

Report # 108
BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
Central Africa
Hafiz Akif Naeem
Weekly Report from 21 February to 27 February 2010
Presentation: 3 March 2010

Contents

Summary.....2-13

Political Developments

- **Rwanda: Sarkozy Arrives Today.....6**
- **Rwanda: Genocidaires Should Be Hunted Down and Punished.....7-8**
- **Rwanda: Sarkozy Visit Should Give the Genocidaires Sleepless Nights...8-9**
- **Rwanda: U.S. College Holds Rwanda Presidential Scholars.....10-11**
- **Armed Group Leader Unhappy Over Exclusion from DRC Cabinet Reshuffle11-12**
- **French Leader in Rwanda for 1st Time since 1994 Genocide.....12**
- **Rwandan Officer Sentenced to 25 Years in Prison for Genocide.....12**
- **Rwanda: RPF Members Vow to Ensure Peaceful Elections.....13**

Economic Developments

- **Paris Club Agrees to Billion-Dollar Debt Relief for DRC.....14**
- **Rwanda: Country and Congo Sign Energy Pact.....15**
- **Rwanda: Crafts Sector Requires \$4.7 Million for Development.....16**
- **Rwanda: Country's Trade Deficit Widens.....16-17**

Social Developments

- **Central Africa: UN Peacekeeping Chief Arrives to Discuss Cooperation with Government.....18**
- **Central African Republic: Under the Gun - Violence and Displacement in Country.....18-19**
- **Uganda/Gabon: We'll Make It to Gabon.....20-21**

Summary

Political Developments

Rwanda: Sarkozy Arrives Today

French President Nicolas Sarkozy is expected to arrive in the country today for a working visit expected to last half-a day. Upon arrival, Sarkozy will visit the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre at Gisozi and thereafter, hold talks with President Paul Kagame at Urugwiro Village from where the two Heads of State are scheduled to hold a joint press conference. Foreign Affairs Minister Louise Mushikiwabo said that discussions will also centre on the "the direct participation" of some top French officials at the time in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Rwanda: Genocidaires Should Be Hunted Down and Punished - Sarkozy

President Nicolas Sarkozy of France said that everyone who took part in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi should be hunted down and punished. He said this while on a one-day visit to Rwanda where he held talks with President Paul Kagame at Urugwiro Village. Sarkozy said that there should be no ambiguity; we want all those responsible to be hunted down and punished, the tough-talking Sarkozy told a joint press conference after the meeting. President Kagame thanked the French Head of State for his "openness" and the "frank dialogue" both have had in the past two years.

Rwanda: Sarkozy Visit Should Give the Genocidaires Sleepless Nights

The admission by French President Nicolas Sarkozy that "serious errors of judgment" were made by his country in relation to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi opens a new chapter in the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Rwanda: U.S. College Holds Rwanda Presidential Scholars Symposium

Hendrix College in the US Thursday hosted the "Rwanda Presidential Scholars Program (RPSP) Consortium Dinner" at the Clinton Presidential Centre which brought together an elite group of academicians from 21 US institutions of higher learning. The purpose of this event was to examine how the RPSP can be better served by expanding to include nine additional schools that will all offer scholarships to Rwandan students.

Armed Group Leader Unhappy Over Exclusion from DRC Cabinet Reshuffle

VOA

A leader of the Mai Mai Kifufua armed group in the Democratic Republic of Congo says his group is disappointed after being excluded from President Joseph Kabila's latest cabinet reshuffle. He says, "We will take care of ourselves because nobody is thinking of

us. We are going to take care of ourselves by doing what will be possible to do,” In response Information Minister said that they must register their party and come to political arena, this is not a way for asking ministers.

French Leader in Rwanda for 1st Time since 1994 Genocide

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has acknowledged that France and the rest of the world made mistakes in failing to prevent Rwanda's 1994 genocide, but he stopped short of apologizing. Mr. Sarkozy told reporters in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, Thursday that France and other nations were "blinded" in their failure to see the genocidal aspect of the government that orchestrated the killings. Before it Rwanda has accused France of aiding the perpetrators of the genocide, in which some 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and Hutu moderates were killed. France denies the charge.

Rwandan Officer Sentenced to 25 Years in Prison for Genocide

A United Nations war crimes court sentenced a former Rwandan officer to 25 years in prison Thursday for his role in the 1994 genocide. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, based in Tanzania, found Lieutenant Colonel Ephrem Setako guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity and other charges.

Rwanda: RPF Members Vow to Ensure Peaceful Elections

Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) leaders in Gicumbi district have been advised to sensitise residents on the party's manifesto and rally other people behind the party. The party faithful vowed to tighten security in the entire district in order to ensure peaceful presidential elections scheduled for August this year.

Economic Developments

Paris Club Agrees to Billion-Dollar Debt Relief for DRC

The Paris Club of creditor nations has agreed to restructure the external debt of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It said Thursday almost half of the nearly \$7 billion debt owed by the DRC will be written off or rescheduled. At the end of June 2009, Congo's debt to the Paris Club stood at \$ 6.9 billion. \$1.3 billion of that total has now been canceled and \$1.7 billion has been rescheduled. Debt service repayments have been deferred until July 2012.

Rwanda: Country and Congo Sign Energy Pact

The Governments of Rwanda and the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) yesterday afternoon signed an agreement to cooperate in the Energy sector at the ministry of infrastructure. The signing follows a three-day visit to Rwanda by a joint government and UN delegation from the Republic of Congo visit to several alternative energy projects like Mini Water Hydro Plants and the Methane Gas Project in Kivu Lake.

Rwanda: Crafts Sector Requires \$4.7 Million for Development

Government of Rwanda needs \$4.7 million to implement its five year strategic plan for the nascent crafts industry, according to the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM). The strategic plan started in 2009 and will run up to 2013. It seeks to provide a systematic and action oriented framework for the purposeful development of the sector with particular emphasis on product and export market development.

Rwanda: Country's Trade Deficit Widens

Rwanda's trade balance widened by over 20 percent in 2009 and more than tripled in the last five years, increasing aid dependency, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning has said. Statistics of selected products show that for the period ending December 2009, Rwanda generated \$140.1 million from coffee, tea and minerals, down from \$182.7 million in 2008. Imports increased by 8.2 percent and 17 percent in value and volume terms respectively, mainly driven by huge expenditures on consumer goods, as well as fuel and energy. Trade balance widened because exports did not perform well due to the credit crunch. Commodity prices fell and yet continued to import. The ministry said that the projected decline in import value did not occur although the rate of increase in import value is the smallest in five years.

Social Developments

Central Africa: UN Peacekeeping Chief Arrives to Discuss Cooperation with Government

The top United Nations peacekeeping official has arrived in Chad accompanied by a five-member team to discuss cooperation between the Government and the UN peacekeeping mission in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR). The visit by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Alain Le Roy comes after Chad called for the withdrawal of the military component of the UN mission, known as MINURCAT, which was set up in 2007 after tensions increased along the border with Sudan's war-torn Darfur region.

Central African Republic: Under the Gun - Violence and Displacement in Country

IRIN

Central African Republic (CAR) has been in the throes of a humanitarian crisis for more than a decade. Army mutinies, coups and attempted coups, rebellions, gangs that kidnap for ransom and, more recently, elements of Uganda's notorious Lord's Resistance Army have made life for civilians, especially in the north, extremely challenging, unpredictable, and very dangerous. As IRIN's new documentary film, *Under the Gun*, demonstrates, many Central Africans have little say over where they live even. Countless villages in the north lie abandoned, crumbling with disuse, their residents ensconced nearby in makeshift bush camps, too scared to return. With CAR ranked 178th out of the 179 countries listed in the UN's Human Development Index, just ahead of Sierra Leone, everyday conditions are grim even at the best of times. There are only 330 doctors for a population of more than four million. Life expectancy at birth is 43.7 years. Of every 1,000 births, 193 children die before the age of five.

Uganda/Gabon: We'll Make It to Gabon

Uganda's enduring love affair with the Africa Nations Cup has been a roller-coaster of pure agony since 1978, with the intervening years authoring a series of near-misses and abject failures. However, in the aftermath of the 2012 Nations Cup draws, Cranes captain Ibrahim Sekagya said that the team has gathered plenty of experience that should help put an end to the devastating run Ugandan fans have been put through in previous major qualifiers.

Details News

Political Developments

Rwanda: Sarkozy Arrives Today

The New Times

Kigali — French President Nicolas Sarkozy is expected to arrive in the country today for a working visit expected to last half-a day.

Upon arrival, Sarkozy will visit the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre at Gisozi and thereafter, hold talks with President Paul Kagame at Urugwiro Village from where the two Heads of State are scheduled to hold a joint press conference.

In an interview with The New Times, Foreign Affairs Minister Louise Mushikiwabo, said that Sarkozy's visit is an important milestone.

"President Sarkozy's visit is an important step in the normalisation of diplomatic relations between the two countries. We will be more than happy to welcome him, much as we know that there are still some outstanding issues to discuss."

Mushikiwabo noted that the visit will "not be just about normalising relations" but it will also provide Rwanda with a direct platform to discuss with France how the two countries can move forward.

"We will be more than ready to engage on various issues, including the indictments and the issue of respect and independence of the judiciary of both countries," said Mushikiwabo.

She said that discussions will also centre on the "the direct participation" of some top French officials at the time in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

She however added that while the 'political dialogue' to address outstanding concerns goes on, diplomatic and other forms of France-Rwanda cooperation will continue uninterrupted.

"The political dialogue on some of these issues which stem back from 1994 will continue, but as I speak today, the cooperation is already in full throttle. We have already received people from France ready to venture into business and investment,"

"As we have said earlier, we are a forward-looking country and the past will not deter us from moving forward. President Sarkozy also came into office with a positive approach to issues and we will be more than ready to engage," Mushikiwabo said.

She further noted that what the two countries are looking at is a new relationship that will be based on mutual understanding and respect, where the sovereignty of each is held in high esteem.

Rwanda: Genocidaires Should Be Hunted Down and Punished - Sarkozy

The New Times

Kigali — President Nicolas Sarkozy of France yesterday said that everyone who took part in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi should be hunted down and punished.

He said this while on a one-day visit to Rwanda where he held talks with President Paul Kagame at Urugwiro Village.

"There should be no ambiguity; we want all those responsible to be hunted down and punished, the tough-talking Sarkozy told a joint press conference after the meeting.

"I told President Kagame, that those who carried it out, wherever they are, must be found and punished. Are there any in France? It is up to justice to tell us".

He pointed out that France recently denied political asylum to one of them and that a judicial inquiry targeting others is currently ongoing.

Though Sarkozy did not officially apologise for whatever role his country played in the Genocide, he admitted that great mistakes were made that cost the lives of over a million people.

"There were serious errors of judgment. Political mistakes were committed here that absolutely had dramatic consequences," admitted the French President.

"What happened here was a failure by humanity, it left an indelible mark. What happened obliges the international community, including France, to reflect on the errors that made them fail to prevent and stop the heinous crime".

President Kagame thanked the French Head of State for his "openness" and the "frank dialogue" both have had in the past two years.

"Rwanda and France have had a difficult past, but we are here today to affirm a new partnership," said Kagame.

He revealed that they had discussed how both countries could foster a strong partnership for the future, and agreed to explore mutually beneficial opportunities in a number of sectors, including trade and investment, education and health as well as cultural exchanges.

"We look forward to a friendship based on mutual respect and close collaboration in pursuing our shared interests".

On the issue of Rwanda switching from French to English as the language of instruction in schools, President Kagame set the record straight, saying that it was not triggered by the collapse of diplomatic relations in 2006, but rather by the need for Rwanda 'to be the best it can be'.

"I want to make it clear, that in the first place, we did not stop teaching, learning or speaking French in Rwanda. In fact, we have not stopped our membership to the francophone family of nations. We are still members and want to continue being a member," he pointed out.

"We are basically ready to speak other languages including French and English. In fact there have been suggestions that we should maybe start learning Chinese".

President Sarkozy announced that he had personally invited President Kagame to a Franco-Africa summit that will be held in Nice mid this year.

"I think it is a great symbol of our reciprocal trust and our capability to turn the page It does not take away the pain, the mistakes or the difficulties, but it makes it possible to think about the future," underlined the French President.

Rwanda broke off diplomatic relations with France following a string of controversial and subsequently discredited indictments by a French judge against senior Rwandan officials in November 2006.

Rwanda: Sarkozy Visit Should Give the Genocidaires Sleepless Nights

The New Times

EDITORIAL

Kigali — The admission by French President Nicolas Sarkozy that "serious errors of judgment" were made by his country in relation to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, opens a new chapter in the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Sarkozy, the first French leader to visit Rwanda since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, visiting the Gisozi Genocide Memorial Centre, where hundreds of thousands of the Genocide victims are laid to rest, is an indication of the political will on the part of his government to make amends with Rwandans.

It was very important for Rwandans to hear the French President declare that the perpetrators of the Genocide should be brought to book.

Because, as he made this powerful statement, dozens of Rwandans indicted by the National Prosecution over their role in the Genocide, are freely roaming the streets of various cities in France. His statement should indeed give the genocidaires sleepless nights.

Much as he insisted that the judiciary works independently, the support of his government in that process would go a long way to ensure that the judiciary does its work diligently.

Indeed, the President of France could use his country's weight in the European Union to call for the arrest of other fugitives leaving in various countries in Europe.

Rwanda: U.S. College Holds Rwanda Presidential Scholars Symposium

The New Times

Kigali — Hendrix College in the US Thursday hosted the "Rwanda Presidential Scholars Program (RPSP) Consortium Dinner" at the Clinton Presidential Centre which brought together an elite group of academicians from 21 US institutions of higher learning.

The purpose of this event was to examine how the RPSP can be better served by expanding to include nine additional schools that will all offer scholarships to Rwandan students.

Dr. Tim Cloyd, President of Hendrix College, introduced the new partner institutions to the program. He acknowledged the enormous impact these exceptionally talented students have had on each campus they are studying.

"Having day-to-day contact with Rwandan students helps faculty members, administrators and students of the participating schools develop a global view and gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by developing countries," he said

Rwandan traditional dance was performed by six students from Hendrix College. Patrick Kamongi, a Rwandan Presidential Scholar at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, delivered the invocation. Mireille Mutesi and Alex Kagabo Mugengana were the two scholars who were asked to give the "student perspective" on the program.

"It was tough in the beginning to overcome language barriers, cultural adjustments, and survive in a competitive academic environment," Mutesi said.

James Kimonyo, Rwanda's Ambassador to the US, said that the Government of Rwanda was committed to supporting the incredible initiative.

"We look forward to engaging in this important discussion on accepting new academic partner institutions and discussing the financial mechanism that will be affordable by our government bearing in mind that we need to continue with this program without adversely affecting national programs that support thousands of students in Rwanda," he said.

Dabbs Cavin, former CEO of Urwego Opportunity Bank of Rwanda, said that there was so much to learn from Rwandan students and that the Rwanda Presidential Scholars will continue to have an impact on the American students they interact with everyday.

Hendrix solicited five other schools and awarded 25 new scholarships in 2008. Last year the consortium expanded again to include a total of 12 schools and awarded 52 scholarships, bringing the total student enrolment under the program to 81 students in five different states.

Armed Group Leader Unhappy Over Exclusion from DRC Cabinet Reshuffle

VOA

A leader of the Mai Mai Kifufua armed group in the Democratic Republic of Congo says his group is disappointed after being excluded from President Joseph Kabila's latest cabinet reshuffle.

"We will take care of ourselves because nobody is thinking of us. We are going to take care of ourselves by doing what will be possible to do,"

A leader of the Mai Mai Kifufua armed group in the Democratic Republic of Congo says his group is disappointed after being excluded from President Joseph Kabila's latest cabinet reshuffle.

Didier Bitaki said the government flouted a recently signed peace agreement to politically integrate leaders of the group into the government.

"The movement is not happy because as we agreed in Goma when we signed the peace accord, it stated that all the groups after integrating the combatants now the political integration will start. And when we met several times with the high authorities especially the president ministers they were not refusing that they were not going to integrate... the political leaders from the armed groups into the government," he said.

Congo's media quoted the prime minister's office as saying there were no cabinet posts for the former rebels whose units have been integrated into the national army.

But Bitaki said the government has failed to take care of the group's concerns.

"We will take care of ourselves because nobody is thinking of us. We are going to take care of ourselves by doing what will be possible to do," Bitaki said.

The former combatants are currently demanding four ministerial positions in President Kabila's government.

But Information Minister Lambert Mende said the rebels should focus on forming a legitimate political party to participate in next year's election just like all the other political parties.

“You just don’t grab a ministry just like that. You must come from a party. We have a constitution (and) nobody can go into the government just because he was fighting somewhere. No. they must transform to a political party as did the CNDP (National Congress for People's Defense). They register themselves at the Internal Affairs ministry and join a coalition. They can join the majority coalition which is now assuming the power,” Mende said.

Bitaki said the rebels would take up arms if Kinshasa refuses to address their concerns. But information minister Mende said the government does not kowtow to threats.

President Kabila’s reshuffle whittled down the cabinet from the initial 54 posts to 43 -- a move political observers say will rein in government spending ahead of next year’s general elections.

French Leader in Rwanda for 1st Time since 1994 Genocide

VOA

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has acknowledged that France and the rest of the world made mistakes in failing to prevent Rwanda's 1994 genocide, but he stopped short of apologizing.

Mr. Sarkozy told reporters in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, Thursday that France and other nations were "blinded" in their failure to see the genocidal aspect of the government that orchestrated the killings.

The French president spoke after holding talks with Rwandan President Paul Kagame and visiting the genocide museum and memorial, where he paid homage to the victims.

His one-day visit is the first by a French leader since Rwanda's 1994 genocide. The two nations are trying to repair diplomatic ties after a three-year breakdown.

Rwanda has accused France of aiding the perpetrators of the genocide, in which some 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and Hutu moderates were killed. France denies the charge.

Rwanda broke off relations with France in 2006, after a French judge issued arrest warrants for nine advisers of Mr. Kagame. The judge accused the advisers of helping to plot the assassination of Mr. Kagame's predecessor, Juvenal Habyarimana, at the start of the genocide.

Relations were restored late last year.

The French leader also has been to Gabon and Mali during this two-day tour of Africa.

On Wednesday in Mali, Mr. Sarkozy met with a Frenchman who was held hostage by an al-Qaida group for three months. The French president told Mali it could count on France's support in the fight against terrorists.

The French aid worker, Pierre Camatte, was set free this week after Mali released four Islamist militants in an apparent prisoner swap with the group al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb.

Rwandan Officer Sentenced to 25 Years in Prison for Genocide

VOA

A United Nations war crimes court sentenced a former Rwandan officer to 25 years in prison Thursday for his role in the 1994 genocide.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, based in Tanzania, found Lieutenant Colonel Ephrem Setako guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity and other charges.

The court said Setako ordered the killings in 1994 of up to 50 ethnic Tutsis at the Mukamira military camp in the northwestern Ruhengeri region. Setako had been serving as head of the division of legal affairs under the Ministry of Defense.

Setako was arrested in 2004 in the Netherlands and transferred to the U.N. detention facility in Arusha the same year to face charges.

Hutu extremists killed an estimated 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus during the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

The UN tribunal was set up to prosecute those who organized the killings. The court has convicted about 40 people so far, while about 30 suspects are either being tried or awaiting trial.

Rwanda: RPF Members Vow to Ensure Peaceful Elections

The New Times

Kigali — Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) leaders in Gicumbi district have been advised to sensitise residents on the party's manifesto and rally other people behind the party.

The district party Chairman, Bonane Nyangezi, made the remarks during a delegates' conference held at Hotel Urumuli.

The party faithful vowed to tighten security in the entire district in order to ensure peaceful presidential elections scheduled for August this year.

Addressing an estimated 1,000 party faithful drawn from across the district, Nyangezi said; "RPF political manifesto aims at uniting all Rwandans and steering economic development to attain true democracy countrywide."

Nyangezi, who is also the District Mayor, pointed out that the party members have greatly contributed to recruiting other members now estimated at over 187,000 in the entire district.

"RPF members at various administrative levels have also enabled the district to attain tremendous socio-economic achievements, including land consolidation, in which the district has registered a high yield of wheat, beans and potatoes," he added.

Participants also resolved to put more efforts in providing housing for vulnerable persons.

Economic Developments

Paris Club Agrees to Billion-Dollar Debt Relief for DRC

VOA

The Paris Club of creditor nations has agreed to restructure the external debt of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It said Thursday almost half of the nearly \$7 billion debt owed by the DRC will be written off or rescheduled.

Guillaume Lacaille, a Nairobi-based analyst with International Crisis Group, says the debt relief is a positive step for Congo's President Joseph Kabila. He says much of Congo's debt was accrued during the presidency of Mobutu Sésé Seko.

"When the transition started in the country that ended up with the democratic election of President Kabila, the load was already very heavy. So it's not bad thing that the government of the Congo will not have to pay for debts raised during Mobutu's era," said Lacaille.

At the end of June 2009, Congo's debt to the Paris Club stood at \$ 6.9 billion. \$1.3 billion of that total has now been canceled and \$1.7 billion has been rescheduled. Debt service repayments have been deferred until July 2012.

Lacaille says the debt relief won't necessarily free up new money because up until now Congo has had a limited capacity to repay them. But he says the debt relief will put Congo in a better position to attract loans from international donors. "It's not so much that a lot of money is being paid servicing the debt, it's much more that the Congo [will] have access to new money in the moment that is critical for the political life of the country," he said.

This money, he says, should be used to help Congo build a national infrastructure with much needed schools and hospitals. "The problem being that Congo is still suffering from corruption, it's still suffering from governance issues and it's very very difficult considering all these issues to make sure that the money is being well spent for the population," said Lacaille.

The Paris Club is an informal group of creditor governments from large industrialized countries. The Club says it will be ready in the future to offer Congo further debt relief.

Rwanda: Country and Congo Sign Energy Pact

The New Times

Kigali — The Governments of Rwanda and the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) yesterday afternoon signed an agreement to cooperate in the Energy sector at the ministry of infrastructure.

The agreement was signed by the Minister of State in charge of Energy and Water, Coletha Ruhamya and Jean Bruno Itoua of Congo.

The signing follows a three-day visit to Rwanda by a joint government and UN delegation from the Republic of Congo visit to several alternative energy projects like Mini Water Hydro Plants and the Methane Gas Project in Kivu Lake.

Speaking at the event, Ruhamya said that the agreement was meant to enhance cooperation between the two countries in order to facilitate development and eradicate poverty.

"We need the cooperation so that by 2015 we can be able to eradicate poverty in our countries and this should run in all African countries" she said.

The two countries agreed to cooperate in the areas of electricity generation, transmission and distribution, renewable energy solutions, energy efficiency measures, biogas and hydrocarbon exploration and management.

"We shall send our people to learn the good and modern technology of Congo and they will also send their people here to learn what they don't have with ease" she clarified.

Speaking to The Sunday Times, Ruhamya said that this kind of cooperation will not stop on meeting physically, but will continue across the borders and will be implemented even in the other sectors.

The ceremony was also attended by UN Resident Coordinators of Congo and Rwanda; Mr. Lamin Manneh and Mr. Aurelien Agbenonci respectively.

Rwanda: Crafts Sector Requires \$4.7 Million for Development

The New Times

Kigali — Government of Rwanda needs \$4.7 million to implement its five year strategic plan for the nascent crafts industry, according to the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM).

The strategic plan report from the ministry states that the budget is expected to be secured primarily through the annual budget appropriations of MINICOM with support from development partners.

The strategic plan started in 2009 and will run up to 2013. It seeks to provide a systematic and action oriented framework for the purposeful development of the sector with particular emphasis on product and export market development.

"MINICOM recognizes the potential of the craft industry in generating employment and income to a greater percentage of rural population especially women, youth and people with disabilities," the plan reads in part.

It adds that a big fraction of this investment will be committed into enhancement of production, capacity building and the coordination functions which will receive \$1.96 million and \$960,000 respectively.

Other priority areas in the strategic plan include trade facilitation, export marketing strategy and establishment of the craft industry secretariat.

Rwanda boasts of various crafts category which include basketry and mats, hand textiles and hand loomed products, ceramics and pottery and leather products among others.

MINICOM says that in the years preceding the financial crisis, revenues resulting from trade related to African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) stood at about \$10 million.

However, this revenue fell by more than half in 2008 compared to 2007.

A case study that was carried out indicated that the AGOA revenues continued to fall in 2009. Total revenue earned by a local crafts exporter to US in 2008 amounted to \$549,000.

But the report indicates that in the first quarter of 2009, her average sales had fallen to \$120,000.

Rwanda: Country's Trade Deficit Widens

The New Times

Kigali — Rwanda's trade balance widened by over 20 percent in 2009 and more than tripled in the last five years, increasing aid dependency, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning has said.

Figures from the ministry suggest that last year imports outstripped exports as domestic demand for foreign goods increased while exports fell.

Statistics of selected products show that for the period ending December 2009, Rwanda generated \$140.1 million from coffee, tea and minerals, down from \$182.7 million in 2008. Imports increased by 8.2 percent and 17 percent in value and volume terms respectively, mainly driven by huge expenditures on consumer goods, as well as fuel and energy.

"Trade balance widened because exports did not perform well due to the credit crunch. Commodity prices fell and yet we continued to import," John Rwangombwa, the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning said yesterday.

The ministry said that the projected decline in import value did not occur although the rate of increase in import value is the smallest in five years.

Imported goods in all categories were expected to decline in value and volume by an average of around 20 percent due to the anticipated fall in import prices and a modest rise in volume.

Import growth was high in the beginning of the year, but showed a negative trend in the 3rd and 4th quarters of the year.

The largest revenue declines for exports were significant particularly in the mining sector which dropped by 39.8 percent from \$90.7 million in 2008 to \$54.6 million last year.

But the sector maintained its position as Rwanda's top revenue export earner.

Revenue from the country's traditional export, coffee, slid -20.8 percent as tea showed a modest rise of 7 percent.

However, the ministry said that the capital account balance, which reflects the movement of funds for investments and loans into and outside the country, increased as a result of a rise in direct investments, particularly from Rwandatel and Tigo.

"Other bowings include that of \$18 million by Development Bank of Rwanda (BRD), \$13 million for RwandAir and smaller amounts for Serena and for coffee exporters," a statement from the ministry reads in part.

Receipts from the Diaspora increased modestly as revenues for charities and churches declined by over 20 percent.

The ministry says that government aims at export promotion and import substitution through the support of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

"To bridge the gap we are trying to improve on our export sector," Rwangombwa said.

Social Developments

Central Africa: UN Peacekeeping Chief Arrives to Discuss Cooperation with Government

UN News Service

The top United Nations peacekeeping official has arrived in Chad accompanied by a five-member team to discuss cooperation between the Government and the UN peacekeeping mission in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR).

The visit by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Alain Le Roy comes after Chad called for the withdrawal of the military component of the UN mission, known as MINURCAT, which was set up in 2007 after tensions increased along the border with Sudan's war-torn Darfur region.

Mr. Le Roy met today with the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of MINURCAT, Victor Angelo, after which they both met with Chadian Prime Minister Idriss Deby.

The Security Council tasked MINURCAT with protecting civilians and refugees as well as promoting human rights and peace in the troubled north-eastern part of the CAR and eastern Chad.

Last week the 15 members of the Council "expressed their full support for MINURCAT and encouraged further consultations on the way forward."

During his five-day visit, Mr. Le Roy will continue discussions with Chadian authorities and the senior management of the mission.

Central African Republic: Under the Gun - Violence and Displacement in Country

IRIN

Central African Republic (CAR) has been in the throes of a humanitarian crisis for more than a decade. Army mutinies, coups and attempted coups, rebellions, gangs that kidnap for ransom and, more recently, elements of Uganda's notorious Lord's Resistance Army have made life for civilians, especially in the north, extremely challenging, unpredictable, and very dangerous.

As IRIN's new documentary film, *Under the Gun*, demonstrates, many Central Africans have little say over where they live even. Countless villages in the north lie abandoned, crumbling with disuse, their residents ensconced nearby in makeshift bush camps, too scared to return.

Details of perpetrators vary from village to village and depend on the year of what are euphemistically referred to as "events". But for the most part, the story is the same: one day in 2003, or 2006, or 2007, or 2009, men with guns - government soldiers, Chadian soldiers, mutinous soldiers, rebels - fighting other men with guns, turned up at dawn, shooting, sometimes executing, often setting fire to every thatched roof.

In areas where criminal gangs known as "Zaraguinas" are rife, fear of kidnapping and extortion prompted the exodus. There are now at least 100,000 Central Africans living in the bush, with a similar number living as refugees, mostly in Chad.

With CAR ranked 178th out of the 179 countries listed in the UN's Human Development Index, just ahead of Sierra Leone, everyday conditions are grim even at the best of times. There are only 330 doctors for a population of more than four million. Life expectancy at birth is 43.7 years. Of every 1,000 births, 193 children die before the age of five.

Clarissa's story

Before their village was attacked in 2003 by Chadian troops backing rebels who went on to take control of the country, residents of Bedamara 4, near the northwestern town of Paoua, were relatively fortunate. A working pump placed them among the 25 percent of rural Central Africans with access to potable water. There was a clinic a short walk away. Oxen and plentiful arable land made for good crops of cassava, which could be sold at nearby market towns.

But the "event" changed everything and emptied the village in minutes. Clarissa Deti's husband was shot by the soldiers. Five of her children died when her hut was set on fire, which also destroyed all her meagre possessions. The oxen were stolen. Health workers fled the clinic, leaving looters to steal its supplies.

Clarissa spent the following years in a makeshift hut next to a small cassava plot, drawing water from a foetid pond. Her cousin, Augustine, lost her unborn baby during the bush years, and blames the miscarriage on the dirty water. Her mother developed a growth on her head nobody has been able to diagnose and has felt weak and dizzy for years. Rebels roam the countryside - the government has no presence here - and brook no dissent from civilians.

Now, like many northern villages, Bedamara 4 is being rebuilt and echoes with the sound of cement being slapped on adobe bricks, nails hammered into beams, thatch being cut.

But while thousands of Central Africans have come back from the bush because progress in peace talks has made it safe to do so, motives for the returns taking place near Paoua are more sinister.

"They are being forced to return," explained the head of a clinic in Paoua, who treats many patients from such villages. "The rebels decided people should return. Those who

refuse will be punished; have their possessions taken away," he said, echoing the returnees, who did not wish to be named for fear of reprisals.

"The rebels say we have to go back to our homes, or they will hit us and confiscate our goods. That's why the men are rebuilding their houses," said one villager.

A local rebel leader denied there was an official policy to force people out of the bush back to their villages, but suggested if such an order had been given, it would have been by a "drunken" fighter acting off his own bat.

Asked if he felt safe to be back in the village, one man simply said: "There is no security. Only God is watching over us. There is no security."

Uganda/Gabon: We'll Make It to Gabon

The New Vision

Kampala — Uganda's enduring love affair with the Africa Nations Cup has been a roller-coaster of pure agony since 1978, with the intervening years authoring a series of near-misses and abject failures.

However, in the aftermath of the 2012 Nations Cup draws, Cranes captain Ibrahim Sekagya told The New Vision that the team has gathered plenty of experience that should help put an end to the devastating run Ugandan fans have been put through in previous major qualifiers.

"I am extremely sure the boys can make it this time. It will be all about determination. The good thing is this time has acquired so much experience and that will count so much. We have learnt a lot from the past and should get it right this time," he stated.

Uganda was handed a relatively tricky group for 2012 tournament after Cranes were placed in Group 10, alongside their former 2010 World Cup qualifying opponents Angola, regional rivals Kenya and Guinea-Bissau.

Forty-four teams were drawn into 11 groups of four teams each and will play each other in a round-robin basis. The winners of each group will qualify for the finals as well as the three best second-placed teams.

Co-hosts Equatorial Guinea and Gabon qualify automatically for the tournament.

For the third consecutive edition, Uganda avoided North African opposition and contrary to the two previous qualifying tournaments, the Cranes will have to deal with just one

West African country Guinea-Bissau, placed 195 in the World FIFA rankings. "It's not an easy draw but with football everything is possible. We will have to take care of Angola first because for me that looks to be the big problem," he added.

"If selected for the team, I will give my all," he pointed.

Uganda's first game is at home against Angola on September 4.

Qualifying group

Group 10: Angola, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Uganda