and breakdowns.

“Our reserve margin is so thin, that every incident creates a major systems issue,” Chief Executive Officer Tshediso Matona said at the time.

A maintenance team will determine if the Koeberg unit can be brought back in the next few days or be taken out for its planned maintenance earlier than scheduled, Eskom said. Koeberg Unit 2 is currently generating full power and there is no nuclear safety concern, it said.

TANZANIA :

Tanzania: Bunge Urges State to Do Away With Emergency Power Plants

Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/1 February 2015

Dodoma — PARLIAMENTARY Standing Committee on Energy and Minerals has urged the government to do away with emergency power plants to relieve the state-owned power utility Tanesco from huge amounts of money it pays to the firms in term of capacity charges.

Instead, the committee wants Tanzania Electric Supply Company Limited (TANESCO) to be empowered to purchase its own power generating plants which will also ensure cheap electricity compared to that produced by independent power producers.

The companies in question include Songas Power Tanzania, Independent Power Tanzania Limited (IPTL) and Symbion. The government has already parted ways with Aggreko, the National Assembly was told on Saturday.

"It is high time Tanesco was enabled to have its own facilities to produce power and this will save a lot of money which it pays out in capacity charges," the committee member, Mr Juma Njwayo (Tandahimba - CCM), said while presenting the committee's annual report spanning January 2014 to January, this year.

At present, the power utility heavily relies on the private producers to feed the national grid to supplement production at hydro power plants amid increasing demand for electricity in the country.

Presenting the report on behalf of the Chairman of the committee, Mr Richard Ndasu (Sumve-CCM), Mr Njwayo said the government should as well continue to solicit funds to implement power projects earmarked in the Big Results Now (BRN) initiative.

"There should also be short, medium and long term strategy by Tanesco to collect debts from individuals, public and private institutions which amounts to a whopping 186.4bn/-," Mr Njwayo stated.

He stressed on the other hand that funds collected as petroleum levy to fund rural electrification projects through the Rural Energy Agency (REA) should be disbursed to the agency in full and on time.

In another development, the Parliamentary Committee on Infrastructure chaired by Mr Peter Serukamba (Kigoma Urban - CCM), has said a total of 572.7bn/- will be required to implement railway upgrading projects during the next three years.

Mr Serukamba lamented that availability of funds to maintain the railway network has been tricky,

but challenged the government to engage the private sector through private-public partnership. The MP was presenting an annual report for the committee.

Tanzania: Kenya, Tanzanian to Discuss Cross-Border Tourist Vehicles

By Omari Moyo/Arusha Times (Arusha)/31 January 2015

Tanzanian and Kenyan officials will meet next month to iron out hitches in tourism operations with regard to the two countries.

The Minister for Natural resources and tourism, Lazaro Nyalandu met his Kenyan counterpart Phyllis Kandie early this month in Nairobi and discussed how they could resolve the problems which led to Kenyan Government ban on Tanzania vehicle from entering into Kenyan tourism sites and the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.

Lazaro Nyalandu, Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism.

Kenyan Minister for Tourism and East African

Cooperation, Phyllis Kandie.

In a joint press conference in Nairobi, Nyalandu and Kenyan Minister for Tourism and East African Cooperation Phyllis Kandie agreed to convene a bilateral meeting to resolve some obstacles facing tourism in Tanzania and Kenya.

Late last year the Kenyan government banned vehicles with Tanzania registration numbers from entering JKIA to pick or drop off passengers apparently as a retaliation of what Kenyan government viewed as a reciprocity following Tanzania's refusal to allow tour operators from Kenya to access its national parks.

According to the Kenyan minister responsible for tourism the bilateral agreement of 1985 has specified some areas that are restricted for Kenyan vehicles to enter likewise to Tanzanian vehicles entering Kenya.

She said that the agreement of 1985 needs to be amended to match with time.

"We feel that this agreement needs to be reviewed to improve our tourism business environment for the mutual benefit of the East African region," she said.

For now, she said, Tanzania vehicles are allowed to pick and drop off passengers at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport pending the outcome of the bilateral meeting to be held in February.

Tanzanian Tourism and Natural Resources Minister said a lot should be done for the benefit of the East African people and that it was the right time to discuss the challenges in the tourism sector with regard to the two countries.

Tanzania: State Says No to Sugar Imports

Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/31 January 2015

Dodoma — Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives, Mr Godfrey Zambi

TANZANIA will not import sugar for domestic use during the 2014/15 fiscal year as advised by the Technical Advisory Committee on Sugar Importation which is under the Tanzania Sugar Board (TSB), the National Assembly was told on Friday.

Smuggling of sugar into the country, dumping of the sweetener in the local market meant for transit as well as industrial sugar being sold to people, are among challenges facing the sugar industry in Tanzania.

This was revealed by Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food Security and Co-operatives, Mr Godfrey Zambi, while issuing a government statement on importation of sugar during the financial year under review.

"However, given the fact the season is not over the recommendation on not to import sugar during the year may change depending on local production of the sweetener," he said.

He added: "During its meeting in October, last year, the committee recommended that there should not be imports to cover the shortage this year after their assessment of demand and available stocks and expected production at local industries," Mr Zambi explained.

Mr Zambi said the committee had recommended only importation of industrial sugar in which 182,765 tonnes are to be imported to be used for industrial production.

"A total of 25 industries were to import the sweetener and as of January 8, this year, permits were issued for importation of 46,984 tonnes of which 36,103 tonnes has already been imported," the deputy minister explained. Demand for sugar in Tanzania stands at 420,000 and 170,000 tonnes per annum for domestic and industrial sugar, making it a total of 590,000 tonnes each year.

Yet local industries can only produce 300,000 tonnes, thus each year there is a shortage of 290,000 tonnes for domestic and industrial use. Of the 290,000 tonnes, 120,000 are for domestic use and 170,000 for industrial production.

Privatisation of sugar industries namely Kagera, Mtibwa, TPC and Kilombero between the year 1998 and 2000, according to the deputy minister, has helped boost production from just 98,000 tonnes in 1998 to 300,000 tonnes at present.

Tanzania: Cashless ATCL Amounts to Sabotage - Sitta

By Christopher Majaliwa/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/1 February 2015

Dodoma — THE multi-billion shillings that the cash strapped Air Tanzania Limited (ATCL) owes various entities is due to gross negligence of the company's management, government has said.

The newly appointed Minister for Transport, Mr Samwel Sitta, said that such negligence can be termed as sabotage. He was speaking while responding to the report tabled by the Parliamentary Committee for Infrastructure that pointed out that investors are scared to invest in the company due to such debts.

"I need just to be sincere here; it is nothing but negligence of the company's management that brought ATCL to where it is now. This is just sabotage," he said.

The minister said that clear-cut explanations from management are required to establish what exactly transpired that led to such high debts.

Details provided by the office of the Registrar of Treasury show that close to 50bn/- is to be paid by ATCL for the aircraft that did not fly in Tanzania and is currently providing services in another country.

According to the Registrar of Treasury, the debt is a result of a bad contract signed between Wallis Trading Inc and ATCL in 2007 whereby Wallis acquired an Airbus 320 from Liberia before leasing it to ATCL for six years at monthly rental fee of \$370,000 (673.6M/-).

Due to its inability to clear debts, ATCL could lose its headquarters located at the heart of the central business district along Ohio Street over a debt of more than 2bn/-.

ATCL had an ultimatum of December 31, 2014 to pay \$477,506 to Leisure Tours and Holidays, \$661,089 to Wellworth Hotels and Lodges Ltd as well as \$144,000 to Tanzania Bags Corporation (1998) Limited.

But the airline failed to clear any of the debts thus forcing the companies to write to the Registrar of the High Court, Commercial Division, asking for the execution of the sale of the building since ATCL failed to clear its debts within the agreed time.

KENYA :

Kenya Commits U.S. \$1 Million to 'Unstoppable' African Court of Justice

By Pscu/Capital FM (Nairobi)/31 January 2015

Addis Ababa — President Uhuru Kenyatta has said the establishment of the proposed African court of Justice and Human Rights is now unstoppable and announced Kenya's commitment of one million dollars (Sh91mn)for the new judicial institution.

He said Africa is poised to establish a broader African transitional justice police framework and an African Court of Justice to handle all criminal cases from Africa currently referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague, Netherlands.

The Head of State said he has already signed the Malabo Protocol on the African Court before the necessary instruments are transmitted to Parliament for ratification.

President Kenyatta announced this new commitment when he addressed the 24th Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Kenya is among the frontline countries associating themselves with the establishment of the African Court of Justice largely out of its experiences at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The African countries pushing for the creation of a continental court wish to establish an institution that delivers African solutions to African Problems as compared to the ICC which pre-occupies itself with trying to solve African challenges using western standards, perceptions and perspectives.

President Kenyatta described the creation of the African court as urgent.

"I urge you brothers and sisters to join me in ensuring that the necessary ratifications are in place

and that the resulting court is fully owned, financed and driven by Africa. This is an urgent and historic task that cannot wait."

President Kenyatta whose ICC case recently collapsed at The Hague for lack of evidence told the AU delegates that the case facing Deputy President William Ruto is exhibiting the same pattern of weakness as the dropped case against him.

"We look forward to its conclusion so that my Deputy can join me in focusing exclusively on transforming Kenya and serving our people," said President Kenyatta.

The Head of State said the ICC as currently constituted poses a grave risk to peace and security not only in Africa, but to the whole world because the court had been heavily politicized.

"Observe closely, and you will see that the court has unfortunately become ever more vulnerable to blatantly politicised designs," said the President.

He said that with the Kenyan cases came a progressive breaching of the Rome Statute's critical cornerstones of complementarity, admissibility, threshold and gravity, cornerstones that had previously been negotiated and agreed.

President Kenyatta described the current ICC as a far cry from the expectations and aspirations that Africa had in mind when it formed the decisive block that brought the ICC court into existence.

He recalled warnings from powerful countries that had expressed reservations about the court going down the political path.

"We resisted their warnings in our desire for an international community in which all nations are on a level playing field of justice and accountability."

He regretted that each one of those reservations have been borne out in the Kenyan cases.

President Kenyatta said it was out of the ICC experience that African Countries have decided to craft appropriate and effective solutions expected from the African Court.

"We have the right to chart our own course and correct our mistakes while staying accountable to our people. This was the burning conviction of our founding fathers, and it remains our cause today," said President Kenyatta.

President Kenyatta said Africans cannot forever keep waiting for non forthcoming reforms in the Rome Statute when the people in the continent have the power and duty to take their destiny in their own hands.

"Our continent's Attorneys General, Justice and Foreign Ministers, and experts have crafted separate but interdependent mechanisms built to be responsive to the realities and needs of this continent," said the Head of State.

He reiterated that through the ICC, the international judicial system had been manipulated and instead of seeking justice, peace and reconciliation, it ended bringing weak and politicised cases to court.

President Kenyatta regretted that the ICC investigators had ignored all known facts and rules of justice and their Kenyan cases stood on shaky ground from the start, hence the reasons they are

collapsing.

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

Illicit cash outflow hits Africa hard

AFP/02 février, 2015

Africa loses at least \$50-billion a year to criminal practices such as tax fraud and corruption, and to organised crime, a UN-mandated study group warned yesterday.

Illicit financial flows - which range from international corporations dodging taxes to the trafficking of weapons and minerals - are a barrier to creating jobs on the world's poorest continent, according to the group, which is headed by former president Thabo Mbeki.

"Large commercial corporations are by far the biggest culprits of illicit outflows, followed by organised crime," said Mbeki in a report commissioned by the UN and the African Union.

"We are convinced that corrupt practices in Africa are facilitating these outflows."

The report called for a crackdown by customs, tax, business and anti-corruption authorities.

The illicit outflows of capital mean that African countries' "economies do not benefit from the multiplier effects of the domestic use of such resources, whether for consumption or investment.

"Such lost opportunities impact negatively on growth and ultimately on job creation in Africa," the authors of the report said.

Africa agrees to send 7,500 troops to fight Boko Haram insurgency

31/01/2015/independent.ie

African leaders have agreed to send 7,500 troops to fight the Boko Haram insurgency in north-east Nigeria.

Samil Chergui, the head of the African Union's (AU) peace and security council, said the decision was made after the council urged heads of state to endorse the deployment of troops from five West African countries to fight the terror group.

African leaders who are members of the 54-nation AU are meeting in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa for a two-day summit that ends on Saturday.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon earlier said he support the AU's move to send a force to fight Boko Haram.

The group has been increasing its attacks as Nigeria prepares for elections on February 14. Thousands have been killed in the five-year insurgency.

Iran also said it has begun consultations with West African countries affected by Boko Haram to provide help. The country's deputy foreign minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said he is confident the group could be defeated with collective action.

"We will share our experiences in combating terrorism to defeat Boko Haram. We will achieve that without a doubt," the official said on the sidelines of the AU summit.

African nations have opened up a new international front in the war on terror. On Thursday, neighbouring Chad sent a warplane and troops that drove the extremists out of a north-eastern Nigeria border town in the first such act by foreign troops on Nigerian soil.

Chad's victory, and the need for foreign troops, is an embarrassment to Nigeria's once-mighty military, brought low by corruption and politics.

Mr Chergui said Chad's operation against Boko Haram was a result of a bilateral arrangement between Chad and Cameroon.

"It is conducted as part of a bilateral agreement and arrangement between the two countries. The AU, however, will launch the force in the future," he said.

Boko Haram attracted international outrage in April when it kidnapped 276 schoolgirls at a boarding school in the remote town of Chibok. Dozens escaped on their own, but 219 remain missing.

Suicide bombings in recent months by young girls have raised fears that Boko Haram is using the kidnap victims in its conflict, which has displaced more than one million people and killed about 10,000 in the past year, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

Press Association

Africa: AU Should Stop External Funding - Uhuru
Capital FM (Nairobi)/31 January 2015

Addis Ababa — President Uhuru Kenyatta Saturday said the continent stands on the threshold of new rebirth and the African Union should stop depending on external funding to finance its programmes.

He said after 50 years since the inception of the union, Africa is experiencing the most inspiring rebirth and the confidence in African resources and solutions grows each passing day.

President Kenyatta said Africa stands tall and the continent looks at the future with certainty that the possibilities and opportunities for growth and prosperity are in the hands of Africans.

He said the continent is asserting its independence and sovereignty more robustly and the solidarity of Africa has never been greater.

"Depending on external funding for 78 percent of the union's budget is simply unacceptable", said the Head of State when he addressed the 24 Ordinary Session of the African Union Heads of State

and government in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

He said the African Union is a testimony to the resolve of the African people to march boldly into the future and symbolizes the people's consensus for peace, stability, development and happiness.

President Kenyatta said over-dependence on external funding by the AU poses a profound handicap and an impediment to the continent's momentum to march forward.

He asked member states to take the affairs of the AU in their hands and ensure compliance in their contributions to the financial resources of the union. Member states should ensure timely remittances of their contributions to the union.

"It is the only way that our meetings and programmes will be sustainable", said President Kenyatta.

He said Kenya fully endorses the recommendations of the AU's commission on alternative sources of financing the union.

"It (commission's report) sets out a menu of innovative financing alternatives that offers choice and flexibility aimed at ensuring that we all do our part in liberating the African Union from dependency", he added

President Kenyatta said Kenya favours financing of the union through a dedicated line controlled by respective treasuries of member states.

"This, in our view ensures consistency in remittance and therefore, better compliance. I urge Members to work harder to clear arrears in contributions.

President Kenyatta assured the delegates that the Treasury, through the National Bank will establish a channel through which Kenya will fulfil all its obligations to the union.

South Africa To Host Next AU Summit

radiovop.com/02/02/2015

South Africa will host the 25th African Union (AU) summit in Johannesburg, in mid-2015, the country's Presidency said on Sunday.

President Jacob Zuma led the South African delegation to Ethiopia, where Zimbabwe was elected chair of the AU for the year.

Zimbabwe will have the double responsibility of leading both the continent and the sub-region as chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Among the issues discussed at the summit were the escalation in terrorism in parts of Africa and the AU's co-ordinated response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

Zuma took part in the discussion on security, focusing on the situation in the Great Lakes Region, South Sudan and the threat posed by Boko Haram in Nigeria and the surrounding countries. He said the countries of the Lake Chad Basin (Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger) have established a multinational force and sought endorsement from the AU.

The security council agreed to the establishment of this force and that requisite funding be provided,

Zuma said.

A special SADC meeting took place on the margins of the summit to consider the current developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes Region. The need to disarm "negative forces" in the region was also discussed at summit level.

In regard to South Sudan, Zuma stated that member states of the inter-governmental authority on development met on the sidelines of the AU summit in an attempt to finalise the agreement related to the modalities on how the government of South Sudan would be structured.

"A report on the situation in South Sudan will be presented to the AU peace and security council once negotiations, which are at a delicate stage at the moment, are concluded," Zuma said.

The summit also reviewed the progress made in addressing the Ebola outbreak in West Africa (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone). It reiterated the need to urgently establish the African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention this year, Zuma said.

Meanwhile, Zuma says his Nigerian counterpart, Goodluck Jonathan, did not approach him for help in the fight against Boko Haram during the AU summit. The AU resolved to create a West African task force to counter the jihadists.

The President states that there hasn't been any request until they met at the Security Council meeting. He confirms though that there is a meeting request between him and Jonathan, saying: "if that meeting doesn't happen, we will wait for a memo to be sent to South Africa and hear what the envoy says."

AU big meet opened with talk of female empowerment; we toast the fearless women who once ruled Africa

31 Jan 2015/Samantha Spooner /mgafrica.com

From Angola to Ethiopia, Africa's female leaders and warriors left their mark on history.

THE 24th African Union summit opened Friday. This year, the theme of the summit is: "Year of Women Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063". Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union, underlined the importance of the theme, stating that "we must also do more this year to increase the representation of women in government, in the judiciary and other public and private institutions and their participation at the tables in peace negotiations."

The continent has already taken many decisions towards achieving gender parity, the AU for example has adopted gender programmes to support women's empowerment such as the AU Protocol on Women's Rights, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the Africa Women's Decade, and the Fund for African Women.

Despite that, today women in Africa still do not have equal access to opportunities and services.

It wasn't always this way. Women have traditionally played critical roles in African society, holding very great responsibilities in our ancient civilisations. Here we remember the great and powerful women of ancient Africa:

Yaa Asantewa of the Ashanti Empire, Ghana (1840 - 1921)

Yaa Asantewa was the sister of the ruler of the Ejisu traditional area (part of modern Ghana), Nana Akwasi Afrane Okpase. She was appointed queen mother by her brother who died in 1888 after the Asante civil war.

Being very influential, she nominated her grandson as ruler of Ejisu but when the Asante began rebelling against the British in 1896, they exiled him as well as the King of the Ashante (Prempeh I) to the Seychelles. The British governor, Lord Hodgson, also demanded that the Asante hand over their Golden Stool, a highly treasured spiritual symbol of the Ashanti.

There was a disagreement among the Ashanti leaders on how to deal with this but Yaa Asantewaa was determined that they fight. She took on leadership of the Asante Uprising of 1900 and for three months laid siege to the British mission at the fort of Kumasi. The British had to bring in several thousand troops and artillery to break this siege. Her fight against the colonialists is a story woven throughout the history of Ghana, demonstrating incredible bravery and leadership. She was eventually captured and exiled to the Seychelles. Some historians argue that Yaa Asantewaa's war was the last major war in Africa that was led by a woman.

Makeda the Queen of Sheba, Ethiopia

One thousand years before Christ, Ethiopia was ruled by a line of virgin queens. The most famous of these queens is Makeda, her legend of Sheba can be found in the Christian Holy Bible, the Muslim Qur'an and the Ethiopian holy book - Kebra Nagast. According to Kebra Nagast, the capital of Makeda's kingdom was Axum and it is believed that she reigned over parts of Southern Arabia in Sabaea (Sheba), earning her the title of Queen of Axum and Sheba. During her reign, Ethiopia was famous for her widespread international trade, chief exports being gold and silver.

It was also during her reign that the Solomonic Dynasty in Ethiopia was established. Legend has it that the Queen left her home to visit King Solomon in Jerusalem to satisfy her curiosity on his beliefs. It's believed that she gained a deep appreciation of the God that King Solomon worshipped as the King did of the Queen. According to the Kebra Nagast, the King wooed the Queen and she became pregnant. Their son was named Ebna Hakim, or Menelik I, and he went on to become the first King of the Solomonic dynasty which, lasting until the emperor Haile-Selassie I who was deposed in 1974, was one of the longest and oldest monarchies anywhere in the world.

Queen Ranavalona, Madagascar (1829 to 1861)

Often referred to as a "mad" or "ruthless" Queen, Ranavalona was the ruler of the Indian Ocean Island of Madagascar for 32 years. She positioned herself as queen following the death of her young husband, Radama I, and pursued a policy of isolationism and self-sufficiency which included the expulsion of Christian missionaries and reducing economic and political ties with European powers. It was her drastic and often violent rejection of foreign powers that earned her a fearsome reputation, however, the majority of textbooks documenting her actions were written by French or British authors. What cannot be argued is that the queen was acting in a way that sought to retain her country's cultural heritage and defended it against more powerful foreign nations who wanted to take advantage of the island's resources.

Mbuya Nehanda, Zimbabwe (1840 - 1898)

Mbuya Nehanda was a spiritual leader who was, and continues to be, highly respected by

Zimbabweans. The Shona people believed her to have been a spirit, whose medium was a woman called Nyakasikana. Committed to upholding the traditional Shona way of life, she used her position to spearhead the first war of resistance (Chimurenga CheKutanga) against European domination in the region.

She instructed all the regional chiefs to arm and resist foreign intrusion in whatever way they could. She and her ally Kaguvi, another great regional Shona spirit medium, were eventually captured and executed by the British. Nonetheless, Nehanda's heroism became a significant source of inspiration in the nationalist struggle for liberation in the 1960s and 1970s.

Queen Nzinga Mbande, Angola (1583 - 1663)

Nzinga Mbande was the queen of the Mbundu people in 17th century Angola. Her incredible political and diplomatic acumen combined with brilliant military tactics have made her the stuff of legends. She was a resilient leader who had become queen in 1626, after her brother committed suicide in the face of rising Portuguese demands for slave trade concessions. Recognising that a refusal to trade with the Portuguese would remove a potential ally and the major source of guns for her own state, Nzinga made concessions, converting to Christianity and adopting the name Dona Anna de Souza.

But she was not about to let them control her nation. In 1627, after forming alliances with the Dutch, she led her army against the Portuguese, initiating a thirty-year war against them. With their help, Nzinga defeated a Portuguese army in 1647 but when the Dutch were defeated the following year they withdrew from Central Africa.

Nzinga continued her struggle against the Portuguese, personally leading troops in battle. She also orchestrated guerilla attacks, a tactic which would continue long after her death and inspire the ultimately successful 20th Century armed resistance against the Portuguese that resulted in independent Angola in 1975.

Au Nigeria, les islamistes de Boko Haram sous le feu des Tchadiens

le 02-02-2015/ AFP

Fotokol (Cameroun) (AFP) - Détonations sourdes, nuages de fumée épaisse: les islamistes de Boko Haram retranchés dans la ville nigériane de Gamboru, à la frontière avec le Cameroun, ont été pilonnés dimanche après-midi par des hélicoptères de combat de l'armée tchadienne.

Deux appareils ont bombardé pendant deux heures les positions des islamistes qui tiennent cette ville, située à la frontière camerounaise, a constaté un journaliste de l'AFP depuis la ville voisine de Fotokol.

"Nous sommes déterminés à combattre l'ennemi", a déclaré après les bombardements le commandant du contingent tchadien à Fotokol, le général Ahmat Darry Bazine, devant les caméras de la télévision nationale.

"Le moral (des troupes) est très haut", a-t-il assuré, flanqué de lunettes de soleil et la tête entourée d'un chèche, assis au milieu de ses hommes dans la brousse.

Gamboru, déjà bombardée samedi par l'aviation tchadienne, est séparée par un pont de 500 mètres de Fotokol, où sont massées troupes tchadiennes et camerounaises.

"La localité est sous le contrôle de Boko Haram. Ils sont dans toute la ville, se cachent dans les maisons et ont placé des snipers partout", a expliqué à l'AFP un officier de l'armée tchadienne, sous couvert d'anonymat.

"A travers ces bombardements, nous cherchons à neutraliser l'ennemi pour ouvrir la voie en vue de libérer Gamboru" lors d'une opération terrestre, a-t-il ajouté.

Boko Haram a lancé dimanche une nouvelle offensive contre Maiduguri - son ancien fief du nord-est peuplé d'un million d'habitants - une offensive que l'armée dit avoir repoussée avec l'aide des milices.

Toujours dans cette zone, au moins sept personnes ont été tuées dimanche par un attentat-suicide visant une réunion au domicile d'un homme politique à Potiskum et deux explosions ont fait au moins cinq morts dans la ville de Gombe.

D'importantes forces camerounaises et tchadiennes, équipées de blindés et d'artillerie, sont arrivées dans Fotokol ces derniers jours. Des soldats du Bataillon d'intervention rapide (BIR, unité d'élite de l'armée camerounaise) contrôlent l'accès du pont qui relie les deux villes.

- 'Beaucoup' d'islamistes tués-

"Nous voyons de plus en plus de troupes arriver à Fotokol. Elles augmentent tous les jours", avait indiqué samedi à l'AFP un habitant, Aisami Bukar.

Samedi, deux avions de combat tchadiens ont déjà bombardé Gamboru et ses environs. "Pendant près d'une heure, tout ce que nous avons entendu était des explosions et on pouvait voir des avions larguer des bombes de l'autre côté de la frontière, à Gamboru", avait raconté Aisami Bukar.

Ces raids aériens ont fait suite à des combats jeudi et vendredi entre islamistes armés et soldats tchadiens à la frontière.

Le bilan provisoire de ces combats était, vendredi soir, de "trois morts et 12 blessés" au sein de l'armée tchadienne et de 123 islamistes tués, avait indiqué l'état-major, précisant que les militaires avaient été tués "par des engins explosifs de fabrication artisanale".

Dimanche soir, le général Darry Bazine a fait état de "175 à 200" combattants tués dans les bombardements. "Nous avons riposté de manière très rigoureuse" à des tirs de mortiers, a-t-il dit, et "il y a eu beaucoup, beaucoup de morts" du côté de Boko Haram.

Selon l'hôpital militaire de N'Djamena, un soldat blessé lors de ces attaques est décédé samedi, portant le bilan des pertes tchadiennes à quatre morts.

Le Cameroun a déployé dans la région de l'Extrême-Nord, frontalière du Nigeria, ses troupes d'élite à l'été 2014 pour contrer les islamistes nigériens. Depuis, Yaoundé avait sollicité à plusieurs reprises un soutien de la communauté internationale pour faire front.

Le Tchad a répondu à cet appel et dépêché mi-janvier un important contingent au Cameroun pour aider son voisin à contrer les raids meurtriers de Boko Haram sur son sol.

L'Union africaine a appelé vendredi et samedi à la mobilisation en Afrique contre les islamistes nigériens lors d'un sommet à Addis Abeba et demandé la mise en place d'une force régionale de 7.500 hommes.

Le secrétaire général de l'ONU Ban Ki-moon a apporté samedi son soutien à la formation d'une telle force en dénonçant la "brutalité sans nom" des combattants de Boko Haram, qui multiplient des exactions de grande ampleur, qualifiées par Washington et Paris de "crime contre l'Humanité".

South Sudan's warring sides sign another ceasefire deal

Sun Feb 1, 2015/ Reuters

ADDIS ABABA

(Reuters) - South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and rebel commander Riek Machar signed another ceasefire agreement on Monday, edging them closer to a final deal to end a 15-month conflict that has ravaged the world's newest country, mediators said.

African diplomatic sources said the agreement, which has not been made public, sets out how the two leaders would share power once they formed an interim government. It is proposed Kiir would remain president while Machar would become vice president.

The warring sides also agreed to abide by a ceasefire deal signed in January 2013 but frequently violated.

The rebels, however, said many more details need to be ironed out before the deal can be labelled a "power-sharing" agreement.

After signing the latest agreement, Machar said the two sides would hold more discussions on the functions of the provisional government.

Few other details were revealed after frantic late-night talks. Regional diplomats had warned the warring sides that failure to come up with a new deal could see sanctions imposed on them.

The conflict in Africa's newest nation and one of its poorest erupted in December 2013 and has rumbled on since then despite several commitments by Kiir and Machar to halt the violence.

More than 10,000 people have been killed, about 1.5 million people have been driven from their homes and many in the oil-producing nation of about 11 million people are struggling to find enough food to eat.

Seyoum Mesfin, chief mediator of the East African IGAD bloc, said the two leaders had agreed to resume talks on Feb. 20.

"(Those talks) would be final and that would lead them into concluding a comprehensive agreement to end the crisis in South Sudan," Mesfin told reporters minutes before Kiir and Machar signed the latest peace deal.

Several previous peace deals and ceasefires that accompanied the agreements were swiftly broken.

The two sides need a transitional government in place by July, when Kiir's presidential term runs out.

Rights groups have said both factions have been responsible for ethnic killings and other abuses, driving the nation to the brink of famine. The fighting has largely pitted Kiir's Dinka ethnic group

against Machar's Nuer group.

Mugabe shrugs off concern about new African role

02.Feb.2015/tribune.com.ng

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has dismissed concerns that his appointment as new African Union chairman would harm relations between the pan-African bloc and the West.

“What the West will say or do is not my business,” Mugabe told a news conference on Saturday at the close of the two-day African Union summit held in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

“My business is to ensure the decisions we take here are implemented. My concern is on uplifting the life of our people, giving them something that will raise their standard of living,” he said.

“For more than 10 years I have been under sanctions, my country has been [under] sanctions. If they want to continue it’s up to them but these sanctions are wrong,” the president said.

“If Europe comes in the spirit to cooperate and not the spirit to control us and control our ways, they will be very welcome,” he added.

Mugabe, Africa’s oldest president at 90, took over the rotating post of African Union chairman on Friday, replacing Mauritania’s President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz.

Mugabe, a former liberation war hero who is Africa’s third-longest serving leader, is viewed with deep respect by many on the continent.

But he is also subject to travel bans from both the United States and European Union in protest over political violence and intimidation.

Last year Mugabe boycotted an EU-Africa Summit in Brussels after he was given a rare invitation, but his wife was still denied a visa.

Mugabe also spoke on his attitude towards the empowerment of women in Saturday’s closing remarks.

“We are different,” he told reporters. “There are certain things men can do and that women can’t do. And there are things women can do that men cannot do.

“You can’t bear babies in your tummy, can you? Even the gay ones cannot.

“But what we have done in Zimbabwe is that our women can become ministers, judges, farmers, pilots. We have three pilots,” he added.

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

US AFRICOM commander calls for “huge” military campaign in West Africa

By Thomas Gaist/wsws.org/2 February 2015

US Africa Command (AFRICOM) head General David Rodriguez called for a large-scale US-led “counterinsurgency” campaign against groups in West Africa during remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC last week.

Rodriguez’s statements are part of a coordinated campaign by the US to massively expand its military operations in the resource-rich region, as it combats the influence of China and other powers.

The US should prepare for operations in at least four West African countries as part of a “huge international and multinational” response aimed at forces affiliated with Boko Haram, Rodriguez said.

AFRICOM is already preparing an “across the board response to the threat,” Rodriguez said.

Echoing recent comments from US Secretary of State John Kerry during his visit to Lagos, Nigeria that the US is ready to “do more” militarily in Nigeria, Rodriguez called on the Nigerian government to “let us help more and more.”

In similar remarks at a the US Army West Point academy last week, US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) chief General Joseph Votel said that US commando teams must prepare for new deployments against Boko Haram and the Islamic State.

“[Boko Haram] is creating fertile ground for expansion into other areas,” Votel said.

“While it isn’t a direct threat to the homeland, it is impacting indirectly our interests in this particular area and creating another area of instability,” the top US special forces officer said.

Votel warned that radical Islamic groups are gaining tens of thousands of new fighters.

Votel cited ongoing SOCOM operations in the Philippines, begun in 2002, as a model for how US commandos can project US power by building relations with allied militaries. Votel will travel to Norway in early February to talk with NATO allies about US war preparations, including new military operations in the Arctic directed against Russia, according to Defense News .

Rodriguez and Votel’s statements coincided with plans announced by the African Union last week to deploy a 7,500-strong multinational force in the name of fighting Boko Haram and “other extremist groups.”

The AU multinational force will serve as the vehicle for further infiltration of US forces into West Africa, while providing support for and legitimizing the already significant US military presence in the strategically crucial, resource region. The intervention will proceed amidst elaborate war game exercises led by US Special Operations Command (SOCOM), known as Operation Flintlock, to be coordinated with a number of West African and European militaries beginning in mid-February.

US Congressional leaders are also pushing for a new war in Nigeria and the surrounding region. Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Ed Royce was scheduled to meet with the Nigerian ambassador to the US today, Ade Adefuye, known to be a strong advocate of US military

intervention in Nigeria, according to Nigeria's the Guardian.

Representatives Patrick Meehan and Peter King demanded that the US implement "a comprehensive strategy to address Boko Haram's growing lethality" in letters to Secretary Kerry posted in mid-January.

The Obama administration is also preparing to approve the sale of Cobra jet fighters to Nigerian government, according to the Guardian.

Last week, Chadian jet fighters and ground troops launched cross-border attacks against the Nigerian towns of Gamboru, Kolfata and Malumfatori, reportedly driving Boko Haram fighters out of the area. Boko Haram launched repeated assaults against northern capital of Maiduguri, home to some 2 million residents, reportedly utilizing heavy weapons including RPGs and artillery. The Nigerian military claims that hundreds of Boko Haram fighters were killed during the attacks.

South African mercenaries are fighting alongside Nigerian troops against the militants, according to reports late this week.

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

Egypt Deports Australian Journalist Jailed With 2 Al Jazeera Colleagues

By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK/nytimes.com/FEB. 1, 2015

CAIRO — The Egyptian authorities have deported an Australian television journalist jailed for more than a year on politicized charges about the content of his work.

The Australian, Peter Greste, is one of three journalists for Al Jazeera's English-language affiliate jailed on allegations of reporting false news in a conspiracy with the Muslim Brotherhood to destabilize the country. The other two, along with at least nine other journalists, remain in prison.

Egypt has a long history of jailing critical or dissenting Egyptian journalists. But its authorities have generally left correspondents who work for international news organizations alone. Mr. Greste had left the BBC to join Al Jazeera's English-language network shortly before his arrest.

His incarceration sent a tremor of anxiety through the international news media here, and some Egyptian journalists said privately that it appeared intended to convey a warning.

Many analysts viewed the case as an attempt to punish Qatar, which owns Al Jazeera. Qatar nurtured close ties to President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood before he was ousted in a 2013 military takeover by the current president, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Al Jazeera's Arabic networks, most notably a dedicated Egyptian channel, provided consistently sympathetic coverage of the Brotherhood and caustic coverage of Mr. Sisi's takeover.

A recent decision by Qatar to shut down Al Jazeera's Egyptian channel may have helped clear the

way for Mr. Greste's release. The decision was part of a reconciliation meeting between Qatar and Egypt brokered by Saudi Arabia, and observers close to the Egyptian authorities immediately began speculating about a possible release of the Al Jazeera journalists. Yet Egypt did not disclose its specific reasons for the release or its timing.

The official state news agency said Mr. Sisi had approved the release under a decree he issued a few months ago giving himself the power to deport convicted prisoners who are citizens of other nations. (With no Parliament at the moment, Mr. Sisi rules by decree.)

Another of the jailed Al Jazeera journalists, Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, is a dual citizen of Egypt and Canada who previously worked as a producer for CNN. He has also worked as a reporting assistant for The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times and other publications. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, Egyptian officials said they expected that he would soon be deported to Canada. But he is expected to give up his Egyptian citizenship to obtain his release.

"Egyptian citizenship vs. freedom: take your pick?" Mr. Fahmy wrote from his detention in a message posted on Twitter.

The third jailed Al Jazeera journalist, Baher Mohamed, previously worked for the Japanese media company Asahi Shimbun. He is an Egyptian citizen, so he has no recourse under the new law allowing deportation.

All three were arrested at the end of 2013 on the same charges of conspiring with the Brotherhood to spread false news, and prosecutors presented no public evidence to support the accusations before the journalists were convicted. Mr. Greste and Mr. Fahmy were each sentenced to seven years in prison, and Mr. Mohamed was given 10 years because a used bullet casing was found in his possession. His lawyer said he had picked it up at the scene of a protest.

Egypt has faced heavy criticism from Western leaders, rights groups and the international media over the case, and Mr. Sisi has suggested that deporting the foreigners might have been a preferable way to handle their sentencing from the start.

The Egyptian law allowing the deportation of the foreigners stipulates that they face prison or trial in their home country, but neither Australia nor Canada is likely to uphold the convictions.

By 5 p.m. on Sunday, Mr. Greste had boarded a plane for Cyprus, the first stop on his return to Australia, according to news reports. "He left to his country," said Badr Abdelatty, an Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesman.

"Hard to believe, but YES," Andrew Greste, Peter's brother, wrote on Twitter. Peter Greste "is a free man."

The Committee to Protect Journalists, an independent nonprofit group, said that as of December there were at least 12 journalists in jail in Egypt. Except for Mr. Greste and Mr. Fahmy, the rest appear to be Egyptian citizens. Most are linked to Islamist news outlets critical of the current government.

L'Egypte remet en liberté et expulse le journaliste australien d'Al-Jazeera
01-02-2015/AFP

Le Caire (AFP) - L'Egypte a libéré et expulsé dimanche le journaliste australien d'Al-Jazeera Peter

Greste, emprisonné depuis plus d'un an en dépit des protestations internationales contre sa condamnation pour "soutien" aux Frères musulmans.

M. Greste, qui s'est envolé du Caire en fin d'après-midi dans la plus grande discrétion, a atterri dimanche soir avec son frère à Chypre. Il y a rencontré les autorités consulaires, a rapporté l'agence australienne de presse.

"Il est extrêmement soulagé et a désespérément hâte de rentrer chez lui en Australie et de retrouver sa famille", a déclaré la ministre australienne des Affaires étrangères Julie Bishop, qui s'est entretenue avec lui.

Le journaliste australien avait été arrêté en décembre 2013 avec un confrère de la chaîne qatarie, l'Egypto-Canadien Mohamed Fahmy, dans une chambre d'hôtel du Caire où ils avaient installé, "sans autorisation" selon l'accusation, un bureau d'Al-Jazeera. Peu après, la police avait interpellé l'Egyptien Baher Mohamed, un autre journaliste de la chaîne.

Les trois hommes avaient été condamnés en juin, MM. Greste et Fahmy à sept ans de prison et M. Mohamed à dix ans de détention.

"La décision d'expulser Peter Greste vers l'Australie a été prise par décret présidentiel", a déclaré à l'AFP un haut responsable du ministère de l'Intérieur.

Le Canada a dit espérer la libération rapide de son ressortissant. Le ministre des Affaires étrangères John Baird, qui s'était rendu en Egypte mi-janvier pour tenter d'obtenir la libération de Mohamed Fahmy, s'est dit "très confiant que le cas de M. Fahmy sera résolu très vite".

"Nous sommes heureux que Peter et sa famille puissent être réunis", a commenté Al-Jazeera Media Network, basé au Qatar. Mais "nous ne retrouverons pas la quiétude tant que Baher et Mohamed ne retrouveront pas aussi la liberté".

Le comité de protection des journalistes (CPJ) a réclamé la libération de tous les reporters emprisonnés en Egypte, soulignant que ce pays est le sixième au monde en nombre de journalistes détenus -- douze selon le dernier recensement de cette ONG en décembre 2014.

Les arrestations de trois journalistes d'Al-Jazeera avaient eu lieu alors que l'Egypte et le Qatar étaient à couteaux tirés après la destitution et l'arrestation par l'armée égyptienne, en juillet 2013, du président islamiste Mohamed Morsi.

Al-Jazeera, qui avait largement couvert les manifestations des partisans de M. Morsi, a été accusée de "soutenir" les Frères musulmans, dont est issu M. Morsi, cibles d'une sanglante répression et décrétés "organisation terroriste" en décembre 2013 par le gouvernement de transition issu de l'armée.

- Tollé international -

L'arrestation et la condamnation des trois journalistes, qui travaillaient en Egypte sans l'accréditation nécessaire selon l'accusation, avaient provoqué un tollé international.

Le 1er janvier, la Cour de cassation a ordonné un nouveau procès mais pas la libération sous caution réclamée par leurs avocats, le nouveau tribunal chargé de les rejurer devant statuer sur la question.

Les familles de MM. Greste et Fahmy avaient réclamé l'expulsion des deux journalistes, en vertu

d'une loi promulguée en novembre autorisant, sur décret présidentiel, l'expulsion des étrangers condamnés à des peines de prison ou en instance de jugement.

Alors que le journaliste égyptien n'est pas éligible à une expulsion, son épouse Jihan a dit dimanche qu'elle espérait "une grâce présidentielle ou un acquittement en appel".

Premier président élu démocratiquement en Egypte en 2012, M. Morsi a été destitué le 3 juillet 2013 par le chef de l'armée d'alors, le général Abdel Fattah al-Sissi. Ce dernier a été élu président 10 mois plus tard, après avoir éliminé toute opposition de la scène politique, islamiste puis laïque et libérale.

Al-Jazeera et ses trois employés, ainsi que les organisations internationales de défense des droits de l'Homme avaient dénoncé un procès "politiques", le régime du président Sissi reprochant au Qatar et à la chaîne d'avoir été le principal soutien des Frères musulmans quand ils étaient au pouvoir de l'été 2012 à l'été 2013, et d'avoir soutenu les manifestants pro-Morsi après sa destitution.

Dans les mois qui ont suivi cette destitution, policiers et soldats ont tué plus de 1.400 manifestants pro-Morsi et plus de 15.000 Frères musulmans ou sympathisants ont été emprisonnés. Des centaines ont été condamnés à mort dans des procès de masse expédiés en quelques minutes.

Le nouveau pouvoir assure, lui, que M. Morsi --qui encourt aussi la peine de mort dans plusieurs procès-- a été destitué à la demande de millions d'Egyptiens qui avaient manifesté fin juin 2013 pour réclamer son départ, l'accusant de ruiner l'économie et de vouloir islamiser à marche forcée la société égyptienne.

EU/AFRICA :

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Commentary: The West's baloney about China-Africa cooperation

Editor: Chen Yue/Xinhua/02-02-2015

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NAIROBI, Feb. 2 (Xinhua) -- In recent years, the West has conjured up fantastic theories like "neocolonialism", "China is exploiting Africa's resources," etc., effectively throwing mud at China over its win-win cooperation with Africa.

These theories, however, have increasingly become unpopular as China and Africa have constantly expanded cooperation in terms of scope and content over the years to focus on building up Africa's ability to sustain its own development and creating a win-win scenario.

At the just concluded African Union summit in the Ethiopian capital, the world witnessed the birth of a "century document" detailing China-Africa cooperation on infrastructure projects across the African continent.

Spanning nearly half a century and covering the entire African continent, this memorandum of understanding (MOU) has elevated China's win-win relationship with Africa to a new height.

While African leaders embraced the blueprint designed to improve Africa's infrastructure, which has long been stifling economic growth, some Western media were obviously not happy about it.

Floating terms like "concrete diplomacy", "neocolonialism", etc, they opted to be a jealousy kind who loathed being sidelined and conspired to drive a wedge between two partners who do not fear to work up a sweat for better future.

"When the West labels Chinese aid and infrastructural projects in Africa as neocolonial, it is a question of sour grapes," said Professor Munene Macharia, lecturer of international relations with Kenya-based United States International University.

The notoriety of the West's colonization in Africa, which lasted for hundreds of years dating back to the 15th century, is well-known to the world. Even today, Western powers, in particular those in western Europe separated from Africa only by the Mediterranean, cannot break out of a mentality to see Africa as their "backyard".

Long gone is the history of enslavement in Africa. But the ills of one-sided economic structure and backward infrastructure, left behind by Western colonizers, are not easily remedied. Today, Africa remains the only continent that has not realized industrialization. Its weak status in the global economy had roots in the colonial past.

Nowadays, natural resources like oil, gas and minerals in many African countries are in fact controlled by Western powers, who have taken advantage of their dominant role in the global economic and trade order. On the other hand, Africa has gained little as it has long been treated by the West as a material supplier and market to dump industrial products.

"The West is not happy that China is assisting Africa to overcome one of its biggest challenges that it faces today," said Macharia. "The West has been in Africa for a long time but has never made development of Africa's infrastructure as a priority."

"The Western nations only develop infrastructure in Africa that helped to ship Africa's resources to the West," said Dr. Gerishon Ikiara, lecturer of international economics with University of Nairobi, and ex-Permanent Secretary with Kenya's Ministry of Transport and Communications.

The West's defamation will not eclipse China's honesty and sincerity with African brothers. In a vivid description of the vision of cooperation with Africa, Chinese President Xi Jinping said that the phoenix will come if the nest is built and that teaching one to fish is better than giving him a fish.

By tackling infrastructure, China and Africa have chosen to root out a bottleneck that has long checked Africa's economic growth, and clear the way for Africa to promote self-sustained development and accelerate industrialization.

As a Chinese saying goes, "wealth is not far away if roads are built". China is willing to share with Africa the most valuable experience it has learned and has been practicing over the past 30- odd years of reform and opening up and rapid economic growth.

Facts speak louder than words. China has long been helping Africa with infrastructure development and have completed 1,046 projects, built railways with the total length of 2,233 km and highways with the total length of 3,530 km in Africa, making tangible contributions to the improvement of

living and working conditions in Africa.

The acrimony and suspicion was obvious as certain Western media hyped up the so-called "concrete diplomacy" in an attempt to belittle China's assistance with Africa in defusing the bottleneck and improving infrastructure.

As the world's second largest economy, China has become more sophisticated in dealing with such Western media hypes.

"Some say that China is conducting 'concrete diplomacy' by helping Africa with infrastructure development. I believe that is what badly needed by Africa in pursuing economic growth," Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying told a recent press briefing.

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EN BREF, CE 02 Février 2015... AGNEWS/ DAM, NY, 02/02/2015