



(Student protests in South Africa are taking on an increasingly violent tone following clashes between black and white students at several universities this week. Academic activities are suspended indefinitely.)

BURUNDI :

UA-Burundi: l'opposition déçue à l'issue d'une première journée de consultations

Par RFI/le 26-02-2016

Ce jeudi marquait le premier jour de discussions au Burundi pour la délégation de haut niveau de l'Union africaine. Composée de cinq dirigeants africains, cette délégation est chargée de mener des consultations pour convaincre de la nécessité d'un dialogue inclusif hors du Burundi pour tenter de sortir de la crise qui secoue le pays. La rencontre avec le président Nkurunziza a été reportée à vendredi à cause du retard pris sur le programme. La délégation a toutefois rencontré en fin d'après-midi les représentants religieux et de la société civile, mais aussi les acteurs politiques. Si côté pouvoir, on reste discret, l'opposition, elle, affiche déjà clairement son mécontentement.

La délégation de l'UA est composée des présidents sud-africain, mauritanien, sénégalais, gabonais et du Premier ministre éthiopien. Jeudi, c'est le président Jacob Zuma qui a mené la plupart des échanges, au cours d'une rencontre d'environ deux heures. Face à la délégation, une douzaine de partis de la majorité d'un côté et, de l'autre, deux hommes : les leaders du Frodebu et de l'Uprona, rares représentants de l'opposition à ne pas être en exil.

A la sortie, la majorité n'était pas disponible pour réagir. Les autorités préfèrent, elles, attendre la rencontre avec le président Nkurunziza avant tout commentaire. L'opposition, en revanche, ne cache pas sa déception.

Charles Nditije accuse la délégation de n'être venue qu'entériner le maintien au pouvoir de Pierre

Nkurunziza. Selon le président de l'Uprona, Jacob Zuma aurait exclu que la question du 3ème mandat figure à l'agenda du dialogue, et demandé aux opposants de respecter la décision pourtant contestée de la Cour constitutionnelle, qui avait fini par valider la candidature de Pierre Nkurunziza.

« Rien de concret n'a été proposé pour mettre fin aux violences, rien de concret non plus pour le dialogue. Non seulement aucune date n'a été donnée, mais les dirigeants ont très peu insisté sur la nécessité d'inclure tous les opposants » poursuit Charles Nditije.

Un membre de la délégation récuse, lui, tout penchant en faveur du pouvoir : « les discussions continuent et nous allons tenter de faire évoluer les positions pour un dialogue le plus inclusif possible » indique cette source.

RWANDA :

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

Will Uganda change constitution for Museveni to stay in power for life?

By REUTERS/Feb. 26, 2016

1. Long-serving president won re-election in disputed vote
2. Age limit blocks him from running again, could be changed
3. Opposition leader vows to continue "defiance campaign"

While Ugandans spar over President Yoweri Museveni's disputed re-election this month, a bigger battle is already looming: whether the country will change its constitution to allow him to stay in power for life.

Museveni, 71, who came to power in 1986 and has endeared himself to the West by fighting militants in the region, is barred from the next election in 2021 because he will be past the constitutional age limit of 75 for presidential candidates.

But rivals, experts and voters said they expected Museveni to remove the age cap, following the February 18 election that saw him win 60 per cent of the votes. The opposition has challenged the result, saying it was rigged, but authorities deny the charge.

Museveni's critics say he is following a well-trodden path of African leaders trying to stay in power for life, ignoring calls by the United States and other Western nations for African presidents to stick to constitutional limits and step down.

"Many of these (leaders) have got a very great fear of leaving power, and that cannot be explained rationally," said Nicholas Sengoba, a columnist for Uganda's Daily Monitor.

In a televised interview this week, Museveni appeared to open the door to the possibility. "We don't believe in term limits," Museveni told the BBC. "If you don't want them to be there forever, you vote them out."

Museveni, who led a guerrilla war in the early 1980s that brought him to power, has been credited with bringing relative peace and economic growth to Uganda, a prospective oil producer that nonetheless still suffers poor infrastructure.

Critics fault him for not doing enough to stem high youth unemployment and sweeping corruption, as well as hampering Uganda's progress with a top-down approach to governing. They point to Museveni's tendency to refer to "my oil".

Opposition leader Kizza Besigye, who took 35 per cent of the vote and accused Museveni of rigging the election, told Reuters he expected the president to try to remain in office.

"Whether he changes the constitution or not, a dictator is an unwelcome thing in our country," Besigye said. "The defiance campaign ... will not stop until the dictator is out of power."

Represents stability

On the streets of Kampala, many voters said they would be shocked if Museveni were to relinquish power, either by naming a successor or announcing his retirement. More than three-quarters of Ugandans are under 30 and have never known another president.

In a nation still haunted by decades of chaos under leaders such as Idi Amin, who ran a ruthless police state in the 1970s that killed or tortured an estimated 300,000 people, Museveni still represents stability for many.

"Uganda needs a calm leader," said Benjamin Kashilling, 29, a restaurant manager in Kampala.

Others said it was time to stop the pretence of voting.

"They should just stop bothering us altogether and announce that he has a life presidency," said Sara, 52, who only gave her first name and says the latest vote was rigged. "Stop wasting our time with these elections."

Former UUS President Bill Clinton once heralded Museveni as part of a "new generation" of African leaders who embraced democracy. Now, many Ugandans compare him to Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, who turned 92 this month and has shown no intention of stepping down.

Last year, Rwanda and Congo Republic both changed their constitutions to allow their leaders to seek third terms.

Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to stay in office beyond two terms sparked a crisis that international observers fear could return the country to civil war.

"We have said that there is going to be a review of the constitution. Many areas need to be looked at," Ugandan Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda told Reuters. "As to what happens five years from now, it's the prerogative of the people of Uganda."

For now, Uganda has an age limit but no presidential term limits. Rivals say Museveni is likely to remove the age cap, just as he scrapped term limits a decade ago.

After the latest election, Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) party controls at least 275 of 381 seats in parliament.

SOUTH AFRICA :

South Africa: S. Africa's Zuma Condemns Student Protests

25 February 2016/Deutsche Welle (Bonn)

By Subry Govender

Student protests in South Africa are taking on an increasingly violent tone following clashes between black and white students at several universities this week. Academic activities are suspended indefinitely.

The latest protests in South Africa come in the wake of violent student demands for fees to be abolished late last year across all universities in the country.

Protesting students burned down several buildings at North-West University, forcing administrators to close the campus. The black students are demanding the phasing out of the Afrikaans language from their studies, while white students are claiming that this is an attack on their culture.

At the University of Free State, a group of white students and their supporters attacked black students who ran on to a sports field during an inter-varsity rugby match. The black students were agitating against what they call the exploitation of black workers and the culture of racism they claim still haunts South Africa.

Similar incidents have taken place at the University of Cape Town where students threw human excreta in some departments on Wednesday and three buildings were set on fire early on Thursday at North-West University's Mahikeng campus.

Black students are demanding rapid transformation from the culture of white domination to one where all students and people would be treated equally. "We find ourselves in a situation whereby reconciliation tools have completely collapsed at the University of Free State," student Karabo Kao told DW.

Another student, Benz Mabengwane, complained that "black workers are still subjected to inferiority in the campuses. They are still subjected to poor salaries." This could not be allowed to happen anymore, he added.

'Afrikaans Must Fall'

In November last year, student protestors scored a victory following months of unrest at universities across the country. The administration at the prestigious Stellenbosch University announced that classes would be taught in English instead of Afrikaans, a triumph for increasingly combative students who see the university system as a racist remnant of the country's apartheid past.

During the apartheid era, the Afrikaans language was forced on black students as a medium of instruction.

Activists with the student group Open Stellenbosch had complained that Afrikaans was the language of oppression and that using it in instruction disadvantaged black students.

The South African Students Organization (SASCO) which represents mainly black students has now called for the complete phasing out of Afrikaans from the University of Pretoria. SASCO is adamant that the language hampers African students from entering universities.

"For example, a person who has never spoken Afrikaans comes to the university and enters a residence; the songs sung there are in Afrikaans," the spokesperson for SASCO, Junior Ackotia, said, adding that many traditions practised in student residences have their roots in Afrikaans.

Meanwhile, white Afrikaan students are fighting back. According to Henrico Barnard, the spokesman for the AfriForum Student Organisation, they believe that in the new democratic South Africa they have a right to receive their education in Afrikaans. "We came a long way last year and we joined hands to fight for education because education is actually the key to unite us and make this country go forward," Barnard said. He argues that the campaign "Afrikaans Must Fall" is a direct attack on their culture.

One South Africa for all

While tensions are running high among black students in former white establishment universities, there are some black and white students who believe that the new South Africa belongs to all who live in it and that Nelson Mandela would be saddened by what is taking place now.

The students have held joint demonstrations to promote unity and peace. "This skin is just a skin, two millimeters deep. This racism must stop," student Fabian Schroeder said, adding that they needed to make their stand very clear. "We are here to unite the country."

A spokesperson for the University of Pretoria, Professor Cheryl de la Ray, says academic staff are shocked at the turn of events since they have always promoted transformation in the interests of all students.

Professor Jonathan Jansen, rector of the University of the Free State, says most of his students are not racists but an investigation would be conducted to identify and punish the culprits responsible for the latest outbreaks of racial intolerance.

Pressure mounts on Zuma

University authorities around the country have an uphill task to satisfy the demands of the students. The government has now announced that it would provide a further 18-billion rand (\$11.5 billion, 10 billion euros) to assist poor and needy students but whether this will help to stem the tide for complete transformation from white culture to majority culture remains to be seen.

South African President Jacob Zuma on Thursday condemned the violence and destruction of property by protesting students.

"The burning of university buildings at a time when we are prioritising the education of our youth is inexplicable and can never be condoned," Zuma said in a statement.

Last year, South African students held violent protests against a university fees hike for more than a week. They called on the president to step down and in October President Zuma announced that there would be no increase in fees for students in 2016.

The government is concerned that there are fringe elements behind the students working to create a climate of instability in the country for their own political motives.

Despite threats of arrest, Peres due to travel to South Africa

02/26/2016 /jpost.com

Former president Shimon Peres was scheduled to travel to South Africa this weekend, notwithstanding threats by the Muslim Lawyers Association to have him arrested and prosecuted for “war crimes.”

Peres said that no threat of BDS, arrest or any other attempt to hinder his visit would stop him. He is due to participate in “A Salute to Israel” by the South African Jewish community, which he is due to address on Sunday evening.

The former president will speak of the strategic importance of the deep ties between Israel and South Africa in particular and Israel and the African continent in general, and is expected to emphasize the need to strengthen South African Jewry’s ties to the Jewish state.

Before to his departure, Peres met with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, whose late father, Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya’s founding prime minister and later president, he knew well.

Junk status still likely for South Africa: ratings agency

By News24Wire/February 26, 2016

South Africa’s fiscal budget for 2016 lacks significant policy announcements that will spur GDP growth, or provide enough business confidence, rating agency Standard & Poor’s (S&P) said on Thursday.

It said in a statement that its negative outlook of South Africa was not “immediately affected by the National Treasury’s 2016 budget” and that “no rating actions are currently warranted”.

S&P’s rating of South Africa is the most negative out of the three rating agencies, which includes Moody’s and Fitch.

South Africans were hoping Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan’s budget speech would convince the rating agencies that the country could pull itself out of its economic rut.

Moody’s reacted immediately on Wednesday, saying it was concerned that the specific revenue measures that will accomplish the smaller deficits predicted for 2017/18 and 2018/19 have not yet been identified.

“Only a rating committee may determine a rating action and, as these developments (listed below) were not viewed as material to the ratings, neither they nor this report were reviewed by a rating committee,” S&P said in a statement.

The rand was trading 0.78% stronger to the dollar on Thursday at R15.54.

In December, before Nhlanhla Nene was fired as finance minister, S&P kept the long- and short-term foreign currency sovereign credit ratings on South Africa at BBB-/A-3 and BBB+/A-2 for the long- and short-term local currency ratings.

S&P said Treasury's budget projections are consistent with its assumptions of planned fiscal consolidation, albeit against a sharp downward revision of GDP growth in 2016.

"The negative outlook reflects our view that GDP growth might be lower than we currently expect; for instance, due to persistent electricity shortages, continued weak business confidence, or labour disputes escalating again," it said in December.

Treasury confirmed this outlook in its budget review on Wednesday, saying GDP growth is estimated to be 0.9% in 2016, 1.7% in 2017 and 2.4% in 2018. "This is considerably lower than last year's estimates," it said.

Updating its view on Thursday, S&P said GDP growth rates are still subdued, and will likely remain so in the medium term, posing a threat to consolidation plans.

"The announced budget lacks significant policy announcements that we think would immediately spur GDP growth, or provide much-needed business confidence to the private sector," it said.

It warned that labour relations had the potential to further stagnate GDP growth this year in the mining sector.

"We consider South Africa's fiscal consolidation remains vulnerable to lower-than-expected GDP growth and shortfalls in revenues," it said.

Moody's also said Treasury's revised growth forecasts of 0.9% and 1.7% are still slightly more optimistic than its own predictions of 0.5% for 2016 and 1.5% for 2017.

S&P said it noted that the budget's ambitious fiscal consolidation targets for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, which aim to reduce fiscal deficits at a faster pace than the Treasury previously anticipated.

It believes the fiscal trajectory will be exposed to contingent liabilities resulting from state-owned entities with weak balance sheets, which may require more support than what the government has currently provided.

"Debt-servicing costs are vulnerable to the domestic interest rate environment and to a lesser extent to exchange rate weakness," it said.

Mark Joffe, CEO of Global Credit Ratings, said the budget speech showed a pragmatic approach by Gordhan against a backdrop of subdued economic growth, twin deficits and a rising trend of government debt to gross domestic product.

TANZANIA :

Tanzania Discovers Gas Deposits Near Dar

26 February 2016/The Monitor (Kampala)

By Henry Mwangonde

Dar es Salaam — About 2.17 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of natural gas reserves have been discovered in coast region, the Tanzanian government has confirmed.

Energy and minerals minister Sospeter Muhongo, on Wednesday, said the discovery was made last July at the Ruvu basin onshore block.

The official announcement was delayed because the country was going through a political transition and the oil and gas revenues management Act 2015, which gives the minister powers to make such a declaration, was not yet operational, according to Mr Muhongo.

"Now that the law has come into effect and a new government is in power, we are ready to make an international announcement that we have discovered more gas reserves, but there are a few things being sorted out by the Attorney General's chambers before we do so," he said.

Mr Muhongo said he would soon officially announce the discovery, which, he added, would be a big boost to the country's endeavour to have reliable energy sources.

The minister was speaking on the sidelines of a meeting in Tanzanian capital Dar es Salaam that brought together government and oil and gas companies.

Mr Pilavulathill Surendran, the CEO of Dodsal Hydrocarbons and Power (Tanzania) Ltd, which is conducting gas exploration at Ruvu basin, said the discovery was made through three wells drilled by the company, adding that there was a possibility of more gas being discovered in the area.

"We have learnt that there are huge potentials of hydrocarbons in Tanzania. We expect to have more gas discoveries in the near future," he said.

Mr Surendran added that the discovery was significant in that it was made close to Dar es Salaam, which, he said, is the main local market and a gateway to others.

The company started oil exploration at Ruvu in 2007 after signing a production sharing agreement with the government and acquiring possession of an onshore oil and gas concession called the Ruvu Block, located 30km west of Dar es Salaam.

The firm plans to increase its investment in the country by injecting an additional \$50 million (Shs168 billion) into its operations in the next twelve months.

According to the ministry of Energy and Minerals, natural gas reserves discovered in the country increased by 18 per cent to 55.08tcf in April 2015, from 46.5tcf in June 2014.

The government has set aside \$6m (Shs20 billion) in its 2015/16 budget for assessment and compensation of 450 people living where the facility will be built.

According to Mr Muhongo, the project will be the third largest in the country's history after the Tanzania-Zambia Railway and the Mtwara gas pipeline.

Gas potential

Tanzania's natural gas reserves currently stand at about 55tcf following new deep sea discoveries off the country's southern coast. Tanzania is also finalising plans to set up a liquefied natural gas processing plant in Lindi.

Kenya's fuel retailer exit Tanzania, Congo markets

DAILY NEWS Reporter and Agencies/26 February 2016

Kenya's third largest oil marketer KenolKobil has pulled out of Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo markets blaming tax evasion practices that made them unable to compete in the market.

The oil dealer Wednesday announced its exit from the two markets, in a brief statement sent to the Kenya's Capital Markets Authority, and copied to the Nairobi Securities Exchange and the Central Depository and Settlement Corporation.

The company said it had relinquished its shareholding in Kenol Tanzania, which operates 17 fuel stations, and in KenolKobil Congo SPRL, which owns a 4,000 cubic meter dry storage facility in Lubumbashi but did not give reasons behind the decision.

However, the Chief Executive David Ohana is quoted by international news agencies to blame business practices in both Tanzania and the DRC for the company's decision to exit both markets.

"In every country we operate in, we comply with the rules. When people don't pay taxes, you can't compete with them," he said, adding the Tanzania business was not making money.

"There is a lot of tax evasion in those two markets and we don't want to compromise ourselves," he is further quoted as saying. The exit of the Kenya's fuel retailer came at the time when the government has tighten noose on tax evasion in the lucrative oil industry.

The government ordered owners of all petrol stations across Tanzania to install special devices connected directly to fuel pumps to monitor business transactions as part of a wider crackdown on tax evaders in the country's \$3 billion-a-year oil import industry.

The state-run Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) said in a public notice last week that all petrol stations in Tanzania must have the special electronic fiscal devices (EFDs) installed by March 1 this year.

"These special EFDs will be directly connected to (the) fuel pumps," TRA acting commissioner general Alphayo Kadata said in the statement. He warned that oil marketing companies that fail to heed the directive would face stern penalties, including the shutting down of their petrol stations.

The order came a few days after Prime Minister, Kassim Majaliwa, suspended two senior officials of the state-run Weight and Measures Agency (WMA) after it was revealed that oil flow metres at the Dar es Salaam port had remained unused for the past five years.

The metres were supposed to monitor fuel imports into the country for purposes of ensuring proper government revenue collection.

KENYA :

Kenya: Somali Leader - '200 Kenyan Troops' Dead in January Raid

25 February 2016/Al Jazeera (Doha)

Up to 200 Kenyan soldiers were killed in an attack on their camp in Somalia by al-Shabab last month, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said - although Kenya rejected the figure.

On January 15, dozens of heavily-armed al-Shabab fighters assaulted a Kenyan-run military base for African Union peacekeepers in the southern Somali town of El-Ade, not far from the Kenyan border.

"When about 200 soldiers who came to help your country are killed in one morning, it is not something trivial," Mohamud told Somali Cable TV, a privately owned station. The interview was posted on YouTube on Thursday.

"We have been winning for years and months but that El-Ade battle, we were defeated. Yes, in war, sometimes something that you do not like happens to you," the Somali president added.

Kenyan authorities have refused to give a death toll following the attack, which targeted troops working under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

But Kenya Defence Forces spokesman, Colonel David Obonyo, denied the number given by the Somali president and questioned the source of the information.

"It is not true. This information never came from us or anyone in the government of Kenya," he told the Reuters news agency on Thursday.

Series of attacks

Newspaper pictures of coffins draped with Kenyan flags bringing back dead soldiers after last month's attack increased the disquiet from ordinary Kenyans and the opposition alike over Kenya's continued presence in Somalia.

Al-Shabab later distributed photos purporting to show the bodies of dozens of Kenyan soldiers, many apparently shot in the head.

Kenya sent soldiers into Somalia in 2011 after raids in the border region and kidnappings that threatened the tourism industry in the region's biggest economy and wider regional destabilisation. It later joined the AMISOM operation.

Al-Shabab's attacks in Kenya have included a raid by gunmen on the upscale Westgate shopping mall in 2013 and a university in Garissa in 2015. Hundreds of people have been killed in al-Shabab attacks in the past two years.

The group has been driven out of major strongholds in Somalia by AMISOM and Somali army offensives, but it still controls some rural areas and often launches guerrilla-style assaults and bomb attacks.

Al-Shabab, which has links to al-Qaeda and seeks to overthrow Somalia's Western-backed government, initially said it had killed more than 100 soldiers in the attack.

The group, which is also seeking to drive the AU force out of Somalia, often says its attacks against Kenyan targets are retaliation for its participation in AMISOM, which also includes Uganda and Burundi.

Mogadishu attack

The release of President Mohamud's interview came as at least three people were killed and nine wounded on Thursday when al-Shabab fired mortars at the presidential palace in Somalia's capital Mogadishu, health officials said.

The wounded, including three children, were brought to the Dar-ul Shifa hospital from the Ago dhiig area of the Warta Nabada district, hospital director Mohamed Abas told Al Jazeera.

Al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the midday attack and confirmed it was aimed at the palace.

"We fired nine mortars at the presidential palace and most of them hit their intended target," Abdulaziz Abu Muscab, the group's military spokesman, told Al Jazeera.

"The attack is part of our ongoing operations in Mogadishu," Muscab said.

The group attempted similar mortar attacks on the palace earlier in February, and also in January.

Kenya plagued by tribalism and looting - Uhuru

By OLIVER MATHENGE/the-star.co.ke/Feb. 26, 2016

Kenyans have mastered the art of stealing, promoting tribalism and hurling insults, President Uhuru Kenyatta said on Wednesday.

Addressing Kenyan students in Israel, he admitted Kenya faces unending problems created by its own citizens.

Speaking in Swahili, Uhuru accused Kenyans of not supporting the government's efforts to deal with the country's problems.

"When we walk, it is crying ... it is stealing ... we have the expertise (laughs) ... of stealing, insulting each other, doing other evil things ... perpetuating tribalism," he said.

"These others have come from different countries, united in uplifting the security and livelihood of their citizens. And even, we Kenyans, God has blessed us with a country that is 20 times better than the one we are in [Israel]." The President was on a state visit to Israel to woo investors.

He said Kenyans should focus on improving the country to see growth and improve the livelihoods of all its citizens.

"Please, let us learn from our friends and I am sure if we can, in a very short period of time, we can transform our country," Uhuru said.

The head of state's comments come at a time the country is engaged in a heated debate on the Sh791 National Youth Service scandal.

The NYS is one of the President's pet projects and fresh details reveal key political leaders in his

Jubilee administration may have been at the centre of the scandal.

Among them are former Devolution CS Anne Waiguru, National Assembly majority leader Aden Duale, Elgeyo Marakwet Senator Kipchumba Murkomen and Treasury CS Henry Rotich. The Jubilee administration has faced numerous queries on public spending, with the NYS and the Eurobond being the most prominent.

Uhuru's government has also been accused of nepotism, with allegations most jobs have gone to persons from two regions – Central and Rift Valley.

The President draws the majority of his political support from Central, while Deputy President William Ruto's backyard is the Rift Valley.

Uhuru's statement comes a month after outgoing Chief Justice Willy Mutunga said Kenya is run by mafia-style cartels of political chiefs and corrupt businesspeople.

"Eighty per cent of political leaders are not fit to hold office and corruption has never been worse in the bandit economy," he said in an interview with Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad.

Kenya President Irks Palestinians With Visit to West Bank Settlement

JTA/forward.com/February 25, 2016

Kenya's president was validating Israel's occupation of the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem with his visits there on his first official trip to Israel, Palestinian leaders said.

Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi said Thursday that the Palestinians plan to complain to the African Union and other regional organizations about Uhuru Kenyatta's trip this week, The Associated Press reported. Kenyatta did not visit any Palestinian cities, further roiling the Palestinians.

"This is an important foreign visit that was planned long ago," Israel's Foreign Ministry said, according to Army Radio citing the Times of Israel. "The request to visit Ramallah was filed at the last minute and unfortunately there is no way to approve it."

Kenyatta, who arrived in Israel on Monday for a three-day state visit, was making the first trip by a Kenyan president since Daniel Moi in 1994, according to The Jerusalem Post.

In the West Bank, Kenyatta went to a kibbutz on the Dead Sea where Kenyan students are participating in an irrigation training program. He also went to the Western Wall, in the eastern part of Jerusalem, which Israel conquered in the Six-Day War.

Kenyatta and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signed agreements on irrigation and agriculture, strengthening already solid ties between the countries. According to Kenya's The Daily Nation, the two nations also committed to joint security training.

Israel also agreed to consider a proposal to bring in more Kenyan workers, The Daily Nation reported. Kenya's ambassador to Israel, Agostino Njoroge, told the publication that the number of Kenyan workers in Israel has dropped to 200 from 2,000 in the past 10 years as a result of Israel's tougher immigration laws and security concerns.

Kenya is seeking an agreement to have recruitment agencies contract Kenyan workers for short

stints in the Jewish state and also wants to increase the number of Kenyan students undergoing agricultural training in Israel.

The Daily Nation said the Israeli government is funding free training for 100 Kenyans in irrigation engineering in Israel.

Kenyatta's spokesperson did not immediately respond to the AP's request for comment about the Palestinians.

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

Elections au Niger: l'opposition remet en cause le travail de la Céni

Par RFI/le 26-02-2016

La Céni est encore dans le collimateur de l'opposition. Les quatre candidats Amadou Boubacar Cissé, Hama Amadou, Seyni Omarou et Mahamane Ousmane, leaders de la Copa, la coalition pour l'alternance 2016, sont revenus jeudi à la charge contre la commission électorale, après l'avoir déjà accusée en milieu de semaine de complicité avec le pouvoir. Au vu des multiples dysfonctionnements qu'ils dénoncent, ils préviennent qu'ils se réservent le droit de rejeter l'intégralité des résultats de la présidentielle et des législatives.

Un des reproches de l'opposition, c'est de voir la Céni diffuser des résultats qui ne sont pas en adéquation, dit-elle, avec ceux mentionnés sur les procès-verbaux. Et pour en apporter la preuve, elle promet de diffuser ce vendredi des exemples concrets. L'opposition demande aussi la suspension du site internet de la Céni, qui aurait dû, selon elle, diffuser les résultats bureau par bureau.

Ousseïni Salatou, porte-parole de la Copa 2016. « La Copa 2016 marque son inquiétude par rapport au site de la Céni, qui ne remplit pas les conditions fixées d'un commun accord entre la Céni, les partenaires techniques et les partis politiques. Ce site sert d'organe de propagande au profit du candidat Issoufou Mahamadou pour préparer les esprits à son machiavélique dessein d'usurpation du pouvoir par des voies frauduleuses et illégales. »

Le site internet est conforme à ce qui était prévu explique en réponse Ibrahim Boubé, président de la Céni. « Nous n'avons jamais pris l'engagement de publier les résultats bureau par bureau en temps réel. Nous avons pris l'engagement de publier les résultats bureau par bureau trois jours, 72h après la publication des résultats globaux provisoires. Tout le monde sait qu'il est matériellement impossible de publier en temps réel les résultats bureau par bureau. »

Accusé de publier des chiffres qu'il n'a pas vérifiés, le président de la Céni assure qu'il ne peut y avoir de falsification entre les bureaux et le niveau central.

En attendant, suite à des retards dans la transmission des résultats de plusieurs communes, la proclamation des résultats de la présidentielle et des législatives prévue jeudi a finalement été

reportée. Elle aura lieu ce vendredi assure le président de la Céli.

Au vu des chiffres donnés jusque-là par la commission électorale, le président Issoufou arrive en tête, suivi des deux opposants Hama Amadou, et Seyni Oumarou. La question est de savoir s'il y aura un seul tour comme le clame déjà le camp présidentiel ou deux comme l'assure l'opposition.

UN/AFRICA :

1 Million Remain Stateless in W. Africa, UN Says

Reuters/February 25, 2016

DAKAR, SENEGAL—

More than 20,000 people in West Africa have gained identity documents in the past year as part of a drive to eradicate statelessness, yet about 1 million in the region still have no nationality, the United Nations said Thursday.

Stateless people, sometimes referred to as legal ghosts, are not accepted as citizens by any country, which means they are denied basic rights — leaving many unable to work or access health care — and are vulnerable to exploitation and traffickers.

Many West Africans are left stateless by laws that prevent women from passing their nationality to their children and a lack of birth registrations, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said.

About 22,000 people in Ivory Coast, Benin and Mali have received identity documents or birth certificates since the 15-member Economic Community of West African States signed a declaration in January last year that it would end statelessness.

"Thousands of people who, until now, did not have a determined nationality will come out of the shadows," said Liz Ahua, UNHCR regional representative for West Africa. "Thanks to the reforms currently being implemented in several states in West Africa, these men, women and children will finally be able to obtain a legal identity."

Nations' responses

Several West African countries have adopted action plans to tackle the issue, the UNHCR said. Guinea, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Togo are reviewing their nationality laws, while Senegal is working on a law to protect children from being born stateless.

"Thousands of children in West Africa, such as street children, are not declared at birth. ... They can be easily exploited by human traffickers or forced to work," said Emmanuelle Mitte, UNHCR senior regional protection officer.

There are an estimated 10 million stateless people worldwide, with other big populations in Nepal, Myanmar and Thailand.

The UNHCR launched a global #ibelong campaign to end statelessness within a decade in November 2014.

S. Africa pulls out of UN-AU mission in Sudan's Darfur

AFP/February 26, 2016

South Africa has told the United Nations it is withdrawing its troops from the joint UN-African Union mission in Sudan's strife-torn Darfur, a UN official said.

"The government of South Africa decided to withdraw its troops from the mission," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The 850 troops will end operations on April 15.

"Of course, we will have to look at the contingency in terms of how we fill those gaps," she said.

Relations between Sudan and the United Nations have been tense over Khartoum's demands that the 17,000-strong UNAMID peacekeeping mission shut down.

South Africa's decision to pull out comes after five weeks of intense fighting that have sent some 85,000 people fleeing in the Jebel Marra area, while UN officials are seeking to verify reports of an additional 50,000 on the move.

"It's a very large number for a very short period of time," said the official.

The 85,000 civilians, mostly women and children, have fled to north Darfur, but UN officials are seeking access to central Darfur where unconfirmed reports suggest 50,000 people have been driven from their homes there.

The Khartoum government has denied access to UNAMID, said the official.

A large influx of 63,000 civilians taking refuge at the UNAMID camp set up at Sortoni, in north Darfur, is prompting concerns.

"We are very concerned by the swelling of the makeshift camp at Sortoni. 63,000 people is a large number of civilians," said the official.

"We are very concerned on how in the mid-term we can deal with this."

Sudan's army has been trying to crush rebels of Abdulwahid Nur's faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA-AW) in Jebel Marra, saying it was responding to attacks by the rebels.

The UN says that some 300,000 people have been killed in the fighting in Darfur since 2003 and 2.5 million displaced.

US/AFRICA :

U.S. Plans to Put Advisers on Front Lines of Nigeria's War on Boko Haram

FEB. 25, 2016/nytimes.com

DAKAR, Senegal — The Pentagon is poised to send dozens of Special Operations advisers to the

front lines of Nigeria's fight against the West African militant group Boko Haram, according to military officials, the latest deployment in conflicts with the Islamic State and its allies.

Their deployment would push American troops hundreds of miles closer to the battle that Nigerian forces are waging against an insurgency that has killed thousands of civilians in the country's northeast as well as in neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon. By some measures, Boko Haram is the world's deadliest terrorist group.

The deployment is a main recommendation of a recent confidential assessment by the top United States Special Operations commander for Africa, Brig. Gen. Donald C. Bolduc. If it is approved, as expected, by the Defense and State Departments, the Americans would serve only in noncombat advisory roles, military officials said.

Even as President Obama has drawn down the large American armies sent to Iraq and Afghanistan, he has relied heavily on Special Operations forces to train and advise local troops fighting the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, and to carry out clandestine counterterrorism missions.

Already, about 50 American commandos are advising fighters battling the Islamic State in eastern Syria. Scores more in a new, secret kill-or-capture unit are hunting Islamic State militants in Iraq. The Pentagon has offered to send American advisers with Iraqi brigades on the battlefield instead of restricting them to bases inside Iraq. Dozens of American commandos are conducting surveillance missions in Libya and counterterrorism missions in Somalia.

"Rather than entangle U.S. combat forces on the ground, help build the capacity of regional forces to tackle their countries' security challenges," said Jennifer G. Cooke, Africa director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, who visited Nigeria last month. "Training and advising and perhaps imparting the lessons we learned the hard way is a good thing."

Since taking office last year, Nigeria's president, Muhammadu Buhari, has vowed to pursue a military campaign against Boko Haram more vigorously than his predecessor, Goodluck Jonathan. His shake-up of the military high command and new cooperation with neighboring countries has proved effective.

Mr. Buhari, a former general, has boasted of the military's successes in wresting control of a huge portion of terrain from the group, declaring a "technical" victory late last year. But while the military has killed or captured thousands of militants and put an end to raids of villages by dozens or more fighters, the group has still carried out suicide attacks at a relentless pace in Nigeria and neighboring countries.

"Despite losing territory in 2015, Boko Haram will probably remain a threat to Nigeria throughout 2016 and will continue its terror campaign within the country and in neighboring Cameroon, Niger and Chad," James R. Clapper, the director of national intelligence, told the House Intelligence Committee in Washington on Thursday.

To help combat this threat, Mr. Buhari has embraced American assistance, ending several years of tense relations that sank to new lows in 2014 when the United States blocked the sale of American-made Cobra attack helicopters to Nigeria from Israel, amid concerns about Nigeria's protection of civilians when conducting military operations.

Groups like Human Rights Watch say the Nigerian military has at times burned hundreds of homes and committed other abuses as it battled Boko Haram and its presumed supporters.

Nigeria's ambassador to the United States responded sharply at the time, accusing Washington of hampering the country's effort to defeat Boko Haram. American officials also expressed hesitancy about sharing intelligence with the Nigerian military, fearing their ranks had been infiltrated by Boko Haram, an accusation that further infuriated Nigerian leaders.

In December 2014, Nigeria canceled the last stage of American training of a new Nigerian Army battalion that was to take the lead in fighting terrorists.

Those days now seem over. This month Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the State Department's top diplomat for Africa, announced that the suspended training for the Nigerian infantry battalion would resume soon. Nigeria will provide the ammunition.

Two weeks ago, Gen. David M. Rodriguez, the head of the Pentagon's Africa Command, hosted Nigeria's chief of defense staff, Gen. Abayomi Gabriel Olonisakin, at the American headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany. "To contain Boko Haram, working together is a priority," General Rodriguez told his visitor.

About 250 American service members have deployed to a military base in Garoua, Cameroon, where United States surveillance drones flying over northeastern Nigeria are sending imagery to African troops. Drone photos recently helped the Nigerian Army avoid a major Boko Haram ambush, according to a senior American intelligence officer.

Another breakthrough occurred late last year when General Bolduc, a Green Beret with multiple Special Forces tours in Afghanistan, visited Nigeria. When officials there asked for assistance, General Bolduc quickly sent an assessment team to conduct a 30-day review.

Among the team's main recommendations was to position "small dozens" of Special Forces in Maiduguri, a major city in the northeast on the edge of the conflict, to help Nigerian military planners carry out a more effective counterterrorism campaign. British special forces are already assisting in the city. (The American military now maintains only a tiny intelligence cell in Abuja, Nigeria's capital.) Nigerian military officials have embraced the recommendations and are drawing up detailed requests, American officials said.

Just last fall, life seemed to be turning back to normal in the areas near Maiduguri, which for years had been the epicenter of Boko Haram's activities. But after a major military operation uprooted the militants from nearby villages they had seized, many fighters have returned to Maiduguri to launch repeated suicide bombing operations in the city or in villages on the outskirts that have caused dozens of deaths.

At the end of last year, fighters attacked the city with rocket-propelled grenades and several suicide bombs. Residents say they eye one another with suspicion, especially women wearing religious gowns, fearful that explosives may be hidden underneath.

These relentless attacks have put more pressure on Nigeria and its neighbors to marshal their forces against a common enemy.

After taking office last year, Mr. Buhari began forging relationships with the presidents of neighboring countries to establish information-sharing and to build trust between his nation and Niger, Cameroon and Chad. But grouping the four nations together to share information and untangling decades of mistrust among them have proved harder.

A regional task force established by the countries last year has largely stalled amid lingering distrust

and differing views about the threat. Less than half of the task force's \$700 million budget has been raised, and sinking oil prices have hurt the economies of Chad and Nigeria, Ms. Cooke said in congressional testimony this week.

Still, working together has yielded victories.

Earlier this month, the Cameroonians teamed up with the Nigerian military as part of a joint operation on Nigerian soil just across the border in the far north, killing more than 160 Boko Haram fighters, dismantling a logistics hub for the fighters and destroying explosive devices, according to officials there.

CANADA/AFRICA :

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