

Business and Politics in the Muslim World
West African News Monitoring
Weekly Report 106
07, February -13 February 2010
By Mustapha Shafi

Table of Contents

Headlines	2
Summary	4
Detail of the news	9
Political news	9
Economy/ Energy	32
Health Issues	40
Human Rights	41
Pan-African issues	47
Editorials	50

Headlines

Political News:

Liberia: Ex-minister in payroll scandal

Nigeria: 1. protocol embarrassed Acting President Jonathan.
2. Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, Chief Mike Aondoakaa (SAN), Demoted.
3. Can the acting president fight a robust war against corruption with his wife facing money-laundering charges?
4. Nigerian VP's Address the Executive council.
5. Nigerian MPs visit Yar'Adua

Togo: Togo delays presidential polls

Côte d'Ivoire: 1. Protestors go on a rampage
2. UN on Alert as Country Halts Voter Registration Due to Tensions
3. Ivory Coast president dissolves Gov't

Guinea-Conakry: 1. Religious tension ignites in Guinea
2. Exile of junta leader sparks hope in Guinea
3. Diallo to head transition council

Senegal: African singers to raise money for Haiti

Mali: 1. Toure 'optimistic' for hostages
2. No prisoner exchanges
3. Negotiators meet al-Qaeda
4. Hostage - French FM in Mali

Niger: 1. Niger opposition slams deal Togo
2. Talks on Niger crisis suspended

Burkina Faso: Date set for Burkina Faso polls

GHANA: Constitution under the Knife

Economy/Energy:

Nigeria: 1. Shell Explains Divestment in Three Oil Blocks
2. Mend claims pipeline attack
3. Lawmakers probe NNPC on \$85 million Kaduna Refinery expenses

Liberia: Liberia Slammed For Diamonds Abuse

Ghana: 1. Tullow Upbeat about Timeline for First Oil Production.
2. World Bank official urges Ghana to focus on diversified economy.

Health: Benin: Clean water is essential in containing the spread of cholera

Human rights:

Nigeria: 1. Boko Haram: Reps to Probe Al-Jazeera's Footage of Killings.
2. Amnesty Tasks Jonathan on Extra-Judicial Killings.
3. Human Right Watch urges Jonathan to sack Maurice Iwu.
4. Acting President Should Address Abuses

Niger: As Country Faces Severe Food Shortages, UN & Partners Appeal for Aid.

Senegal: West African collaboration for gender equality enhanced by new UN initiative.

Liberia: Liberian kids face exploitation

Pan-African issues:

- A Type of Africa Gaddafi Can Buy
- AU hails Nigeria power transfer

Editorials:

- **Ghana:** Can Oil Turn Economy Around?
- **Nigeria:** Power Transition - Jonathan's First Step

Summary

Political news:

Liberia: Ex-minister in payroll scandal

Liberia's ex-information minister Laurence Bropleh has been charged with corruption after being accused of pocketing the salaries of fictional employees, according to an indictment seen on Friday.

Nigeria: 1. protocol embarrassed Acting President Jonathan.

ACTING President Goodluck Jonathan could not get a triumphant entry into the Federal Executive Council (FEC) chambers meeting, on Wednesday, as the protocol officers did not usher him in, as was done to substantive presidents.

2. Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, Chief Mike Aondoakaa (SAN), Demoted.

Acting President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, sat for the first time on the seat of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in the council chamber yesterday. He carried out a minor cabinet reshuffle which saw the controversial Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, Chief Mike Aondoakaa (SAN), redeployed to the Special Duties ministry.

3. Can the acting president fight a robust war against corruption with his wife facing money-laundering charges?

Immediately after assuming office as the acting president yesterday, Goodluck Jonathan made a national broadcast to the nation. He promised many things, one of which is the prosecution of the war on corruption with renewed vigour.

4. Nigerian VP's Address the Executive council.

Nigerian Vice President Goodluck Jonathan assumed office as acting president on Tuesday more than two months after President Umaru Yar'Adua left for medical treatment in Saudi Arabia. Below are excerpts from his speech

5. Nigerian MPs visit Yar'Adua

Nigerian lawmakers were in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to meet ailing President Umaru Yar'Adua, whose 10-week hospitalization in the kingdom has sparked political turmoil in Abuja, an embassy official said.

Togo: Togo delays presidential polls

Togo's presidential election set for February 28 has been delayed until March 4 following an opposition request, a presidential decree read out on state television announced on Thursday.

Côte d'Ivoire: 1. Protestors go on a rampage

Demonstrators on Tuesday burned down a sub-prefecture building in Ivory Coast in protest at the possible striking off of the electoral roll of people of foreign descent, locals said.

2. UN on Alert as Country Halts Voter Registration

Due to Tensions

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon voiced concern today about events in Côte d'Ivoire, where the Government has suspended voter registration ahead of this year's already delayed presidential election because of rising tensions.

3. Ivory Coast president dissolves Gov't

Ivory Coast President Laurent Gbagbo on state television on Friday sacked the government and dismissed the electoral commission because of a crisis sparked by alleged fraud by the commission's head.

Guinea-Conakry: 1. Religious tension ignites in Guinea

Clashes between Christians and Muslims in eastern Guinea have left one person dead and two missing, police have said.

2. Exile of junta leader sparks hope in Guinea

After only a year in power, Guinea's hated coup leader is in exile, his departure having breathed surprising new life into a country he had terrorized, and hopes are even stirring that the nation will hold its first democratic elections in half a century.

3. Diallo to head transition council

Guinea's interim president has named a union leader to head a council charged with managing a transition from military to civilian rule, a decree read on state radio and television said on Monday.

Senegal: African singers to raise money for Haiti

West and Central African singing stars will record a song in early March in the Senegalese capital Dakar to raise money for victims of last month's earthquake in Haiti, the musical project's leader said on Wednesday.

Mali: 1. Toure 'optimistic' for hostages

Mali's President Amadou Toumani Toure said on Saturday he is optimistic about the fate of six Europeans held in his country by the North African branch of al-Qaeda.

2. No prisoner exchanges

Mali will not give in to demands from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to free Islamist radicals held in its prisons in exchange for a French hostage, security sources said on Monday.

3. Negotiators meet al-Qaeda

Two Malian negotiators on Friday met leaders of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in a bid to free six European hostages held in the northern Mali desert, one of the negotiators told AFP.

4. Hostage - French FM in Mali

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner arrived unexpectedly in Mali on Saturday, a week ahead of a deadline set by an al-Qaeda-linked group threatening the life of a French hostage, government and airport sources said.

Niger: 1. Niger opposition slams deal

Niger's opposition has accused President Mamadou Tandja's government of fraud over an 11 million euro deal with a Chinese company to provide pre-fabricated classrooms for schools.

2. Talks on Niger crisis suspended

Talks between Niger's government and the opposition to end a political crisis in the poor West African country were suspended on Thursday, sources said.

Burkina Faso: Date set for Burkina Faso polls

Burkina Faso will go to polls for presidential elections on November 21 this year, the government announced on Thursday.

GHANA: Constitution under the Knife

After 18 years of successful multi-party democracy, Ghanaians are bracing themselves to review the Fourth Republican Constitution. Following cabinet's approval of a memorandum on the consultative review, government has established an independent body to spearhead the process.

Economic/Energy:

Nigeria: 1. Shell Explains Divestment in Three Oil Blocks

Oil giant Shell has said its recent divestment in the three oil blocks in the Niger Delta - Oil Mining Lease (OMLs) 4, 38 and 41- is aimed at encouraging local participation in the upstream petroleum industry.

2. Mend claims pipeline attack

A Nigerian militant group claimed it had attacked a major oil pipeline operated by a Royal Dutch Shell PLC subsidiary in Nigeria, although the international oil giant could not confirm the attack occurred.

3. Lawmakers probe NNPC on \$85 million Kaduna Refinery expenses

Members of the House of Representatives committee on petroleum resources (downstream), on Thursday, asked the Nigeria National Petroleum Resources (NNPC) to give reasons why the Kaduna Refinery has failed to work despite spending \$85 million on its Turn around Maintenance, while Nigeria presently imports 100 per cent of its domestic fuel use.

Liberia: Liberia Slammed For Diamonds Abuse

United Nations Panel of Expert has indicted Liberia for 'abuse of internal control' for failing to comply in the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification (KPC) system accusing it of exporting diamond valued over US\$7.4m.

Ghana: 1. Tullow Upbeat about Timeline for First Oil Production.

In line with efforts to meet its last quarter of 2010 time line to start pouring Ghana's first commercial oil from the jubilee fields, Tullow Ghana Limited has began the installation

of a number of subsea equipment required for siphoning oil from under the seabed, with the latest being the Christmas Tree.

2. World Bank official urges Ghana to focus on diversified economy

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Managing Director of the World Bank Group on Wednesday, urged Ghana to focus on diversifying her economy and use the expected revenue from oil and gas for socio-economic development.

Health: Benin: Clean water is essential in containing the spread of cholera.

UN health agency stresses good hygiene to prevent cholera spread in Benin
[Clean water is essential in containing the spread of cholera]

Human rights:

Nigeria: 1. Boko Haram: Reps to Probe Al-Jazeera's Footage of Killings.

The House of Representatives yesterday mandated its committees on Human Rights, Police Affairs and Justice to investigate a video clip that has been airing on Al-Jazeera, an international news station which showed extra judicial killings of defenceless cripples and underage citizens by men of the Nigeria Police Force, during the Boko Haram sectarian violence in Borno State, last year.

2. Amnesty Tasks Jonathan on Extra-Judicial Killings.

Amnesty International has called on Acting President Goodluck Jonathan to fulfill the commitments made in his acceptance speech by setting up an independent commission of inquiry into all suspected cases of unlawful killings by the Nigeria Police Force in recent years.

3. Human Right Watch urges Jonathan to sack Maurice Iwu.

An international human rights group, Human Rights Watch, has called on Nigeria's Acting President, Goodluck Jonathan, to dismiss the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Maurice Iwu, in order to enhance the much needed electoral reform.

4. Acting President Should Address Abuses.

Nigeria's acting president, Goodluck Jonathan, should take immediate and concrete steps to address large-scale violence, endemic corruption, a lack of accountability for abuses, and other pressing human rights problems in Nigeria, Human Rights Watch said in a [letter](#) to the newly mandated leader.

Niger: As Country Faces Severe Food Shortages, UN & Partners Appeal for Aid.

With 7.8 million people in Niger - or three fifths of the population - facing moderate to severe food insecurity, the United Nations and its non-governmental organization (NGO) partners today appealed for international aid to help the Government of the impoverished West African country overcome imminent shortages.

Senegal: West African collaboration for gender equality enhanced by new UN initiative.

Gender equality, respect for women's rights and the fight against sexual violence in West Africa received a new weapon in its arsenal today with the launch of a United Nations initiative to enhance cooperation among all stakeholders in the region.

Liberia: Liberian kids face exploitation

Liberian children are vulnerable to exploitation, partly because of poverty and sexual violence that remain rife in the West African nation, the UN peacekeeping mission said on Wednesday.

Details of the News

Political news:

Liberia: Ex-minister in payroll scandal

Liberia's ex-information minister Laurence Bropleh has been charged with corruption after being accused of pocketing the salaries of fictional employees, according to an indictment seen on Friday.

Bropleh, a close ally of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, stepped down on January 19 over accusations that he had netted more \$260 000 through the alleged scam. He has vowed to clear his name of all charges.

Two other ministry officials have been charged alongside him.

According to the indictment, the three "intentionally, criminally, stole ... and converted sundry amounts from various accounts of the government of Liberia" and placed "names of foreign services personnel who are not legitimate employees of the ministry of information" on the government payroll.

The charges come after months of investigation into financial malpractice at the information ministry.

Sirleaf, Africa's first female head of state in 2005, has warned ministers and officials she would clamp down on graft, pledging to make the fight against corruption in her war-ravaged country a top priority.

Nigeria: 1. protocol embarrassed Acting President Jonathan.

ACTING President Goodluck Jonathan could not get a triumphant entry into the Federal Executive Council (FEC) chambers meeting, on Wednesday, as the protocol officers did not usher him in, as was done to substantive presidents.

The acting president came into the meeting unannounced against the convention that the protocol officer should announce to the waiting cabinet members that the president had arrived, a call that instantly makes members to stand up to usher in the president.

In an apparent conflict of duty between the two protocol officers, the acting president was left to his own fate.

President Umaru Yar'Adua's protocol officer, Inuwa Baba, apparently relaxing that his own boss was not around, did not announce the arrival of Jonathan while the acting president's protocol officer, apparently not used to his new boss's position, also kept mum.

That was not the only embarrassment that heralded the first FEC meeting Jonathan would chair as acting president.

His protocol officer, instead of guiding him to the seat of the president, chose to usher him to the seat of the vice-president but he (Jonathan) promptly ignored him and went to the seat of the commander-in-chief.

As he made for the seat of the president, there was anger and surprise on the faces of some of the ministers, especially those who were known to have worked against Jonathan becoming acting president.

As expected, at 10.00 a.m. all the ministers were seated, as nobody wanted to test the might of the acting president. It was only Mr Aondoakaa who arrived at 10.19a.m.

because he had gone to Jonathan's office for consultation. After Mr Aondoakaa had settled down, Chief Economic Adviser to Yar'Adua, Dr Tanimu Yakubu, went to meet him and the duo chatted. By 10.21 a.m. the acting president walked in.

From the pattern of interaction, before reporters left the chambers, it was obvious that Yar'Adua's men, especially Alhaji Sayyidi Abba Ruma, Tanimu Yakubu and Mike Aondoakaa, had lost their influence as they were deserted by other ministers who in the past used to cluster around them to curry favour with them. Alhaji Ruma is the Minister of Agriculture.

2. Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, Chief Mike Aondoakaa (SAN), Demoted.

Acting President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, sat for the first time on the seat of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in the council chamber yesterday. He carried out a minor cabinet reshuffle which saw the controversial Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, Chief Mike Aondoakaa (SAN), redeployed to the Special Duties ministry.

No reason was given for Aondoakaa's demotion from the high-profile Attorney-General position to the Special Duties Ministry.

In a brief announcement that was said to have taken everyone present at the weekly meeting of the Executive Council of the Federation (EXCOF) by surprise, Jonathan was said to have dropped the bombshell just before the closing prayers were said.

"Aondoakaa looked like a battered man," a minister told THISDAY.

To replace him is Prince Adetokunbo Kayode (SAN), who was the Minister of Labour and Productivity until yesterday. He was the first Minister of Culture and Tourism in the Yar'Adua administration. Senator Ibrahim Musa Kazaure was moved from Special Duties to become Minister of Labour and Productivity.

Yesterday's EXCOF meeting was said to have started on a charged note as some ministers who had hoped Jonathan would not be made Acting President were said to be on the edge.

Jonathan became Acting President on Tuesday following resolutions by the two chambers of the National Assembly asking him to fill the vacuum left by Yar'Adua who has been out of the country since November 23 last year for medical treatment in Saudi Arabia.

At last week's EXCOF, the Minister of Information and Communications, Prof. Dora Akunyili, had circulated a memo asking that Jonathan be made Acting President but it was shot down by ministers believed to be loyalists of the President.

This week's meeting was also said to have been kick-started by Akunyili who said she was recognising Jonathan as Acting President and defended her decision to send in a memo, having come under criticism from some ministers for her action.

"She said the council was wrong not to have discussed her memo because in the past,

some memos had been discussed the same day they were submitted,” another minister told THISDAY. “The interesting thing is that many ministers were too afraid to talk even when they seemed to agree with Akunyili’s position. It was only the Minister of State for the Niger Delta, Chief Godsdai Orubebe, who said he supported Akunyili’s position.”

After the lengthy deliberations and a resolution recognising Jonathan as Acting President, Akunyili announced the changes.

To demonstrate the transfer of full presidential powers, Jonathan sat on the presidential seat as he chaired the council meeting, which lasted for over six hours. The meeting saw an unprecedented attendance in recent times as all the ministers were present.

Jonathan still retained his Aide-de-Camp (ADC), Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP) Moses Jitoboh.

According to Presidential protocols, the President and Commander-in-Chief usually has an army officer, usually the rank of Colonel as his ADC.

Akunyili disclosed: “Federal Executive Council accepts the resolution of the National Assembly that the Vice-President, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, becomes an Acting President, Commander-in-Chief.

“Council commends the National Assembly for their action and pledges to support the Acting President in his onerous responsibility of steering the ship of the nation.”

Asked why the Acting President had to embark on a cabinet reshuffle in his first day at work, Akunyili replied: “It is the decision of the Acting President to remove people not the decision of the Federal Executive Council. He has the presidential powers to move any of us.”

Asked how he felt about his removal as Attorney-General, Aondoaka said: “First, I had a discussion with the Vice-President this morning and he informed me about the changes. I have taken a position and in this life when you take a position and there is a change in the position you allow another person who will have a free atmosphere to defend the new position.

“I think what we did was a collective decision. First he told me, it’s a cordial arrangement. Well I am in the government, in the cabinet and I pledge my loyalty to the Vice-President. I’m the Minister of Special Duties. No single action I’ve taken that I have regretted. Every single action I took was in the interest of this country. No country will say there is a [power] vacuum. No attorney-general worth his salt will go to the pages of papers and say there is a vacuum.

“We have to preserve the executive powers until a leader is selected. A leader has been given by the National Assembly. We have recognised him. Do you reject the job you have been given?”

Asked what would be his approach to his new portfolio, the minister replied: “When I go there the permanent secretary will brief me on what the special duties are and I will do the job.”

About 40 policemen had taken over the Ministry of Justice at the Central Area of Abuja, fuelling the speculation that Aondoaka was about to be sacked while more than 20

armed policemen were at his Apo quarters residence.

As early as 8 a.m. before workers arrived for work, policemen were already at the ministry and denied entrance into the premises even to staff without identification.

The former AGF, however, did not appear in the office as at 12.37pm as he was said to have gone for EXCOF meeting where the decision to redeploy him was taken. At about 2.19 p.m, when the policemen had left the ministry, one of Aondoakaa's personal assistants came into the office but refused to talk to journalists who had laid siege for the minister.

The heavy police presence both in the office and house further fuelled the rumour that police were actually looking for documents needed to prosecute the former AGF. But that rumour diffused into thin air when the news of his redeployment filtered out. Aondoakaa had personally appeared in all the cases filed by interested persons in the course of Yar'Adua's absence from the country. He always had ready-made answers for journalists on any issues relating to the president's absence.

3. Can the acting president fight a robust war against corruption with his wife facing money-laundering charges?

Immediately after assuming office as the acting president yesterday, Goodluck Jonathan made a national broadcast to the nation. He promised many things, one of which is the prosecution of the war on corruption with renewed vigour.

The relevant portion of his broadcast is reproduced below for the benefit of those who did not listen to his speech: "One of the cardinal commitments of this administration is our commitment to Good Governance, Accountability and Transparency. We shall continue to pursue these policy objectives with all the seriousness they deserve. In particular, the war against corruption will be prosecuted more robustly. We will therefore strengthen the capacity of the anti-corruption agencies and give them a free hand to prosecute the anti corruption war." The question facing the acting president now is whether he can fight a more robust war against corruption when the money-laundering case against his wife, Patience Jonathan, has been in the cooler since he was sworn in as vice president in May 2007. How the acting president handles the issue of his wife's charges will be an indication of where he is going to take us as a nation. I do not care how the matter is resolved, but a resolution is necessary if the acting president does not want to be held hostage over the matter and if he wants Nigerians to take him seriously. Nigerians want to know what happened to the matter. She was charged with money-laundering offences, the matter is before the courts, we are not aware of a dismissal (aka James Ibori style), where then is the matter? The more robust war against corruption the acting president has promised must include openness. After all, the stolen money belongs to Nigerians and they have a right to know what is being done to the accused looters. The acting president cannot promise a renewed fight against corruption while he is literally sleeping with one. It is in his best interest and that if the nation to have this matter dealt with expeditiously.

The original article dealing with the then charges facing the then vice-president's wife is

reproduced below for ease.

EFCC v. PATIENCE JONATHAN (vice president's Wife): Farida Waziri & EFCC
please provide an update

In August 2006, the EFCC seized the sum of N104 million from one Mrs. Nancy Ebere Nwosu, an associate of Patience Jonathan. On August 22, 2006, Justice Anwuli Chikere of the Federal High Court, gave EFCC the legal backing to retain the N104 million seized from an associate of Patience Goodluck, the wife of then governor of Bayelsa state, Goodluck Jonathan, who is now the vice president of Nigeria.

The order was to stay in place “pending the conclusion of the investigation of the activities of the said persons in connection with their involvement in the acts of money laundering and other economic and financial crimes related offences.” The EFCC’s position was that Patience Jonathan stole the money from the public coffers of Bayelsa and was trying to launder it through her friend, Mrs. Nancy Ebere Nwosu.

Like a crack addict willing to do anything for a high, Patience Jonathan was not going to give up her addiction to treasury looting simply because Nuhu Ribadu’s EFCC was on her trail. Determined to prove that only mere mortals shivered at the sight of EFCC, she continued with her looting of Bayelsa’s treasury with the full cooperation and assistance of her husband, Goodluck Jonathan, who was the then governor of Bayelsa state. The duo was so successful that on September 11, 2006, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) again seized another \$13.5 million dollars (US) from Mrs. Patience Jonathan. Criminal charges were brought against her and Nigerians were awaiting her prosecution to the full extent of the law. Shortly thereafter and in the face of these serious allegations, the insensitive Olusegun Obasanjo and his PDP that had become a den of thieves, nominated Goodluck Jonathan to be the running mate of Yar'Adua.

Fast forward to post 2007 elections. Goodluck Jonathan is now the vice president of Nigeria, Farida Waziri the head of EFCC and whenever president Yar Adua manages to wake up from his near-permanent slumber he rants about his “zero tolerance” for corruption, despite having an indicted man as his personal secretary and dinning and whining with James Ibori. Farida Waziri would want anyone listening to believe that the presidency does not interfere with EFCC’s decision making process and Yar Adua proclaimed this much immediately after the conviction of Bode George.

After trying to deceive the public by blaming the judiciary alone for the near snail speed prosecution of public officials facing corruption charges and then advocating for psychiatric assessment for public officials who dared to steal more money than she realized from defending criminals and scheming a percentage off the money she is recovering for the banks. Farida Waziri is in the news again. This time around, she is advocating for the death penalty for treasury looters. It will be easier to understand Farida’s cries if she had prosecuted and jailed the corrupt public officials under existing laws and was now seeking the death penalty to discourage reoccurrence. But we all know this is not the case.

Notwithstanding the hypocrisy involved in Farida's "notice-me" advocacies, I am in complete agreement with her that public officials found guilty of corruption should be tied to the stake and publicly executed. My only concern is she is aware of the fact that she would be among the first to be tied to the stake and executed under the full glare of Nigerians should corruption be made a capital offence? Sorry for the diversion and back to the issue of patience Jonathan.

The case against patience Jonathan has gone cold since Jonathan Goodluck became the vice president of Nigeria. The case has gone cold despite relentless denials of political interference by the EFCC and the presidency, although the president has publicly acknowledged directing investigations into certain allegations when such suits his political purpose. It has gone cold despite Yar Adua's broken-record equivalent repetitiveness of zero tolerance for corruption, a repetitiveness that leaves Nigerians with two options: the president is either "419"ing Nigerians with his proclamations or lacking the intellectual capacity to comprehend what constitutes corruption.

In the past, Farida Waziri has been quick to blame Sahara Reporters and its ardent followers for drowning out her so called anti-corruption message, despite her trepidations and failure to grant a single no holds barred interview to members of the "non-friendly" press since assuming office. This is her chance. Nigerians want to know what happened to the case of EFCC vs. Patience Jonathan. You can lie to a blind person that there is no oil in the food but you cannot lie that there is no salt.

4. Nigerian VP's Address the Executive council.

Nigerian Vice President Goodluck Jonathan assumed office as acting president on Tuesday more than two months after President Umaru Yar'Adua left for medical treatment in Saudi Arabia. Below are excerpts from his speech

Assuming powers

"As we all know, our dear President, His Excellency, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, has been receiving treatment in Saudi Arabia for some time now. Naturally, his absence from the country has generated considerable interest and a heated national debate.

"Today, the National Assembly passed a resolution mandating me to act as President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"In following the extant provisions of the 1999 constitution to arrive at this decision, the leadership and members of the National Assembly have shown great courage, statesmanship and patriotism. I salute them all ...

"The circumstances in which I find myself assuming office today as Acting President of our country are uncommon, sober and reflective. More than ever therefore, I urge all Nigerians as a people of faith in God, to pray fervently for the full recovery of our dear President and his early return.

Challenges ahead

"It is now time for us to move on in a more determined manner to tackle the various challenges which we face as a nation ...

"We see a need to prioritize on a few of the most critical areas which continue to plague our effort at engendering meaningful economic growth and development.

"Some of these critical sectors include power, infrastructure, security, generation of employment and business opportunities for our teeming young men and women."

Niger Delta, religious unrest

"The Federal Government will take every step necessary to consolidate the gains of amnesty in the Niger Delta and execute the post-amnesty programme. I therefore appeal to all concerned to be patient, as there can be no meaningful development without peace and security.

"As regards the Jos crisis, government will endeavour to sustain the peace and find a lasting solution to the recurring crisis in Plateau State.

"In the meantime, culprits of the heinous crimes committed in the recent incident will face the full weight of the law. I want to restate that government will not tolerate the culture of impunity that is fast becoming an unwelcome part of our socio-political life."

Corruption and governance

"One of the cardinal commitments of this administration is our commitment to good governance, accountability and transparency. We shall continue to pursue these policy objectives with all the seriousness they deserve.

"In particular, the war against corruption will be prosecuted more robustly. We will therefore strengthen the capacity of the anti-corruption agencies and give them a free hand to prosecute the anti-corruption war.

"Let me once again commend the people of Anambra State, for the successful conduct of the recent gubernatorial election. This has shown that Nigerians can conduct free, fair and credible elections.

"The Anambra Election has however exposed some weaknesses in our electoral system, and government is determined to plug these loop holes as we approach the next General Elections in 2011. I want to reassure all Nigerians and our friends around the world, that our determination to ensure that the sanctity of the electoral rights of our people shall not be compromised."

5. Nigerian MPs visit Yar'Adua

Nigerian lawmakers were in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to meet ailing President Umaru Yar'Adua, whose 10-week hospitalization in the kingdom has sparked political turmoil in Abuja, an embassy official said.

The delegation from the Nigerian House of Representatives arrived on Monday in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, the official said by telephone on condition of anonymity.

The lawmakers are due to meet Yar'Adua, who checked into Jeddah's King Faisal Specialist Hospital on November 23 for an acute heart condition.

Last month Nigerian lawmakers voted to send the delegation to Saudi Arabia to visit Yar'Adua in hospital and discuss "issues of national importance".

Critics and analysts in Nigeria said the president's absence has created a political vacuum, since he has not handed over presidential powers to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan before heading to Saudi Arabia.

In mid-January the Federal High Court in Abuja ruled that Jonathan could carry out the president's functions in his absence, but could not become acting president.

During the president's absence, Africa's most populous country experienced an outbreak of bloody clashes between Muslims and Christians in the north that left hundreds dead.

It also became the focus of international scrutiny after a Nigerian man linked to al-Qaeda attempted to blow up a US airliner on Christmas Day.

The failed bombing led the United States to place Nigeria on a list of 14 countries from which travellers would face extra security checks, angering Abuja.

Abdullah Aminchi, Nigeria's ambassador to Saudi Arabia has regularly reported that Yar'Adua - who is convalescing in a VIP residence operated by the hospital - is improving and would soon return to Abuja.

Togo: Togo delays presidential polls

Togo's presidential election set for February 28 has been delayed until March 4 following an opposition request, a presidential decree read out on state television announced on Thursday.

"The date for the presidential election is fixed for Thursday, March 4. Polling stations will be open from 07:00 to 17:00 throughout the country," the decree said.

The delay comes in response to a request from the opposition during talks in Burkina Faso with President Blaise Compaore who is mediating inter-Togolese dialogue.

"With the aim of permanently seeking consensus and maintaining a peaceful climate during the electoral process, the head of state (Faure Gnassingbe), in consultation with Compaore, decided during a cabinet meeting to delay the election," the decree said.

Campaigning, which had been due to start on February 13, will now start on February 16.

In power since 2005, Gnassingbe is running for another term of office backed by the ruling Togolese People's Rally (RPT). He is the son of Gnassingbe Eyadema, who died in February 2005 after 38 years in power.

Challenges and violence

One of the candidates, Brigitte Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson of the opposition Democratic Convention of African Peoples, is the first woman to run for the presidency in the small West African country.

The constitutional court has proclaimed the candidature of Kofi Yamgnane, a former French government minister who holds dual nationality, invalid because his French documents give one date of birth and his Togolese documents give another.

For many observers, the election will be a test of Togolese democracy after the parliamentary elections that took place without incident in October 2007.

In Togo, presidential elections have always been followed by opposition challenges and violence, particularly in 2005 after the death of General Eyadema.

Opposition demonstrations were severely repressed, leading to between 100 and 800 deaths, according to different sources.

Côte d'Ivoire: 1. Protestors go on a rampage

Demonstrators on Tuesday burned down a sub-prefecture building in Ivory Coast in protest at the possible striking off of the electoral roll of people of foreign descent, locals said.

Several thousand people took part in the protest at Vavoua in the west of the country after hundreds ransacked a court in the western town of Man and a string of other demonstrations last week.

The protest was sparked by a long-running debate over whether people of foreign descent can vote despite being domiciled in Ivory Coast.

The issue linked to the notion of "Ivoirite" or "Ivorianness", which was a factor behind a 2002 coup plot against President Laurent Gbagbo whose five-year mandate ran out in 2005.

The opposition last Friday accused Gbagbo's party of pressuring courts to "strike off

names from voters' rolls in an arbitrary, biased and illegal fashion," and called upon supporters to resist such moves.

It emerged last week that Ivory Coast investigators have found evidence of "fraud" in a voters' roll being compiled for polls which have already been delayed six times since 2005.

The Independent Electoral Commission has denied the allegations but conceded problems.

The poll is aimed at ending a crisis that began with the attempted coup against Gbagbo in September 2002, which left the country split between the rebel-held north - which is mainly Muslim - and a government-controlled Christian-dominated south.

The UN Security Council recently called for an election to be held by May 31, before mandates for a UN force with nearly 8 000 personnel and a French 1 800-troop deployment in the country run out.

2. UN on Alert as Country Halts Voter Registration Due to Tensions.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon voiced concern today about events in Côte d'Ivoire, where the Government has suspended voter registration ahead of this year's already delayed presidential election because of rising tensions.

"The violence in [the town of] Vavoua and other locations in the country is a cause for serious concern. The mission has called upon the population to remain calm as a solution to the problems encountered by the electoral process is being sought. The mission is also on alert, and ready to assist the Ivorian authorities to contain violent incidents," Martin Nesirky, the Secretary-General's spokesperson, told journalists today in New York.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) Choi Young-Jin plans to meet with leaders of the major political parties this week to resume the Ivorian political process.

Originally intended to be held in 2005, the polls have been repeatedly postponed. Last scheduled for November 2009, they have been slated for March. The election is seen as a crucial benchmark for the country, which was split into a rebel-held north and Government-controlled south by civil war in 2002.

3. Ivory Coast president dissolves Gov't

Ivory Coast President Laurent Gbagbo on state television on Friday sacked the government and dismissed the electoral commission because of a crisis sparked by alleged fraud by the commission's head.

The move throws into doubt the electoral and reconciliation process in the divided country, where elections have been delayed six times since Gbagbo's mandate ran out in 2005.

Gbagbo called on former rebel New Forces (FN) leader and current Prime Minister Guillaume Soro to form a new government on February 15 and decide on a new "format" for the Independent Electoral Commission.

Gbagbo accused the CEI's head, Robert Beugre Mambe, of having "carried out an illegal operation aimed at obtaining the fraudulent inscription of 429 030 people on the electoral list."

"Just as we thought we had completed our efforts to have clean elections, we see that in reality the peace process... is taken hostage by political parties," Gbagbo said.

"I ask the prime minister to propose to me within seven days from today (Friday) the format of a new credible Independent Electoral Commission which will organise fair and transparent elections," he said.

Ivory Coast investigators said last week that they had found evidence of fraud in a voters' roll being compiled for long-delayed polls because the election panel had used a compact disc with unauthorised names.

Niamkey Koffi, of the opposition Ivory Coast Democratic Party (PDCI), told AFP after Gbagbo's announcement that he had destroyed "all progress in the peace process and sawed off the branch on which he himself was sat."

Anne Ouloto of the opposition Republican Gathering (RDR) party said that "we condemn this decision because it throws into doubt the process for getting out of the crisis."

Guinea-Conakry: 1. Religious tension ignites in Guinea

Clashes between Christians and Muslims in eastern Guinea have left one person dead and two missing, police have said.

Another 29 people were injured in the city of Nzerekore on Friday and Saturday, they said.

Calm had been restored by Saturday evening, although sporadic gunfire was still heard in the city.

Police ordered a curfew from 7:30pm to 5am after groups of Christians and Muslims had been attacking each other with stones and clubs.

The fighting apparently started after a group of Muslims gathered to open up a mosque which was closed down by authorities late last month because of tensions between the religious communities.

Tensions in Nzerekore, a Christian enclave in the mainly Muslim country, rose last week after a row between a Christian woman and a group of Muslim men.

Some residents said the men had stopped the woman from using a road blocked for prayers and that the woman responded by hitting one of them with a shoe.

Other reports said she was accused of wearing indecent dress.

On Friday Christian youths took their revenge by trying to disturb prayers by driving motorbikes near a mosque.

Christians make up around eight per cent of the population in the West African nation.

2. Exile of junta leader sparks hope in Guinea

After only a year in power, Guinea's hated coup leader is in exile, his departure having breathed surprising new life into a country he had terrorized, and hopes are even stirring that the nation will hold its first democratic elections in half a century.

But true reform may be long way off and his legacy lives on through a military junta with bloody hands that's still in charge.

Guinea's Captain Moussa "Dadis" Camara has been reduced to a feeble shell of his former self - exiled to Burkina Faso after a bullet grazed his skull during a December 3 assassination attempt by one of his own men. No longer are there nightly television shows devoted to the dictator's rants, no life-size posters of himself adorning his own walls. No trucks full of soldiers guarding him.

Camara, an erratic 46-year-old who governed at night, had crammed cabinets and drawers in his office with looted cash, gold and diamonds, handing them out "as if he was a king", according to Mamadou Bah Baadikko, who heads a Guinean opposition party.

Times have quickly changed in tiny Guinea, a bauxite-rich country on Africa's west coast with the recent appointment of an opposition politician as prime minister and Camara gone.

"People have a little more hope with him out of the picture," Thierno Sow, head of Guinea's main independent human rights group, told The Associated Press from Guinea's capital, Conakry. "But for now it's only hope. There's a long road ahead."

Guinea "remains a dangerous place", Sow said.

Camara seized power in a coup only hours after strongman Lansana Conte passed away

in December 2008, ending more than three decades of dictatorship. Appealing to a downtrodden public in one of the poorest capitals in Africa, Camara promised things would finally change and led a very public drive against corruption and drug smuggling. But as the months passed, impunity spiralled so far out of control that soldiers were hijacking even diplomat's cars in the streets. Camara began hinting he would run in presidential elections despite a promise not to - prompting a September 28 protest at Conakry's stadium. Camara's red-bereted presidential guard troops crushed the demonstration with astounding brutality, blocking exits, opening fire with live ammunition and raping women. At least 156 civilians died in the massacre.

A United Nations investigation established by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon fuelled tensions within the junta over who would take the blame. When Camara confronted the head of the presidential guard, Lieutenant Abubakar "Toumba" Diakite, on December 3, Diakite shot Camara in the head and fled.

"For the population, Toumba has become an improbable hero," Baadikko noted wryly. "For us, Toumba is a still criminal who needs to face justice."

The wounded Camara was flown to a military hospital in Morocco, but the Moroccan government abruptly put him on a plane to Burkina Faso on January 13.

Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore - who himself took power in a bloody 1987 coup - pushed through a deal in which Camara agreed to remain in exile while his nation embarks on a transition toward elections later this year without him.

International pressure helped box the junta into a corner: Europe and the African Union imposed an arms embargo, a travel ban and froze the assets of most junta members.

Camara allowed his deputy, General Sekouba Konate, to act as interim leader. Konate swiftly swore in a new civilian prime minister, Jean-Marie Dore, on January 26. Dore was an opposition politician who was among those beaten by the presidential guard during the September massacre.

The appointment of an interim government composed of about 32 members - 10 to be appointed by the opposition, 10 by the junta and 12 by unions and civil society leaders - is also imminent. But scepticism abounds. The junta is still in charge. The soldiers who carried out the massacre haven't been arrested, much less punished.

"The question is whether the new government will actually make concrete changes," Baadikko said. "We've had four civilian prime ministers in four years. What difference has it made? None."

Each of Guinea's last four premiers was appointed by either the dictatorships of Conte or Camara. Dore, however, is the first opposition figure to be sworn into the post. Corinne Dufka, of Human Rights Watch, told AP she sees positive signs but that deeds must follow promises.

She said Konate "has recognised the importance of separating the military from political

life" and noted there have been pledges to reform the judiciary and the security forces.

"That's good news, but it's all still in the balance. If their words don't go beyond rhetoric, it's going to be business as usual," Dufka said.

Aside from two public appearances in which he was visibly wooden and weak, Camara has kept quiet since arriving in Ouagadougou. He resides in a guarded, single-story state villa with a small garden in an upscale neighbourhood with his wife, immediate family and two Guinean doctors, according to a presidential adviser here who declined to be named because he is not authorised to speak to the media.

Still a night-owl, Camara takes strolls after dark through wide, deserted streets, the adviser said.

He also calls Konate every day, but "doesn't talk much about politics anymore," the adviser said. "Every time I've been over there, he's been watching football on TV" - mainly the recently concluded African Cup of Nations tournament. The International Criminal Court, which launched a preliminary investigation the stadium massacre, could eventually issue a warrant for his arrest. A UN inquiry also recommended Camara, along with top members of his presidential guard, be brought to trial.

Sow said the soldiers who carried out the massacre should be tried, but believes it's unlikely anytime soon.

"They're roaming the streets freely with guns," said Sow. "The women they raped are still in hiding, scared, and still being threatened not to speak."

Sow said none of the 110 women who were raped dared testify before a Guinean commission which carried out its own investigation of the slaughter. The commission blamed Diakite, the would-be assassin, and absolved Camara and other soldiers. Opposition leaders say the commission was biased in favour of the junta.

"The thing you have to understand is that there is still no state in Guinea. Justice does not exist. Everybody is on their own," Sow said. "The military needs to be completely overhauled. We sincerely hope that will happen, but for now they are still in charge."

3. Diallo to head transition council

Guinea's interim president has named a union leader to head a council charged with managing a transition from military to civilian rule, a decree read on state radio and television said on Monday.

"Rabiadou Serah Diallo, secretary general of Guinea's National Workers Confederation, has been named president of the National Transition Council," the decree signed by interim leader General Sekouba Konate declared.

The body will be composed of 101 Guineans from civil society, political parties, religious groups as well as members of the ruling junta's council.

They will have legislative responsibilities since the National Assembly was dissolved in December 2008 after the military seized power in a coup following the death of longtime strongman Lansana Conte.

Serah Diallo gained international attention in 2007 as a leading figure in protests against the Conte regime.

Guinea is involved in a delicate transition process after an accord was reached on January 15 that would pave the way for the West African nation to emerge from its political crisis and hold elections in June.

The election will be the first democratic presidential poll in Guinea since 1958 and come after half a century of autocratic regimes, initially civilian and then military.

Senegal: African singers to raise money for Haiti

West and Central African singing stars will record a song in early March in the Senegalese capital Dakar to raise money for victims of last month's earthquake in Haiti, the musical project's leader said on Wednesday.

More than 200,000 people were killed and a million left homeless when a magnitude 7.0 quake struck the poor Caribbean country on January 12. Since then, a mass of international relief efforts have been launched.

In the most recent African aid initiative, dozens of singers, among them internationally known names including Senegalese vocalists Youssou Ndour and Baba Maal, Ivorian reggae artist Alpha Blondy and Congolese musicians Lokua Kanza and Papa Wemba, will gather in Dakar from March 1-6 to record a song, all proceeds from which will go to Haitians.

"We have seen many solidarity actions from other parts of the world, we too have to do our share," singer and project coordinator Coumba Gawlo Seck told Senegalese television after a meeting with Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade.

Mali and Guinea will also be represented musically, while Coumba Gawlo said a mega-concert in Dakar will be organised to raise more money for Haitians.

Soon after the earthquake, Wade grabbed international headlines but surprised many in his own country by proposing the creation of a new African state to resettle homeless Haitians, comparing the idea to the 1948 birth of the state of Israel.

Mali: 1. Toure 'optimistic' for hostages

Mali's President Amadou Toumani Toure said on Saturday he is optimistic about the fate of six Europeans held in his country by the North African branch of al-Qaeda.

"Above all we must not be pessimistic. I urge everyone to be optimistic," Toure said a day after al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) said it had extended its deadline for a French and Italian being held in Mali.

The group has threatened to kill the six European hostages it is holding, including the African-born wife of the Italian and three Spaniards.

On the margin of his visit to Taoussa to attend a ceremony launching construction of a dam, Toure could be seen meeting with men involved in negotiations to free the hostages.

One of Toure's close advisors later said that the president's optimism is above all for the release of the three Spanish captives.

He reiterated Mali has no intention to mount any operation to free the hostages by force.

The Friday statement by AQIM gave the French and Mali governments until February 20 to four AQIM militants held in Mali to secure the release of French captive Pierre Camatte.

For Italian hostage Sergio Cicala, AQIM said it was giving the Italian government 25 days, or until March 1, to meet its demands and release imprisoned members whose names it said have been given to Italian negotiators.

2. No prisoner exchanges

Mali will not give in to demands from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to free Islamist radicals held in its prisons in exchange for a French hostage, security sources said on Monday.

"Our country [Mali] has no intention of freeing the Islamic combatants currently in custody in Mali. No, we will not free them. It is a decision of our superiors," a security source close to the case told AFP.

According to the same source, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner has insisted that Mali free the Islamists to save the life of the French national.

"No-one will tell us how to act. We are a sovereign state and we take the decisions that we deem necessary," another Malian security source said.

Last week, AQIM - which has threatened to kill six European hostages it is holding - said it had extended its deadline for French captive Pierre Camatte until February 20.

It warned that the French and Mali governments must release four AQIM militants held in Mali to win Camatte's freedom.

Among the prisoners is an Algerian who holds "an important rank" in the AQIM hierarchy.

According to the Malian security source, Algeria has demanded that he be extradited, with no response yet from Bamako.

AQIM currently holds six Europeans hostage in the northern Mali desert: the French man, three Spaniards captured on November 29 in Mauritania and an Italian couple kidnapped on December 17.

3. Negotiators meet al-Qaeda

Two Malian negotiators on Friday met leaders of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in a bid to free six European hostages held in the northern Mali desert, one of the negotiators told AFP.

The meeting comes eight days before a deadline set by the group, which has threatened the life of French hostage Pierre Camatte if Mali does not free AQIM prisoners by January 20.

"We are with the kidnappers of the hostages. We have spoken and we will speak again shortly," one of the two principal negotiators told AFP by satellite phone.

"I cannot say more, I hope we will have good news."

AQIM is holding Camatte, who was kidnapped in the country on November 26, three Spaniards captured in Mauritania on November 29 and an Italian couple abducted in Mauritania on December 17.

The branch of al-Qaeda is demanding the release of its members imprisoned in Mali in exchange for Camatte's freedom, and have threatened to kill him if their demands are not met, according to a statement released on a jihadist website last week.

In addition the organisation has given the Italian government until March 2 to respond to demands concerning hostage Sergio Cicala, which also concern the freedom of AQIM prisoners.

Sources in Mali say the French and Italian hostages pose a "very difficult" case while that of the Spaniards - seen alive in a video viewed by an AFP correspondent Thursday is expected to be easier.

Despite pressure from Paris, Mali has ruled out releasing AQIM prisoners as demanded.

4. Hostage - French FM in Mali

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner arrived unexpectedly in Mali on Saturday, a week ahead of a deadline set by an al-Qaeda-linked group threatening the life of a French hostage, government and airport sources said.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which is holding six Europeans in the northern Mali desert, has said it will execute Frenchman Pierre Camatte if Mali does not free AQIM prisoners by February 20.

Despite pressure from Paris, Mali has ruled out releasing the prisoners, numbering at least four, but Malian negotiators met the kidnapers on Friday.

"I cannot say more, I hope we will have good news," one of the two principal negotiators told AFP by satellite phone.

AQIM is holding Camatte, who was kidnapped in Mali on November 26, three Spaniards captured in Mauritania on November 29 and an Italian couple abducted in Mauritania on December 17.

The branch of al-Qaeda is demanding the release of its members imprisoned in Mali in exchange for Camatte's freedom, and have threatened to kill him if their demands are not met, according to a statement released on a jihadist website last week.

In addition the group has given the Italian government until March 2 to respond to demands concerning hostage Sergio Cicala, which also involve the freedom of AQIM prisoners.

Sources in Mali say the French and Italian hostages pose a "very difficult" case while that of the Spaniards - seen alive in a video viewed by an AFP correspondent on Thursday - is expected to be easier.

Niger: 1. Niger opposition slams deal

Niger's opposition has accused President Mamadou Tandja's government of fraud over an 11 million euro deal with a Chinese company to provide pre-fabricated classrooms for schools.

The November 2008 deal concluded with Poly Technologies "violates all the rules and legal dispositions" governing public purchasing, said the Front for the Defence of Democracy (FDD) in a statement.

The FDD accused Tandja's family, "whose business relations in China are an open

secret", of profiting from the deal.

The FDD, a coalition of opposition parties, NGOs and labour unions, said the Chinese-made classrooms cost twice as much as the average price nationally.

"The fraudulent and criminal character of the agreement is so obvious that it has ... a confidentiality clause," said the FDD, condemning what it called a swindle.

The government dismissed allegations of wrongdoing. Communications Minister Moctar Kassoum told local media that regulations governing the acquisition of the classrooms had been scrupulously respected.

The front also said that Poly Technologies had refused to provide Niger with technical data on the materials used in building the classrooms, and therefore "no-one knows their impact on the environment and on the health of children and teachers".

2. Talks on Niger crisis suspended

Talks between Niger's government and the opposition to end a political crisis in the poor West African country were suspended on Thursday, sources said.

The two sides failed to reach an understanding on the new "draft agreement" submitted by Abdul salami Abubakar, the mediator of the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas), a source close to the mediation team said.

The dialogue, which began last December 21, has been interrupted several times.

The draft accord proposes that President Mamadou Tandja remains in office during a period of transition. It also envisages an opposition prime minister, a new constitution and fresh general elections.

"As soon as we read the title of the document from the mediator, we told him that we would make counter-propositions. We have done so," said Amadou Djibo, a member of the presidential delegation to the talks.

Abubakar, a former Nigerian military head of state, was expected to leave Niamey on Thursday, but "the dialogue has not ended and the mediator has promised to return", he said.

Development aid

"We agree with the draft accord," said Amadou Boubacar Cisse, leader of the opposition delegation, denouncing what he called the "unwillingness" of the Niamey government which "absolutely has no intention to reach an agreement."

After 10 years in power, Tandja extended his term by way of a referendum on August 4, which was boycotted by the opposition.

To push through with the referendum, Tandja dissolved parliament and the constitutional court.

He then went on to stage parliamentary elections in October, which led the 15-nation Ecowas to suspend Niger's membership. The European Union suspended development aid and the United States imposed sanctions.

Burkina Faso: Date set for Burkina Faso polls

Burkina Faso will go to polls for presidential elections on November 21 this year, the government announced on Thursday.

"The first round for the election of the president ... has been fixed for Sunday, November 21," a statement said after a cabinet meeting.

It said electoral lists would be compiled March 1-21.

President Blaise Compaore, who chaired the meeting, came to power in 1987 coup in which his predecessor Thomas Sankara was killed.

Compaore, 59, was then elected to the office in 1991, winning further mandates in 1998 and 2005.

Under the terms of the constitution, which was revised in 2002, the president should be elected once every five years and can serve two terms.

Some Compaore supporters have recently called for this limit to be scrapped.

The incumbent has yet to indicate whether he will seek re-election.

GHANA: Constitution under the Knife

After 18 years of successful multi-party democracy, Ghanaians are bracing themselves to review the Fourth Republican Constitution. Following cabinet's approval of a memorandum on the consultative review, government has established an independent body to spearhead the process.

The newly formed Constitutional Review Commission is expected to conduct public hearings across the 10 regions of Ghana. The review process will not lead to the rewriting of the constitution but will ensure that recommendations for amendments to the constitution will be made to government. A draft Bill will also be provided for possible amendments.

The commission has already been inundated with petitions from the public.

"Every single petition before the commission will be carefully examined. The issues raised are very valid," said Dr. Raymond Atuguba, a legal practitioner, and executive secretary of the commission. The petitions received to date vary and include calls for a review of the powers of the executive.

He said the number of petitions received by the commission shows the extent to which the public was looking forward to the review.

Calls to review the constitution became pronounced during the 2008 general elections, with almost all the contesting political parties promising to allow Ghanaians make input to the process.

In his state of the nation address to parliament last year, President John Mills said that government will fulfil its promise to put the constitution before Ghanaians for a national debate on proposed amendments. He said this will be done in a broad manner, so that every petition received will be examined on merit and incorporated in the final amendments.

"We believe also that a National Constitutional Review Conference is the surest way to ensure that our manifesto promises, as well as those of some of the other political parties, which require constitutional amendments see fruition in a consensual manner," Mills told the MPs.

The Fourth Republican Constitution came into being after the military regime gave way and set up a National Commission on Democracy to supervise the collation of views on the type of governance Ghanaians wished for.

At the end of the process, the views were subjected to a referendum in April 1992 and, despite some limitations within the final document, the constitution came into effect in January 1993. It was the country's fourth attempt at a democratic government since it gained independence in 1957.

The country has made much progress since then. Ghana was ranked the seventh-best country on the continent for good governance according to the 2009 Ibrahim Index of African Governance. The index measured, among other things, the delivery of public goods and services by government.

Governance and constitutional experts, human rights advocates, media practitioners and ordinary Ghanaians have consistently been drumming for changes to be effected in the 1992 constitution.

Some of the areas proponents of the review hope to see amended include the decoupling of the position of Attorney General from the Ministry of Justice. Currently both postings are held by one person and this, critics argue, gives the executive the opportunity to interfere with the independence of the judiciary.

Another area expected to be reviewed is the provision in Article 78 of the constitution, which requires the president to appoint the majority of his ministers from parliament.

The current practice has affected attendance during proceedings in parliament. Rather than being in the House to deliberate on bills, most MPs, who are also sitting ministers, absent themselves. This has made it difficult for the house to pass some important bills.

Nana Oye Lithur, a human rights lawyer, said there is no better time than now to review the constitution.

"The constitutional review should strength the constitution. The first thing we'll need to look at is our aspirations as a people and, what we want the constitution, as a mirror of our life, to reflect," she said.

Lithur said she'll be pushing for the scrapping of the death penalty which is part of the country's laws even though it has not been used for almost three decades.

But there are dissenting voices against the review process. Chairman of the National Commission for Civic Education, Larry Bimi, believes the constitution is not ready for the intended review. While he supports constitutional reviews, he believes the constitution should be made to serve for, at least, five generations.

Atuguba disputed this. He said there was no 'timeline' hanging around the neck of any constitution that prescribed when amendments should be effected.

Angel Kabonu, the national vice president of the National Association of Graduate Teachers, said the government has not told Ghanaians what the review seeks to do.

"What will that review do for us? How is it going to improve our democracy and our worthwhile?" he asked. "I don't think it will end up changing the worthwhile of Ghanaians to any significant measure. It's not as necessary as we are making it look."

The country's third attempt at a constitution barely lasted twenty-four months when a military coup in 1981 sent the country back to military dictatorship. The fourth constitution has lasted almost two decades of practice without any interference and is seen by most people as a landmark in Ghana's democratic practice.

The government, through the support of donor funding, has allocated an amount of 2.7 million dollars to undertake the exercise. Atuguba said the money was already voted for before the commission was inaugurated but believed the figure could change in any direction.

"Seeing how all presidencies tend to treat ministries, amalgamating, splintering, mixing, and generally treating them like small-town social clubs, who wouldn't love a constitutional review that, for instance, entrenched each government ministry in statute so that any review of their functions and scope would be subject to the scrutiny of the

legislative process?" a statement from the Accra based education think-tank IMANI-Ghana asked.

The commission is expected to operate as a quasi-judicial body for a period of not more than eighteen months.

Economical/Energy:

Nigeria: 1. Shell Explains Divestment in Three Oil Blocks

Oil giant Shell has said its recent divestment in the three oil blocks in the Niger Delta - Oil Mining Lease (OMLs) 4, 38 and 41- is aimed at encouraging local participation in the upstream petroleum industry.

The company also said it had no plans to close its operations in Nigeria despite the tough operating conditions.

Country Chair of Shell Nigeria and Managing Director of Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC), Mr. Mutiu Sunmonu, told journalists in Lagos yesterday that though security and funding challenges had severely cut the company's onshore production in Nigeria and increased direct costs; it would continue its on and offshore exploration and production activities in Nigeria.

Sunmonu spoke against the backdrop of reports that Shell planned to close down its Nigerian operations and had offered some of its oilfields in the Niger Delta for sale over fears that harsher terms may reign next year in the oil industry for foreign operators.

He said the oil giant has a long standing presence in Nigeria and would continue its exploration and production activities in the country notwithstanding the challenges.

Sunmonu described as misleading and untrue reports that the company's recent divestment in the three oil blocks - OMLs 4, 38 and 41 - was in line with its plans to exit Nigeria, saying the assets sold represented less than five percent of the company's assets and were sold to encourage local participation in the upstream sector.

SPDC, Total Exploration and Production Limited and Nigeria Agip Oil Company recently reached an agreement to jointly transfer 45 per cent stake in three production licences and related equipment in the oil-rich Niger Delta held by the multinationals to a consortium led by two Nigerian companies.

This transaction, which requires the consent of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) that holds the balance of 55 per cent in the leases and that of the Federal government, is expected to be completed within the next six months.

The agreement covers Shell's 30 per cent interest, Total's 10 per cent and Agip's five per cent stake jointly held with NNPC under a Joint Operating Agreement in oil mining leases 4, 38 and 41.

Shell named the buyer as Seplat Petroleum Company Limited, a Nigerian consortium jointly owned by two Nigerian firms - Platform Petroleum Limited and Shebah Petroleum Development Company Ltd - along with Maurel & Prom of France.

Sunmonu said: "The assets were sold to encourage local participation in the industry. The Federal Government wants to open up the industry to other players especially local players in line with the local content policy. Shell is one company that has supported this government's initiative. So it's a big boost to the local content.

"Any suggestion that Shell has divested its assets and is exiting Nigeria is misleading and untrue. We have a long standing presence and commitment to Nigeria, and we will continue our on and offshore exploration and production activities."

Explaining the rationale for the divestment in OMLs 4, 38 and 41, Sunmonu said: "Shell has a large and diversified global upstream portfolio, which we regularly review to ensure best value for the company.

"We believe that these assets are best developed by a third party and that the divestment provides an opportunity for local companies to materially increase their participation in the hydrocarbon sector, consistent with the objectives of the Federal Government. It may also accelerate the exploration and development of the acreage. The transaction is subject to the approval of NNPC and the Federal Government."

The company's Chief Executive Peter Voser recently confirmed that the oil giant's onshore output stands at 120,000 barrels per day (bpd) from the about 300,000 bpd being produced before militant activities escalated in the Niger Delta region.

Voser, who assumed office on July 1, 2009 following the retirement of Jeroen van der Veer, said Shell's onshore production in Nigeria had been "heavily curtailed by violence" in the oil-rich region.

"We have a huge proportion of onshore production shut in at this stage. I think we are now at 120,000 bpd and we used to be close to 300,000," Reuters quoted Voser as saying.

But Sunmonu acknowledged that like other oil and gas companies, the operations of Shell in Nigeria had been impacted by several factors.

He regretted that production had not improved significantly more than it was nine months ago.

Sunmonu also acknowledged that Shell like other multinational companies was moving investments to other countries because capital could only be moved where it could get value. He, however, dismissed reports that Shell had shunned new projects in Nigeria owing to the uncertainties about the yet-to-be passed Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB).

He said: "Our major concerns on the PIB are on offshore deepwater. The assets that were sold are onshore assets."

The Shell boss added that about \$5 billion had been budgeted for various projects this year, stating that aside the about \$2.7 billion budgeted by the Joint Venture, Shell also has another \$1.5 billion budget for this year.

"Shell did not sell assets because of PIB or as recourse of our closing shop in Nigeria. We recognise that there are challenging times in Nigeria. We are faced with security, funding and other issues that have severely cut our onshore production and increased our direct costs. Shell takes a long-term view of its business in Nigeria, and has the talent and assets to successfully consolidate its position as a leading Nigerian upstream player," he said.

"Shell and Nigeria have been important to each other for over 50 years and we want that relationship to continue in a sustainable way. A successful oil and gas industry is key for Nigeria to achieve its long-term goals," he said, adding that shell would continue to review and optimise its global upstream portfolio including assets in Nigeria as appropriate.

2. Mend claims pipeline attack

A Nigerian militant group claimed it had attacked a major oil pipeline operated by a Royal Dutch Shell PLC subsidiary in Nigeria, although the international oil giant could not confirm the attack occurred.

Nigeria is one of Africa's largest oil producers and reports of attacks in the restive, oil-rich Niger Delta have the potential to affect oil production in Nigeria and oil prices worldwide.

The Joint Revolutionary Council issued a statement Sunday saying its fighters disabled a Shell pipeline in Rivers state that connects several flow stations to the company's Bonny export terminal. The group claimed Sunday's attack came after police abducted a local chief, prompting them to realise that "only through (an) armed struggle for independence that our people can be freed."

"We believe that it will be a betrayal and disservice to our people if we continue to preach nonviolence in the face of this madness," the group said.

The Joint Revolutionary Council is a smaller militant group that once claimed to be allied with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, the main militant force in the Delta. It has carried out attacks in the past, some of which Mend later denied being involved in.

A Shell spokesperson dismissed the attack claim.

"We have no report of an incident in our operation," spokesperson Tony Okonedo said.

Amnesty deal

Militants in the Niger Delta have attacked pipelines, kidnapped petroleum company employees and fought government troops since January 2006. They demand that the federal government send more oil-industry funds to Nigeria's southern region, which remains poor despite five decades of oil production.

That violence has cut Nigeria's oil production by about 1 million barrels a day, allowing Angola to surge ahead as Africa's top oil producer. Still, Nigeria remains the No 3 crude oil supplier to the US, offering the country nearly a million barrels a day in November, according to US government statistics.

However, the main militant group there and others agreed to a cease-fire brokered by President Umaru Yar'Adua in recent months. Yar'Adua extended an amnesty deal with cash payments to former fighters and the promise of sending more oil money to the region to improve roads and government services.

The deal now appears in jeopardy after Yar'Adua, long troubled by kidney problems, left the country in November for treatment of a heart condition in Saudi Arabia. He has yet to return, prompting Mend and other militants to begin claiming new attacks in the region.

Only one Shell pipeline has been broken since hostilities began again, a line running through Bayelsa State that the company said oil thieves ruptured. However, Mend says that line was attacked by militants with explosives rather than thieves.

3. Lawmakers probe NNPC on \$85 million Kaduna Refinery expenses

Members of the House of Representatives committee on petroleum resources (downstream), on Thursday, asked the Nigeria National Petroleum Resources (NNPC) to give reasons why the Kaduna Refinery has failed to work despite spending \$85 million on its Turn around Maintenance, while Nigeria presently imp Consequently, the lawmakers agreed to visit the refinery next week to ascertain the level of work done so far.

The lawmakers made the demand during a meeting in Abuja with officials of the corporation led by the Group Executive Director, Commercial and Investment Department, Aminu Babakusa. The meeting was convened to find solution to the endless fuel scarcity in country.

The committee members expressed regrets at the refusal of the NNPC Group Managing Director, Mohammed Barkindo to honour the committee's invitation despite repeated letters to him.

“We have lost count of the number of our correspondences to NNPC just to brief us on when the fuel scarcity will end. We asked for details of programmes to make fuel

available for Nigerians, we ask for information on refineries, none has been supplied. Even for the GMD to honour our invitation, it has become a problem and we are in a democracy, where accountability is the watchword of governance,” the committee chairman, Clever Ikiskipo, said.

Mr. Ikisikpo decried the attitude of the corporation and the Minister of Petroleum, Rilwanu Lukman to the quest by Nigerians to make the nation’s four refineries functional.

He explained that despite Mr. Lukman’s assurance to the committee last year that the Kaduna Refinery would start working in January this year, the situation has not improved, “The Minister was here last year and promised Nigerians that Kaduna Refinery will start working by the end of January, now we are in February and nothing is happening, we want to know the level work done so far in relation to the money already committed to it.”

Leading corrupt charges

A member of the committee, Samson Positive also accused the corporation of encouraging the failure of the petroleum sector, stressing that the corporation’s management is deliberately shying away from its responsibilities.

The Representative of the National Association of Road Transport Owners, Lawal Isa said NNPC leads in the chain of corrupt practices in the sector, which he said involves other agencies.

However, Mr. Babakusa said the corporation has identified the basic problems responsible for fuel scarcity and that a committee has been set up to address them. He confirmed that the country is running on hundred per cent importation of fuel.

Mr. Babakusa told the committee that the Warri Refinery is expected to resume production next week, following the completion of the repair of the pipeline pumping crude to it.

Other problems receiving attention of the NNPC, according to him, are the issue of credit facilities to major importers and reduction in the debt profile, as banks have closed credit lines due to the banking reforms.

Liberia: Liberia Slammed For Diamonds Abuse

United Nations Panel of Expert has indicted Liberia for ‘abuse of internal control’ for failing to comply in the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification (KPC) system accusing it of exporting diamond valued over US\$7.4m.

The Panel’s 2009 report stated the diminished political will on the part of the Ministry of Lands and Mines causing the country to loose millions of dollars.

But the Deputy Lands and Mines Minister for Development who is the focus point for the KPC process, Mr. A. Kpandel Fayia said president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has set up a committee to address report adding that “most of these things are allegations.”

The report: Total exports earned since Sept. 2007 amounts to under US\$ 600,000. This is the cost of running the GOD of one year; Liberia is losing to implement the KPS Number of Class C licenses difficult to obtain from the Ministry; illicit mining ongoing in the gold and “diamond sectors. Deputy Minister announces at KP Plenary all miners licensed in response to 2009 review visit.

Noncompliance (a) internal controls (b) data maintenance and sharing(c) barely in compliance of. KPCS

Relocation of companies in the region, presence of regional trading networks, and infiltration of Ivorian sanctioned diamonds into Liberian exports Internal controls, progress must not be piecemeal, required coordination among actors, not further review visit recommended, KP Focal Point to provide semiannual updates to KP Chair challenges of KP implementation recognized by PO, diamond trading ongoing outside KPCS.

Political will, internal controls, data requirement issues, regional network, illicit sales of diamonds.

Reduction in political will, Liberia barely meeting KPCS requirements 2009 review visit was a disappointment, concurrence with 2009 RV conclusion.

MLME did not adequately prepare for; 2009 KPCS Visit; GOO could not give documents to RV team until “pressed” to do so.

Problems of scheduling of meetings during 2009 RV, invitations, not extended to attendees

Field visits during RV not well organized, field visits not treated seriously, regional officers ill prepared, lost keys in Weasua

Accusation that MLME does not always implement the mining laws and regulations, Class C Miners using heavy equipment

No action against users of heavy equipment by MLME

No cooperation amongst MLME departments, e.g., GOO and Bureau of Mines, lack of involvement. of Police, low degree of awareness among the police

48. Complaints from stakeholders about transparency in the mining sector and inability to obtain information from MLME on companies operating in the counties, negative reaction to this by MLME ‘officials

49. Waning political will, no meeting of DTF

50. Regional issues should augment, not replace national level commitment

52: Record keeping, issuance of diamond vouchers to miners with expired licenses, problems with flow of vouchers to Monrovia from regional offices

53. Impossible to thoroughly review functioning of internal control system; GOO does not permit analysis of links between vouchers, sales receipts and KP 'certificates; timing of vouchers from mine. to 'Monrovia

Linkage of Mustapha Tunkara with Youri Freund and Shimon Freund, essence?

Timing of vouchers from mine to Monrovia

Infiltration of Ivorian diamonds in Liberia official exports 57. GDO manager: the potential entry of conflict diamonds into the system is concern of the importer.

Diamond parcel inadvertently shipped to Israel without KP certificate

Data Management discrepancies, discrepancies in data and statistics, HS Codes disharmony, discrepancy in production and export data, some shipments for arriving at designated places but taken elsewhere.

Other violations are unsavory characters involved in diamond mining and trading in Liberia, Youri Freud, Balaji Gems, Moses Blah having Kratos International, unlicensed dealers and brokers operating in Liberia, kickbacks received to cover illicit actors.

The document also mentioned illicit buying in hotels, detective confides in POE, who is the detective?. Increased Ivorian Productive, threat to Liberian KPCS

Ghana: 1. Tullow Upbeat about Timeline for First Oil Production.

In line with efforts to meet its last quarter of 2010 time line to start pouring Ghana's first commercial oil from the jubilee fields, Tullow Ghana Limited has began the installation of a number of subsea equipment required for siphoning oil from under the seabed, with the latest being the Christmas Tree.

Some other equipment currently being installed includes the Riser station and production lines. The Christmas tree is an assembly of control valves, gauges, pipes, chokes and fittings used to control oil and gas flow from a completed well and are installed on the ocean floor. "These installations indicate that production can start anytime from now," Mr. Gayheart Mensah, communications Manager of Tullow Ghana Limited told The Chronicle.

The Sekondi Naval Base and the Takoradi Port have been the main entry points for the equipment. Before the vessels carrying the equipment set sail for Ghana, a team from Tullow Ghana Limited visited some of the companies contracted by the Jubilee partners as manufacturers.

The companies which are based in Houston, Texas, in the United States of America, include MODEC, FMC Technologies and Spitzer industries Incorporated, and are said to be specialized companies that manufacture various subsea equipment for oil production.

Spitzer Industries Incorporated is well known in the oil industry for the manufacture of Manifolds and Riser Stations, both of which are critical in bringing out the oil from belly of the sea. FMC Technologies manufactured the "Christmas Trees" for the Jubilee Project.

The team from Tullow Ghana Limited also visited the Theodora Spool base in Mobile Alabama. Whilst there the Deep Blue Vessel, famed for spooling oil production pipelines, was busy at it, in preparation for its departure to Ghana. Some of the pipelines being spooled onto the vessel had a diameter in excess of 17cm and were 1.5km in length.

Mr. Gayheart Mensah and a member of the team that visited the US said "there are expectations among Ghanaian that the oil find should transform Ghana's economy and spin off jobs immediately. These are huge expectations that need to be managed. "

He was confident that with the level of technology deployed by Tullow Ghana Limited, the operator of the Jubilee Field and the quality of personnel working on the project, the target date of producing first oil by quarter 4 this year will be met.

2. World Bank official urges Ghana to focus on diversified economy

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Managing Director of the World Bank Group on Wednesday, urged Ghana to focus on diversifying her economy and use the expected revenue from oil and gas for socio-economic development.

She said transparency, accountability, human resource development and use of local content in the oil and gas industry should be key in managing the resources for development.

Okonjo-Iweala was interacting with journalists in Accra, at the end of her two-day official visit to the country.

She expressed confidence in the country's economic potentials and stressed that Ghana could practice value-added agriculture to create more jobs especially for the youth.

Okonjo-Iweala noted that Ghana was exporting million dollars of horticultural products annually, adding that, recently the exports had tripled, which is a sign of major improvement in the sector.

On the economic potential of the African continent, she said countries needed to focus on how to mobilise domestic resources to support private sector growth.

Okonjo-Iweala said the socio-economic potential of the continent was under utilised, saying that, only 44 percent of the land was used for agriculture with only 11 percent of farmers using improved seeds.

She however expressed optimism that the situation could be reversed and stressed the need to use improved agriculture as a means for development.

Health: Benin: Clean water is essential in containing the spread of cholera

UN health agency stresses good hygiene to prevent cholera spread in Benin
[Clean water is essential in containing the spread of cholera]

9 February 2010 – Officials from the United Nations health agency and the Beninese Government are urging the West African nation’s citizens to be extra vigilant in observing good hygiene amid a recent cholera outbreak that has already claimed several lives.

Since the outbreak began in early January, 131 cases have been confirmed of which two resulted in death, according to Léon Kohossi with the UN World Health Organization (WHO) in Benin.

“This epidemic has erupted due to lack of hygiene,” Dr. Kohossi told the UN News Centre.

He noted that with the current dry season in Benin, locals are finding it difficult to get clean water and are therefore drinking from the Oueme River, which is polluted.

Most of the cases are centred around four villages located near the Oueme River – Bonou, Adjohoun, Dangbo and Aguegues.

Additional cases have been detected in the capital, Cotonou, which is some 200 kilometres from the epicentre of the outbreak, and Allada, located 100 kilometres north of Cotonou.

The Ministry of Health and local authorities are working to sensitize people against drinking unclean water and trying to identify ways to provide them with clean water.

Meanwhile, WHO is providing emergency kits, including medicine, that are being distributed to health centres in the affected areas to treat patients with cholera – an acute

intestinal infection picked up through contaminated food or water, and which results in diarrhoea that can lead to severe dehydration and death without prompt treatment.

Human rights:

Nigeria: 1. Boko Haram: Reps to Probe Al-Jazeera's Footage of Killings.

The House of Representatives yesterday mandated its committees on Human Rights, Police Affairs and Justice to investigate a video clip that has been airing on Al-Jazeera, an international news station which showed extra judicial killings of defenceless cripples and underage citizens by men of the Nigeria Police Force, during the Boko Haram sectarian violence in Borno State, last year.

The extra judicial killings which was captured as they allegedly took place while the insurrection was being managed by the security agents was aired as part of attempts to counter claims by the Nigeria Police that the report of Amnesty International indicting the police of extra judicial was not true.

Considering a motion moved by Hon Abdulrahman Suleiman Kawu, under a motion of urgent importance that sought to condemn the acts, the House resolved that an investigation should be carried out to ascertain the true situation before any recommendation is made.

Announcing the resolution, the presiding officer, Hon Usman Bayero Nafada said, "there is need for fair hearing. We have committees in charge of issues of Police and Human Rights and it will be out of place to direct the executive to set up a commission of enquiry".

"Let us as a House find out what happened and advise on what next step to take on the matter". Leading the debate on the motion, Hon Kawu said that action of the Nigeria Police show by Aljazeera had further dented the image of the country and should be condemned.

He told his colleagues, "If what we watched on the international news channel was true, then the Nigeria Police had deviated from the statutory duty of protecting the people.

"What I saw on Aljazeera television is horrible', he continued, "I saw how people were lined up and shot by police, I saw young men and women, I saw cripples, I saw the underaged. Police just opened fire on them; I could not believe my eyes. This is why I think we as parliament must look into this killings. It is now on international channel and our image as a nation is at stake".

Hon Faruk Lawan noted in his contribution that though there have been evidence in the past that show incidences of extra judicial killings, nothing concrete has been put in place to punish the culprits.

He said, "Allegations have been made anytime there is crisis anywhere in the country. Even when there was crisis in Jos recently, many people testified that there were many extra judicial killings there but we always pretend that there is nothing going on".

In his contribution, Hon Femi Gbajabamila said what makes it more unfortunate is that there is a false impression that the government endorsed the killings, adding that it was sad that the same constitution which brought the Police into existence is the same that they are flouting.

Meanwhile, the chairman of House Committee on Police Affairs, Hon Abdul Ningi, described what the police did as a heinous crime against humanity that must be investigated and queried why the media has not been active in addressing the issue.

Other members who spoke during the debate included Hon Yakubu Alebiosu, Seriake Dickson, Emmanuel Jime, Samson Osagie ,Hon Abike Dabiri-Erewa and Lanre Agoro and they all called for an exclusive investigation into the action of the police in the Boko Haram saga.

2. Amnesty Tasks Jonathan on Extra-Judicial Killings.

Amnesty International has called on Acting President Goodluck Jonathan to fulfill the commitments made in his acceptance speech by setting up an independent commission of inquiry into all suspected cases of unlawful killings by the Nigeria Police Force in recent years.

Amnesty's call followed the recent broadcast of video footage on Al Jazeera, a Middle East cable news network, showing police shooting and killing unarmed people in Maiduguri, Borno State, in July 2009.

"The Nigerian police routinely kill people in cold blood without fear of punishment. This must stop. The government must ensure that all killings are investigated, that the findings are made public and perpetrators of unlawful killings are brought to justice," said Erwin van der Borgh, Amnesty International's Africa Director.

"The video aired by Al Jazeera is not an isolated example of unlawful use of firearms by the Nigeria Police Force. This is a widespread phenomenon. The video clearly shows members of the Nigeria Police Force carrying out extrajudicial executions, highlighting an issue documented by Amnesty International in a report published in December 2009,"the statement read.

"Repeated claims by the government of a zero-tolerance on extrajudicial executions and torture ring hollow when it fails to investigate and arrest police officers despite mounting evidence incriminating them in hideous human rights violations."

Amnesty referred to Acting President Goodluck Jonathan's February 9, 2010 acceptance speech where he stated that "The Nigeria Police and other security services would be given new impetus to perform their duties, even while respecting the human rights of Nigerians. They are fully expected to produce corresponding results. There shall be no excuses for failure. Nigerians deserve to be fully protected at all times nationwide.

"Amnesty International welcomes the acting president's stated commitment to protect the human rights of Nigerians nationwide, and we call on him to put this into action by immediately setting up an independent commission of inquiry into all unlawful killings by the police in recent years and ensure that it has full support to bring perpetrators to justice," said Erwin

3. Human Right Watch urges Jonathan to sack Maurice Iwu.

An international human rights group, Human Rights Watch, has called on Nigeria's Acting President, Goodluck Jonathan, to dismiss the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Maurice Iwu, in order to enhance the much needed electoral reform.

HRW, in a letter to Mr. Jonathan asked for the dismissal of Mr. Iwu and a comprehensive and impartial investigation into widespread election abuses committed during and since the 2007 elections.

The body urged the Acting President to take immediate and concrete steps to address large-scale violence, endemic corruption, a lack of accountability for abuses, and other pressing human rights problems in the country. They called on Mr. Jonathan to address the problem of impunity, by ensuring that the police conduct a prompt and thorough criminal investigation, with prosecutions, into the outbreak of sectarian violence in Jos and massacre of at least 150 people in Kuru Karama, earlier in January.

It also called for a criminal investigation into the extrajudicial killings by the police of suspected Boko Haram members in July 2009 and the unlawful killings of more than 130 people by the police and military while responding to the November 2008 sectarian clashes in Jos, the Plateau State capital.

To fight corruption, the group urged Mr. Jonathan to call on the National Assembly to pass the Freedom of Information bill and ensure that government officials implicated in the looting of the state treasury are investigated and prosecuted.

"Nigerians have suffered from violence, corruption, and state-sponsored abuses for far too long," said Corinne Dufka, senior West Africa researcher at HRW. The body

commended the recent removal of Justice Minister and Attorney General, Michael Aondoakaa, under whom HRW claimed “the culture of impunity flourished.”

4. Acting President Should Address Abuses.

Nigeria's acting president, Goodluck Jonathan, should take immediate and concrete steps to address large-scale violence, endemic corruption, a lack of accountability for abuses, and other pressing human rights problems in Nigeria, Human Rights Watch said in a [letter](#) to the newly mandated leader.

On February 9, 2010, the National Assembly voted to name Jonathan acting president, taking over from the ailing president, Umaru Yar'Adua, who has been hospitalized in Saudi Arabia since November 23, 2009.

In his address to the nation following the National Assembly's vote, Jonathan pledged to take on the prevailing "culture of impunity" that has fueled successive deadly outbreaks of inter-communal violence, tackle government corruption "more robustly," empower a rights-respecting police force, consolidate efforts to end the Niger Delta conflict, and follow through on electoral reform ahead of Nigeria's 2011 general elections.

"Goodluck Jonathan made positive and encouraging statements," said Corinne Dufka, senior West Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch. "Now the acting president needs to follow up with concrete actions."

The removal, on February 10, of Michael Aondoakaa, the justice minister and attorney general under whose watch the culture of impunity flourished, was an important first step, Human Rights Watch said. Jonathan should continue this positive momentum by taking concrete actions to make sure that those who commit abuses are held accountable.

In its letter to the acting president, Human Rights Watch called on Jonathan to address the problem of impunity by ensuring that the police conduct a prompt and thorough criminal investigation, with prosecutions, into the [January deadly outbreak of sectarian violence in Jos](#) and [massacre of at least 150 people in nearby Kuru Karama](#). He should address the root causes of the violence by sponsoring legislation that bans all forms of discrimination against "non-indigenes."

The acting president should hold accountable security forces, notably the Nigeria Police Force, for widespread abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and extortion, Human Rights Watch said. This should include a comprehensive criminal investigation into the extrajudicial killings by the police of suspected Boko Haram members in July 2009 and the unlawful killings of more than 130 people by the police and military while responding to the [November 2008 sectarian clashes in Jos](#).

Jonathan should also "more robustly" tackle government corruption by subjecting government expenditures to greater oversight and more transparent financial audits, by calling on the National Assembly to pass the Freedom of Information bill, and by

ensuring that government officials implicated in the massive looting of the state treasury are investigated and prosecuted, regardless of how highly placed.

Human Rights Watch further called on Jonathan to tackle the corruption and political violence that underlie the Niger Delta conflict by investigating and prosecuting the politicians who have embezzled and mismanaged the region's vast oil wealth and armed many of the criminal gangs active in the Niger Delta.

On electoral reform, Human Right Watch called on Jonathan to start to restore confidence in Nigeria's electoral system by dismissing Maurice Iwu, the chair of the electoral commission, and ordering a comprehensive and impartial investigation into widespread election abuses committed during and since the 2007 elections.

"Nigerians have suffered from violence, corruption, and state-sponsored abuses for far too long," Dufka said. "Goodluck Jonathan has promised to create a new era of rights and justice for Nigerians, and there is no time to waste."

Niger: As Country Faces Severe Food Shortages, UN & Partners Appeal for Aid.

With 7.8 million people in Niger - or three fifths of the population - facing moderate to severe food insecurity, the United Nations and its non-governmental organization (NGO) partners today appealed for international aid to help the Government of the impoverished West African country overcome imminent shortages.

"It is imperative to support the Government in its efforts to mobilize the resources to satisfy the food needs of the most vulnerable," resident UN Humanitarian Coordinator Khardiata Lo N'Diaye said.

She noted that a national food security assessment completed in December showed that 2.7 million people suffered faced severe food insecurity, and another 5.1 million faced moderate food insecurity, with more than half the total population having less than two months' food stocks until the next harvest, not expected until October.

"The United Nations and their partners in close cooperation with the national authorities to respond rapidly to identified priorities," the Coordinator said.

An irregular, spottily distributed and prematurely shortened rainy season in 2009 led to insufficient cereal and fodder production for people and livestock, and the Government is currently evaluating how much more funding is needed.

"There is good reason to fear that this situation seriously threatens food security in the short term and undermines efforts made so far," Ms. Lo N'Diaye said. "We must act at once, and together."

In 2005, when Niger faced severe food shortages because of drought, the UN launched a variety of initiatives, including funding appeals, to stave off potential famine that threatened nearly 3 million people and had already killed thousands of children.

Senegal: West African collaboration for gender equality enhanced by new UN initiative.

Gender equality, respect for women’s rights and the fight against sexual violence in West Africa received a new weapon in its arsenal today with the launch of a United Nations initiative to enhance cooperation among all stakeholders in the region.

“It is now crucial for the international community, governments and civil society to combine their efforts to address gender issues in the sub-region,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Special Representative for West Africa Said Djinnit said at the launch in Dakar, Senegal, of the Directory of Human Rights and Gender Organizations in West Africa.

The event was organized in collaboration with the UN Development Fund for Women ([UNIFEM](#)). The directory intends to map out initiatives and to facilitate information sharing in order to encourage networking on the issue.

“In this respect, the United Nations Office for West Africa ([UNOWA](#)) and UNIFEM continue to facilitate synergy-driven initiatives such as this directory, and the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security that was established in April 2009,” Mr. Djinnit said.

The launch took place within the framework of Mr. Ban’s “[Unite](#) to end violence against women,” that was officially launched for the African continent during the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa.

Liberia: Liberian kids face exploitation

Liberian children are vulnerable to exploitation, partly because of poverty and sexual violence that remain rife in the West African nation, the UN peacekeeping mission said on Wednesday.

Releasing a report on the country's human rights situation, the UN Mission in Liberia's (UNMIL) secretary general Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu told journalists that "protection of children in particular remains inadequate".

"Extreme levels of poverty and high illiteracy rates, coupled with limited livelihood and economic opportunities have made children in post-conflict Liberia vulnerable to all forms of exploitation," she said.

Many children who should be in school are instead working to contribute to household incomes, the UN mission said.

Moreover, the situation of children in many orphanages was still dire and the "living conditions and quality of care and protection provided was generally poor," according to UNMIL's January-June 2009 report.

Rape and sexual crimes, especially against girls, are still prevalent. Rape cases tend to be settled out of court.

Health care is often unavailable in rural areas and schools are generally ill-equipped, while "insufficient numbers of well trained and qualified teachers is still a challenge," the report said.

UNMIL was established in Liberia in 2003 when a peace agreement was signed ending a long running civil war that killed approximately 250 000 and left infrastructure shattered, slowing post-conflict development.

However the humanitarian situation has improved and UNMIL commended the establishment of an Independent National Commission of Human Rights.

Pan-African issues:

- A Type of Africa Gaddafi Can Buy

After relieving himself of official titles and strict state protocols, Col. Muammar al-Gaddafi has settled down, with ample time in his hands, to become some form of a moving theatre. For the record, Gaddafi is the Supreme Guide of the Libyan revolution.

The Libyan leader is a person of great and new ideas and an experimentalist, to boot. His ideas on social transformation are always not only unorthodox, but breathtaking. Read his Green Book on the Third Universal Theory about the social restructuring of Libya into Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Ever since Capt. Gaddafi overthrew King Idris 1 in 1969, he has gone through complicated processes, especially in the 1970s, to change the socio-political fabric of Libya to tally with his personal ideas, vision and ambitions. He did try to merge his country with Egypt and later Tunisia, in the early 1970s, but failed. This failed pan-Arab confederation project probably helped to turn his attention to his brothers in the so-called sub-Saharan Africa.

Obsessed with a grand continental vision, Gaddafi has always tried to carve out an especial continent-wide role for himself. He would "come" down to Africa to engage with poor Africans, showing the mien and forbearance of a redemptory dotting elder

brother, or in some circumstance, that of a genteel freebies-dispensing potentate. The constant message of Gaddafi has been that of the United State of Africa. He has spent huge amount of resources in ways that sometimes bristle many people.

Not long ago, the Libyan Supreme Leader hosted a conference of traditional rulers from sub-Saharan Africa, and it was all colours, drama and tales. A lot of tales also emanated from his last visit to Italy, Libya's former colonial power. Col. Gaddafi, it was reported, had requested to host a select group of Italian girls in his hotel. Getting to the venue, all veiled up, the great Libyan Leader sat them down and began to regale the youngsters about what they have missed in Islam. To cap it, he offered the bewildered girls to pay for their pilgrimage to Mecca!

In all, Gaddafi's involvement in African affairs has always been equally momentous and dramatic. When Libya took the chair of African Union last year, for instance, it was all about enervating debates, tempers and all. Gaddafi tasked African leaders on his undying subject of one African government; one army and one parliament – and of course, one president! This thing has never worked, right from the day of Nkrumah's frenetic pan – Africanist campaigns. Gaddafi failed, too. But he took the chair of African Union, all the same. His tenure came full circle a week or so ago. It was time to depart, but the Supreme Leader of Libya demurred. He wanted another term; and he was set to even pay for it; lobby, browbeat, beg, cajole and blackmail.

It was the turn of southern Africa to lead the Union and it had fallen on Malawi to take the chair, but Muammar Gaddafi, like many African leaders are wont to do, refuse to leave. I held my breath as the dangerous shenanigans went on.

I think that for holding firm to the principle of fair play, democracy and equality of every member state to wrest and hand over the AU chair to President Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi, African leaders have somewhat redeemed themselves in the circumstance.

Having been in power for 41 long years, and still going strong, I think authoritarian tendencies would come naturally to Col. Gaddafi. And having taken up all levers of power in his country for this length of time, with none to dare constitute opposition, I also think all sense of decency pertaining to public accountability, group participation in decision-making and transparency, has meant nothing to the old pudgy colonel.

With so much spare time and petro-dollars to spend on a small population (6.4 million; GDP, \$62 billion; per capita, \$9,720) – a decidedly good social ratio in matters of human conditions and development – the Libyan leader can afford to dream big, wild dreams, and to want to act on them. But Africa is in too precarious conditions to be let into the hands of Col. Gaddafi, to yo-yo with.

Africa has been particularly blighted by unimaginative leaders; corrupt, sit-tight, out-of-touch rulers, for too long. The engendering factor in this sad set up, has been the inability of the people to change the mindset of the so-called leaders. This undemocratic practice

is exactly what Gaddafi was trying to institute at the African Union, and it was such a good feeling that he was stopped.

It might be a different game in the Maghreb, but here in the sub-Saharan, the people are locked in battles to take back their mandate and use it as they deem appropriate. Strong-headed, enduring leaders have done nothing to develop neither their people nor their environment in the decades past. Pushing them out of the corridors of State Houses is the task at hand, and when Col. Gaddafi came with his nightmarish proposition to hang on a little longer in the African Union leadership saddle, it became such a frightening *déjà vu*.

- **AU hails Nigeria power transfer**

Addis Ababa - The African Union urged the military in coup-prone Nigeria on Thursday to respect a decision to hand power to the country's deputy leader until the recovery of ailing President Umaru Yar'Adua.

In a statement, African Union commission chairman Jean Ping praised the move to install Goodluck Jonathan as acting head-of-state for demonstrating "respect for the constitution, good governance, democracy and the rule of law".

"In so doing, the government and people of Nigeria have, again, resolved a delicate and sensitive political situation within the constitutional and legal provisions available and without recourse to violence or unconstitutional means," the statement added.

"The chairperson of the commission encourages all the stakeholders in Nigeria, including the military, to continue in their firm support for and practice of constitutionality."

Nigeria's cabinet had initially opposed the idea of the vice president being formally appointed as acting head of state in the absence of Yar'Adua who has been treated in a Saudi Arabia hospital for a heart condition since November.

History of coups

But ministers rallied round Jonathan on Wednesday, the day after both houses of parliament had voted to hand him the reins of power.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and one of the world's biggest oil exporters, has a long history of coups and military leadership, and only returned to civilian rule a little over a decade ago.

After his installation as acting president, Jonathan commended the security services for "their loyalty and devotion to duty during this trying period".

The debate around the crisis arising from Yar'Adua's absence has brought to the fore the political battle over the delicate power balancing act in Nigeria.

The situation in Nigeria is further complicated by an unwritten rule under which the

presidency traditionally switches between the north and the south at every two elections.

Yar'Adua is from the predominantly Muslim north and Jonathan from the mainly Christian south.

Editorials:

Ghana: Can Oil Turn Economy Around?

Ghana's oil fields, which is expected to pour its first oil in the last quarter of this year, continue to attract a lot of offshore investors and is receiving a great deal of attention from the international community.

The expectations from the revenue from the oil continue to heighten amid statements and promises that Ghana's economy would witness a significant turn around as soon as oil starts pouring out of the wells.

But most analysts have recommended that Ghana treads the oil path with cautious optimism, as its success story lies in managing public expectation and implementing pragmatic policies to guide the spending of the oil money.

The Standard Chartered's Regional Head of Research, Africa, Razia Khan has opined that government has the responsibility to manage public expectation and strive to diversify the economy and make oil a contributing factor for accelerated growth.

According to her, oil revenues were not likely to significantly change things around for the country in the immediate, as exploration companies would have to plough back their investment before the country could begin to reap the benefit of the oil find.

"The government will have to wait in the next five years to begin reaping substantial revenue from the crude oil because companies involved in the exploration would have to recoup their investment first," she noted.

Razia made these observations when she presented a paper on the topic: Black gold -a game changer? at the British Council in Accra. She emphasized that it would be prudent on the part of government to diversify the economy, placing much emphasis on agriculture potentials and not focus mainly on the oil find.

According to her, the ability of oil to make a meaningful contribution to the economy depends on a wider policy framework. She advised that government would have to place much emphasis on fiscal consolidation and cutting back on its capital spending, adding that Ghana's biggest challenge will be to reduce domestic interest rates and prevent domestic debt from rising further.

Tullow oil, one of the development partners in the jubilee fields has recently announced that in line with efforts at meeting the quarter time line to start pouring first oil, it has began the installation of a number of subsea equipments required for siphoning oil from under the seabed with the latest being the Christmas Tree .

Some other equipments currently being installed include the Riser station and production lines.

The Christmas tree is an assembly of control valves, gauges, pipes, chokes and fittings used to control oil and gas flow from a completed well and are installed on the ocean floor.

Management of the Tullow are, however, confident that with the level of technology deployed, the operator of the Jubilee Field and the quality of personnel working on the project, the target date of producing first oil by quarter 4 this year will be met.

Nigeria: Power Transition - Jonathan's First Step

Analysis

A report on how Acting President Goodluck Jonathan is taking charge. While the 1999 Constitution, problematic as it may appear, makes specific provisions on what a President going on vacation should do, and in his absence, how the Federal Executive Council, FEC, can salvage a situation of stasis or lacuna, the resolution of the Senate and the House of Representatives, last Tuesday appears to have made a mockery of democracy.

February 10, 2010, was a slight contrast from Wednesday, November 25, 2009. Unlike that morning in 2009 when the ministers did not know what to expect from a Goodluck Jonathan chairmanship of the Federal Executive Council, FEC, last Wednesday's was different for many reasons.

First was the fact that just barely 48 hours earlier, two ministers were locked out of a meeting chaired by Jonathan - as mere Vice President of Nigeria. Then his first chairmanship of FEC saw proceedings starting at exactly 10 am.

Therefore, it was not surprising as ministers started rushing into Aso Rock Presidential villa as early as 8:52 am. Before the commencement of FEC meeting, Jonathan had met with the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, SGF, Alhaji Yayale Ahmed, and then Attorney-General of the Federation, Mr. Michael Aondoakaa (SAN).

His task was simple: Get started with the backlog of payments and approvals. But the FEC meeting of last Wednesday was to become markedly different from the FEC meetings that Jonathan had chaired and has been chairing since President Umaru Yar'Adua left Nigeria for Saudi Arabia on medical grounds.

First, the seeming air of freedom expressed by most ministers during presentation of memos at FEC meetings appeared to have shifted for another paradigm which bothered on the anxious and fearsome. Although most of the ministers felt very free to express themselves in times past, last Wednesday was different. One of the reasons is the fear of the unknown.

In an environment of bare-faced power tussle between the pro-Yar'Adua ministers and the pro-Jonathan ministers, most ministers were said not to be particularly free as they were pre last Wednesday when Jonathan chaired the FEC meeting in the new toga of Acting President.

Sunday Vanguard gathered that "ministers appeared to be ready to take their cue from the body language of the Acting President. In fact, the problem that may arise now is that it would be difficult to actually know those who are just playing to the gallery from those who are really interested in moving Nigeria forward with the Acting President". Instructive was the information that "the plethora of pressure being brought on the Acting President may become counter-productive".

One source said, "Whereas the Acting President is expected to take charge fully, the man has decided that he would do all within his powers to ensure that he does not unnecessarily get himself bugged down by politicking. A good example is the way he handled the Anambra governorship elections by not playing his hands as a partisan leader".

How the deal was struck

It was, on the face of it, a supposedly creative way (by the National Assembly) of getting out of a bind which President Yar'Adua put Nigerians.

Sunday Vanguard sources in Abuja, said Acting President Jonathan was only briefed about the strategy of the National Assembly after the deal had been consummated. Senate President David Mark initiated the deal. In consultation with some past presidents of Nigeria and the leadership of most of the important groups that visited the National Assembly on the possible way forward, Mark got the nod.

It was after the series of informal consultations were further carried out with a view to carrying his colleagues in the Senate along on the deal.

Mark was sited at the office of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, last Monday. Whether he visited the INEC chairman to discuss the Senate resolution could not be ascertained at press time but he was said to have visited the Commission's headquarters at a time when Professor Maurice Iwu was meeting with members of the Anambra State Election Monitoring Board.

Is this the best deal?

Was this the best possible deal in town regarding the transfer of power? The devil is in the interpretation. It is perhaps for the same reason that section 419 of the penal code which deals with obtaining by false pretense, the National Assembly resolutions transferring power to Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as Acting President, should be viewed as and punished for transferring power using false interpretation of the 1999 Constitution.

Questions:

How does an interview of 58 seconds duration with President Umaru Yar'Adua on British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC, automatically equate to transmission of a letter informing the National Assembly of a vacation? How does a transcript of same translate into a letter written and signed by the President? How does the posting of same on the World Wide Web, become a transmission to the National Assembly?

But because Nigeria is a nation of ingénues leaders, anything can and does happen. **Omo Omoruyi**, a Professor of political science, in his view, does not believe that what the Senate and the House of representatives have done is legal or proper.

"Respect the Constitution - Section 1(1), (2) (3) is very clear that the Constitution is supreme and that no one shall come to power other those provided for in the Constitution and that any law that is inconsistent with this is Void.

"ISSUE: If the President is ill and cannot govern the Federal Executive Council acting through a two third can say so by a resolution; this resolution must be validated by a Medical Panel put together by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

"PDP AN ISSUE: What baffles me is the inability of the governing party to act i.e. govern. After all, all the people involved including the ailing President, the Senate President, House Speaker, the Ministers are members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Why can't the PDP as the governing party govern?

"GO TO SECTION 144 OF THE CONSTITUTION: Let me go back to what I have been saying since I started to air my view on the matter is that the mode of dealing what looks like a political crisis is contained in Section 144 of the 1999 Constitution. That Constitution makes no provision for the Senate to act one way or the other.

"COUP: Any action outside the Constitution is unconstitutional and coming to power outside the provision of the Constitution is a COUP. Simple!" he said.

Goodluck Jonathan's itinerary since becoming Acting President

Day One

*Wednesday: Jonathan arrives office 8:30, met with SGF and AGF at 8:50.

*Ministers start rushing to attend FEC as early as 8:52 as against 10:30 during Yar'Adua era.

*Ministers begin grouping along Yar'Adua /Jonathan interests and discussing

*Michael Aondoakaa, Abba Ruma and Tanimu Yakubu, Economic Adviser to the President in a prolonged discussion than other groups

*10:05am: Jonathan arrives FEC Chambers, takes everybody by surprise when he walks past his former chair. His ADC hurriedly pulls out the C-in-C chair bearing the seal/coat-of-arms.

. Even when many think that FEC shouldn't have lasted longer as only two memos, in addition to Akunyili are billed for discussion.

Aondoakaa storms out, in a state of confusion, holding three phones, trying to make calls with all of them at the same time. His aides rush to his rescue by helping him to take some of the incoming calls.

*As he talks, Jonathan goes to his office.

*Moments later Aondoakaa rushes to Jonathan's office; Orubebe follows.

*Jonathan receives Kuwaiti envoy before returning to EXCOF meeting.

*Ministers resume their grouping openly while the 40-minute break lasts.

*EXCOF meeting gets underway.

*Handsets of reporters start rigging as their editors call to enquire about Aondoakaa's fate.

*5:20pm: EXCOF ends meeting. Aondoakaa's redeployment confirmed.

Day Two:

*Jonathan receives Senate leadership at his residence at 8:30 a.m.

*He arrives office at 9.30 a.m. Receives presidential committee on remuneration in the civil service

*12:53: meets Niger Delta governors and Amnesty committee,

*More prominent Nigerians besiege his office.

*SGF, NSA and other cabinet members spend almost the whole day in the Villa