

Report # 110
Region: Southern Africa

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

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Summary of Report

Economy & Energy

South Africa Tourism Boost Adds to World Cup Enthusiasm

South Africa has announced that last year, the number of foreign visitors hit an all-time high. Tourism minister Marthinus Van Schalkwyk told a travel industry conference in Cape Town that in doing so, an estimated 9.9 million travellers had defied a global recession and a 4% drop in worldwide travel in 2009. Although European and North American traffic declined, he said, arrivals from Africa, Asia, and South America all climbed.

Zimbabwean Makes Beer at One of Africa's Few Microbreweries

Fred Van Der Merwe remembers creeping through the red dust, “wide-eyed with fear” and rifle at hand, a young boy ready to “kill and die” to protect his family’s farm north of Zimbabwe’s capital, Harare. It was the mid-1970s, and civil war was raging between the troops of the white minority Rhodesian government and the black liberation forces, led by Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo.

REFILE-Zimbabwe struggles to attract foreign aid-finmin Biti

Zimbabwe will have to rely on its own resources to revive its economy because foreign donors are unlikely to provide nearly enough help, Finance Minister Tendai Biti said on Thursday.

Zambia seeks CITES support to sell ivory stockpile

Zambia is lobbying for support to sell its ivory stockpile to Japan and China and use the funds towards conservation, an industry official said on Tuesday.

SA on billionaires' row

Three South African businessmen, Nicky Oppenheimer, Patrice Motsepe and Johann Rupert, have been included in Forbes magazine's annual list of billionaires.

Environmental Issues

Launch of Africa Adaptation Programme in Namibia

Namibia has become one of the first African countries to launch the climate change adaptation programme. Supported by the United Nations Development Programme – UNDP – the Namibia Africa Adaptation Project (NAM-AAP) will aim to create systems to manage climate change risks and opportunities in the long-term. It will focus on improved planning to help Namibia deal with climate change aspects such as, floods and drought risks.

MOZAMBIQUE: Flood situation "under control"

Rivers throughout central and northern Mozambique are swollen above flood alert level and thousands of people have been relocated to higher ground, but national disaster management authorities and aid agencies in Mozambique say "the situation is under control".

MOZAMBIQUE: Floods force evacuation

Mozambique's National Disaster Management Institute (INGC) has raised the flood alert level to "red" and some 130,000 people living along three main rivers in central Mozambique are at risk of possible floods and need to be moved.

Floods displace thousands in Mozambique and Angola

Flooding in Mozambique and Angola has displaced thousands of families, prompting both governments to step up rescue operations and Mozambican authorities to issue a red alert for some areas.

S.Africa, India, Indonesia seek top UN climate job

South Africa, India and Indonesia are vying to win the U.N.'s top climate change job, a key post to build trust between poor and rich in 2010 after the U.N.'s Copenhagen summit which set few binding targets.

Food Security & Health Issues

SOUTH AFRICA: Rift Valley Fever reported in two provinces

An outbreak of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) in two South African provinces has killed one person, while five others have tested positive for the disease, which has also caused

"extensive livestock deaths", the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), said in a statement on 9 March.

SWAZILAND: Tackling one crisis at a time does not solve all

The myriad crises afflicting Swaziland can only be solved with a holistic approach, not a piecemeal one, the World Food Programme (WFP) deputy executive director, Sheila Sisulu, said during a recent tour of the country.

ZIMBABWE: Typhoid kills five people

Typhoid fever has killed five people in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, and 30 others were being treated for the bacterial disease, the city's health director, Stanley Mungofa, told a media briefing on 9 March 2010.

AFRICA: Funding shortfalls foil new treatment guidelines

Global funding shortfalls for fighting AIDS could make it impossible for developing countries to implement new World Health Organization treatment guidelines, activists have said.

HEALTH-SOUTH AFRICA: More Funds Needed for HIV Prevention and Treatment

Decreasing or levelling HIV funding will destabilise developing countries' health systems, a group of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) warned. They demand that governments worldwide own up to their promise of achieving universal access to HIV treatment.

HEALTH-SOUTH AFRICA: Five Years to Children Born Free of HIV

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria says that a world where all children are born free of HIV infection is possible in only five years if donors continue to fund global efforts to combat the virus.

Human Rights & Social Issues

ZAMBIA: Stigma and bureaucracy drive maternal deaths

Parity Zulu, 17, constantly recited a Biblical verse asking God for protection from her persecutors while her mother ferried her to hospital following complications from the teenager's illegal abortion.

Efforts to Organize Farm Workers Keep Political Activists Busy in South Africa

A ramshackle car with a mud-spattered body shutters along a dusty street leading into the small town of Petrusburg, in South Africa's arid western Free State region. The car – its rusted exhaust sending acrid black smoke into the air – is driven by Pitso Marumo, an official from the local branch of the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). Marumo is on the prowl for supporters to attend a party meeting. He brings his vehicle to a sudden halt in the middle of the road. His passenger and ANC colleague, Maboza Ledaka, leans out of the window and asks a woman, "Sister, will you be at our meeting later today?"

Nigerians Fight Crime in South African Coastal City

Nigerians in South African city trying to reduce crime on Parliament Street to help business and customers

UN: IOC and FIFA 'Mega-Events' Violate Housing Rights

A U.N. Special Investigator finds mega-sporting events, particularly the Olympic Games and FIFA Football World Cup, often result in extensive violations of the right to adequate housing. The investigator, who has submitted her report to the U.N. Human Rights Council, is calling for the IOC and FIFA to minimize the abuse by carefully scrutinizing bids before awarding the Games.

Lack of funding threatens humanitarian efforts in Zimbabwe, says UN

Aid agencies in Zimbabwe are appealing to donors to support the \$378 million appeal launched last December to support humanitarian and early recovery efforts in the country, the United Nations humanitarian wing reported today.

Africa still hungry despite annual \$3 billion of aid and \$33 billion of food imports – UN

One in three Africans is chronically hungry, despite \$3 billion spent on food aid for the continent annually and \$33 billion in food imports, the director of the food security at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has warned.

Botswana: UN report condemns government treatment of Bushmen

A report by the UN's top official on indigenous rights calls for urgent action because of the Botswana government's denial of water and services to the Bushmen and Bakgalagadi tribes in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. It also recommends that the

Government 'fully and faithfully implement' the 2006 High Court ruling and facilitate 'the return of all those removed from the reserve who wish to return.

SOUTH AFRICA: Gender Loses Out in Basic Education Crisis

With the 15th-year review of the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women taking place at the ongoing Commission on the Status of Women in New York, South African teachers and education experts say they fear that a special focus on the advancement of girls is getting lost amidst the growing levels of poverty in the country.

NAMIBIA: Female Hip-Hop Artists Challenge Stereotypes

African hip-hop prides itself on a more positive portrayal of women, but traditional cultural attitudes towards women still dominate the industry, say Namibian female rappers.

SOUTH AFRICA: Community Fears World Cup Will Cause Homelessness

While South African parliamentarians attended a swanky pre-International Women's Day celebration at Cape Town's International Convention Centre, a group of destitute women in decaying Kewtown, just seven miles away, worried about looming homelessness.

Politics

Malawi Opposition Figure Slams Untimely Purchase of Presidential Jet

A leading member of Malawi's opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) party says President Bingu Wa Mutharika's government acted irresponsibly when it "secretly" purchased a multi-million dollar presidential jet.

Mugabe's ZANU-PF Deals Serious Blow To Unity Government

Zimbabwe's unity government has suffered its worst blow since its formation a year ago, according to the Movement for Democratic Change and several Zimbabwean political analysts and commentators. President Robert Mugabe has stripped effective power from three ministries, and assigned them to ZANU-PF ministers.

S.Africa's Zuma says ANC will not silence youth leader

South African President Jacob Zuma said the African National Congress would not silence the outspoken leader of the ruling party's youth wing despite his controversial policy demands and radical outbursts.

Detailed Report

Economy & Energy

South Africa Tourism Boost Adds to World Cup Enthusiasm

(Voice of America)

11 March 2010

South Africa has announced that last year, the number of foreign visitors hit an all-time high. Tourism minister Marthinus Van Schalkwyk told a travel industry conference in Cape Town that in doing so, an estimated 9.9 million travellers had defied a global recession and a 4% drop in worldwide travel in 2009. Although European and North American traffic declined, he said, arrivals from Africa, Asia, and South America all climbed.

South African-born Kenneth Hieber is founder and director of 2Afrika, a New York City travel agency he has operated since 1995. He says that with the World Cup beginning in three months' time (on June 11), an even greater number is expected this year, including a surprising number of Americans.

“As I’m led to understand, the majority of people that are coming to the World Cup soccer are actually coming from the United States of America, per capita versus the other countries. But with all of the media attention focused on the World Cup, it certainly puts South Africa in a very positive spotlight,” he said.

Hieber explains that South Africa’s growing appeal to travelers from developing countries stems from a concerted effort by the national tourism industry, as well as Pretoria’s predilection for setting international monetary policy.

“Certainly, South African Airways and South African tourism are very aggressively marketing the destination. Because of the rates of exchange against the fluctuating South African Rand, it is an extremely affordable destination. It’s the affordability of the country or of any vacation one would take within the Republic of South Africa that is making it a rising destination to otherwise developing countries,” he said.

As the first nation to host a World Cup tournament on African soil, South Africa has weathered added scrutiny to meet international standards both for its guest accommodations and its stadiums and sports-related facilities. As a travel operator, Kenneth Hieber says he is confident that his countrymen will apply integrity and great organizational skills to host the event “with an enormous amount of flare and integrity.”

Airline service is expected to be at a peak during the tournament, so land transportation is the method of choice for tour operators to transport spectators between various venues for the matches. Hieber says the strategy of booking fully inclusive tours (FIT’s) takes into

account that not all fans will be attending the same matches or the same number of contests.

“People may have tickets for one game and not another. And between that time, they may want to use certain activities that you really have to custom design...so we’re treating every reservation as a fully inclusive tour and tailoring it to the needs of the passenger,” he said.

Hieber says the experience of acting as standard bearer for the continent and welcoming an international audience to a world-class tournament will supplement their understanding of other cultures. For South Africans, who endured years of international isolation under an apartheid regime, he says hosting an event of such magnitude will help South Africans exchange traditions with their guests and also learn from them.

Zimbabwean Makes Beer at One of Africa's Few Microbreweries

(Voice of America)

07 March 2010

Fred Van Der Merwe remembers creeping through the red dust, “wide-eyed with fear” and rifle at hand, a young boy ready to “kill and die” to protect his family’s farm north of Zimbabwe’s capital, Harare. It was the mid-1970s, and civil war was raging between the troops of the white minority Rhodesian government and the black liberation forces, led by Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo.

“I can’t say I ever remember my parents talking about politics,” Van Der Merwe says. “Our carrying weapons on the farm was only geared towards protecting our land from whoever attacked it.”

But the family’s dream of “forever” farming in a democratic Zimbabwe ended in 2001, when Mr. Mugabe’s war veterans seized their land by force.

“From a very early age, I guess my life was defined by conflict,” Van Der Merwe reflects. “But everything changes,” he adds.

Indeed, the Fred Van Der Merwe of today describes himself as a “changed man – forced by circumstance” to transform himself from a successful tobacco, maize and cattle farmer into a master beer maker – albeit as an “exile” in South Africa.

He acknowledges his path to business here has been “a sometimes traumatic” metamorphosis...but one that’s bringing pleasure to the many beer lovers from across the globe who visit his brewery on top of the precipitous Long Tom Pass in South Africa’s mountainous Mpumalanga province.

‘Whisky water’ is the secret

Rolling green hills and ghostly mist add to the mysterious atmosphere of Van Der Merwe’s distillery, which – at an altitude of almost 2,200 meters – is the highest brewery in Africa and one of the highest in the world. “Drinking our beer in such thin air gives it a very unique taste,” the brewer comments, while standing among huge stainless steel boilers that hum and hiss as water, malt, barley and hops ferment into beer.

“It’s not the type of thing that you can brew from your house or your garage. It’s complicated,” Van Der Merwe says.

His ingredients are steamed in “mash tanks” and then pumped into big copper kettles, where it’s stored for a few hours “to get the concentration right.” Then, it’s channeled into tanks, where yeast is added. The blend is allowed to ferment for a week, after which the beer has its required “kick” – namely a healthy percentage of alcohol. The brew’s then pumped into “conditioning tanks,” where gas is added. Van Der Merwe’s beer is now ready to be put into kegs to be served from the tap to thirsty customers or bottled for transport elsewhere.

“Altogether it’s a very expensive process,” he says. To maintain consistency of flavor, the brewer spends many thousands of dollars every year on malt, barley and hops bought from the same local and European sources.

“If we import from a certain place in Germany or the United Kingdom, it’s got to come from there all the time,” he tells VOA. “We can’t buy hops of a certain type from Russia, for example, and then buy the next batch from the UK, because of the climate differences (in these different places) that change the quality (and taste) of a product.”

But it is “simple H₂O,” maintains Van Der Merwe, that’s the most important additive in high quality beer. “Water makes a good brew, not costly foreign-sourced grains,” he says. “They are secondary.” Van Der Merwe uses water from a natural spring on his property. “The water is pure, it’s clean and it has a taste all of its own. It still contains all the minerals; none of that gets filtered out,” he says.

The spring’s called the Whisky Spruit (Creek). It was named centuries ago by pioneers to South Africa’s interior who camped at the stream and mixed its cool water with their fiery whisky.

The ‘big gun’ of the beer world

The location of Van Der Merwe’s brewery, on one of the many steep, hairpin bends that characterize the Long Tom Pass, ensures that his link with conflict hasn’t yet been severed, for his business is at the scene of one of the most famous battles in South African military history. For five days in 1900, as the Anglo-Boer War between British forces and Afrikaner Boers reached its zenith, Boer General Louis Botha – with only 3,500 men and three “Long Tom” cannons – repulsed 30,000 British troops armed with 88 extreme-range howitzers, before finally being defeated.

The Long Tom Pass is named after one of Botha's famous guns, preserved at a monument near Van Der Merwe's homestead, which now shelters not soldiers, but thirsty beer connoisseurs.

"We basically brew four different kinds of beer," he explains.

Van Der Merwe's Blacksmith's Brew is "very light, and tart, and naturally cloudy, based on the centuries-old tradition of Belgian white beer, or witbier."

His signature Digger's draught beer is based on Kölschbier, which originated in the German town of Köln in 1254. Van Der Merwe says it's "light in body and flavor; quite fruity" – the result of the South African pale malt and imported German winter wheat malt used to make this beer.

Van Der Merwe describes his Mac's Porter brew as an "old English style" beer, with a "malty, creamy fullness, smooth as silk, with chocolate and coffee undertones and a deep ruby color." Then, plopping a mug of thick, golden liquid on the mahogany bar counter, he presents what he calls his "big gun," a mischievous smile creasing his tanned face.

"The Old Bull Bitter is based on a British ale type of beer. It's high in alcohol – not for sissies," Van Der Merwe says. "It's spicy; lots of aromatic floral flavors" – the result of what the brewer calls the "late addition of unprocessed Styrian Goldings leaf hops" imported from Britain.

African microbrew explosion

Van Der Merwe is what's become known around the world as a "microbrewer" – a rarity in Africa, where the beer industry is dominated by immense corporations that mass-produce the continent's most popular alcoholic beverage. He's at the vanguard of what he hopes in the future will result in increasing numbers of Africans turning away from "bland factory beer" and towards "microbrews," made with "absolutely no enhancers or unnatural additives being used anywhere in the brewing process."

Van Der Merwe, however, acknowledges that his quest may remain unfulfilled.

"Brewing beers on such a small scale is virtually unknown in Africa. Africans remain very loyal to the commercial, mass-produced beers and many aren't willing to experiment with others.

"So at the moment, our local, home-grown and produced beer is very much for a niche market – these are people with a bit of money to spend on indulging in fine beer; they are like wine lovers of the beer world, so to speak."

The Zimbabwean doesn't hesitate to equate the consumption of microbrew beer with that of fine wines. "Just as a great Shiraz goes excellently with a steak, so too can a unique microbrew. Just as a wine snob will swirl wine in his mouth and comment, 'Very fruity, with hints of vanilla,' so too will an appreciator of a microbrew beer swirl the beer in his mouth and comment, 'Ah! A coriander flavor....'"

Substandard beer

But at the moment, says Van Der Merwe, African microbrewers are “somewhat isolated.”

“We’re all small guys; we thrive because of word of mouth, not big, multimillion rand advertising campaigns.... So it’s going to take time for us to establish ourselves.” He adds that some South African microbrewers “haven’t exactly helped the cause” by producing beer that’s “not up to scratch.”

“(African) microbreweries still need to achieve a standard as far as the quality of the beer is concerned,” Van Der Merwe says. “The more established microbreweries do keep a reasonably high standard. However, there are many microbrewers still in a very early stage as far as the perfection of their beer is concerned.”

The quality of beer from these manufacturers, he says, “fluctuates too much. They might have had a batch of beer that tasted fine; the following batch tasted different. That sort of fluctuation puts people off.”

As Van Der Merwe reflects on his journey from farmer “under siege” in Zimbabwe to premier beer brewer in South Africa’s beautiful Mpumalanga highlands, he sips at another of his creations and says softly, “South Africa’s been good to me....”

And now, he’s passing some of that goodness on to his customers, in the form of some of Africa’s most extraordinary beer.

REFILE-Zimbabwe struggles to attract foreign aid-finmin Biti

(Alert Net)

11 Mar 2010

HARARE, March 11 (Reuters) - Zimbabwe will have to rely on its own resources to revive its economy because foreign donors are unlikely to provide nearly enough help, Finance Minister Tendai Biti said on Thursday.

A unity government formed by bitter adversaries President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai last year says it needs at least \$10 billion to fix an economy emerging from a decade-long slump.

But key Western donors have withheld aid and demanded broad political reforms and assurances that Mugabe is ready to genuinely share power.

Biti, a top official from Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), said Zimbabwe would have to finance its projected budget deficit of \$810 million from its own resources.

"It's very unlikely that donors will fill that \$810 million gap, we're on our own," Biti said.

"Last year we got \$35 million -- \$30 million from South Africa and \$5 million from China. 2010 is going to be worse, we have to mobilise our own resources."

Critics accuse Mugabe, 86, and in power since independence from Britain in 1980 of ruining one of the continent's most promising economies through policies such as the seizure of white commercial farms to resettle landless blacks.

Although the power-sharing government has managed to stabilise the economy after 10 straight years of decline and inflation which peaked at 500 billion percent, the country is struggling to restore productivity, feed itself and repair its ruined infrastructure.

On Thursday, Biti handed over \$100 million -- from a \$510 million International Monetary Fund allocation Zimbabwe received last year -- to government ministries and state enterprises for infrastructure projects ranging from water and sanitation to road construction and power generation.

The government used \$50 million to purchase seed and fertiliser last year in a bid to rescue an agriculture sector hit by poor funding, planning and inadequate rains.

"The \$100 million constitutes a major injection into the economy, a stimulus in our own small way," he said.

The government has also extended \$19.5 million in credit lines for private sector firms.

Analysts say frequent wrangling over policy and the slow pace of reforms have held back progress by the fragile unity government. (Editing by Ruth Pitchford)

Zambia seeks CITES support to sell ivory stockpile

(Alert Net)

09 Mar 2010

LUSAKA, Mar 9 (Reuters) - Zambia is lobbying for support to sell its ivory stockpile to Japan and China and use the funds towards conservation, an industry official said on Tuesday.

The southern Africa country wants the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to approve its intended auction at its meeting that starts on March 13.

A nine-year ban on ivory sales was agreed in 2007 under CITES, but Tanzania and Zambia -- want to reclassify their elephant populations, as a first step to resuming the trade, a leaked letter from the 23 countries said last week.

The African countries oppose relaxing the ban on the ivory trade.

Francesca Chisangano-Zyambo, head of CITES in Zambia told Reuters the country needs to sell its 21 tonnes stockpile of ivory, partly because it was costly to maintain.

The ivory mainly consists of tusks from elephants that died of natural causes.

"Over the last four years we have spent over \$200,000 on building a strong room for security purposes, the wall fence around it and the personnel that we have employed," she said.

ONE-OFF SALE

"We are likely to raise \$1 million from the one-off sale of the ivory that we have," Chisangano-Zyambo said, dismissing fears that the sale would encourage poaching.

"We are not irresponsible at all. We are talking about ivory that we have already gotten from the dead elephants. We have done our homework, we have made sure we have done the law enforcement procedures well."

Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and Botswana were given permission to sell their ivory during the last CITES meeting, Chisangano-Zyambo said.

Zambia also wanted CITES to allow it to raise the number of elephants that could be killed in sport hunting from 20 to 100 per year. The country has about 27,000 elephants.

Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) acting director-general Victor Siamudaala said if allowed to sell the ivory, the finances raised would be channelled into major elephant strongholds like the Luangwa and Kafue ecosystems.

SA on billionaires' row

(Times Live)

Mar 11, 2010

For the first time since 1994, the list has been topped by a man who is not an American. The richest person in the world this year is 70-year-old Mexican telecoms magnate Carlos Slim Helu, said to have a net worth of \$53.5-billion.

Slim's grip on the Mexican economy is so complete that the country of 110million people has been dubbed "Slimlandia".

The unassuming son of a Lebanese immigrant shopkeeper, he used political contacts in his homeland to make his fortune. He now counts among his trophies a sizeable stake in The New York Times, which once described him as a "robber baron".

Slim's breakthrough came when he persuaded President Carlos Salinas de Gortari to sell him Telmex, the national telephone company, cheaply in 1990.

He and his heirs now control more than 200 businesses, which range from mining and construction groups to hotels and cigarette makers.

The Forbes list shows that the number of billionaires in the world has increased from 793 to 1011.

Recovering financial markets and commodity prices, and strong economic growth in some Asia-Pacific and Latin American economies, helped to increase the collective wealth of the world's richest by \$2.4-trillion to \$3.6-trillion.

This works out at \$3.5-billion each, up from \$3-billion last year.

Slim beat Bill Gates by \$500-million, despite the Microsoft co-founder increasing his fortune by \$13-billion to \$53-billion. It is the first time since 1995 that Gates has not topped the list, which was accurate as of February 12.

Oppenheimer, who made his \$5-billion fortune from De Beers, is the highest-ranking South African, at No154. Motsepe and Rupert share the 421th spot (\$2.3-billion), both having gained on their 2009 rankings.

Mining magnate Motsepe moved from No559 last year, with Forbes attributing his worth to a rise in share prices and the strength of the rand against the US dollar.

Rupert moved from last year's No601, with Forbes saying the family wealth increased through "stock doubling in the past year helped by Christmas sales that were ahead of expectations" and bullish growth in the Asia-Pacific region.

Environmental Issues

Launch of Africa Adaptation Programme in Namibia

(UNDP)

8 March, 2010

Namibia has become one of the first African countries to launch the climate change adaptation programme. Supported by the United Nations Development Programme – UNDP – the Namibia Africa Adaptation Project (NAM-AAP) will aim to create systems to manage climate change risks and opportunities in the long-term. It will focus on improved planning to help Namibia deal with climate change aspects such as, floods and drought risks.

Funded by the Government of Japan, Namibia is one of 20 African countries that has been selected to participate in the overall Africa Adaptation Programme, entitled "Supporting Integrated and Comprehensive Approaches to Climate Change Adaptation in Africa", which is worth US\$92.1 million.

Officiating at the launch of the US\$3 million project, Namibian Prime Minister Mr. Nahas Angula thanked the Japanese government for choosing his country as one of the recipients stating, “We believe that the Namibia Africa Adaptation Project will contribute substantially to the attainment of our long-term Vision 2030, the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the goals that we have set for ourselves in the third National Development Plan.” The Prime Minister particularly emphasized the need for Namibia to look at all energy options so that the best alternative energy sources could be further developed.

The NAM-AAP aims to build effective leadership and institutional frameworks in Namibia for better coordination and integration of climate change programmes into development policy. Support to local community-climate change initiatives as well as priority sectors such as sanitation and health will also be enhanced. The project will assist the government to identify financing options so as to meet long-term national adaptation costs as well as expand knowledge management systems and information sharing.

Speaking at the launch event, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, Mr. Lebogang Motlana said that the launch of the NAM-APP was a milestone achievement in efforts to mainstream environment and energy concerns into the national development agenda. “In devising appropriate strategies to countenance the adverse effects of climate change, we must prioritize support to the most vulnerable, namely rural communities and the poor throughout the country. Importantly, we have to acknowledge that climate change will not impact communities equally, women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and therefore any policy recommendations and indeed the project we are launching today must have gender specific considerations addressed in all its interventions” he underlined.

In the past two years, northern Namibia has been faced by the most severe flooding recorded in more than four decades. The predicted effects of future warming are expected to exacerbate this already critical situation, coupled with the incidence of drought.

Japan’s support for climate change adaptation in Namibia and other developing countries is part of a US\$10 billion ‘Cool Earth Partnership’ financial mechanism aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions while achieving economic growth. “We are very pleased that Namibia is part of this ‘Cool Earth Partnership’”, said Mr. Kunikazu Shimamoto from the Embassy of Japan in Pretoria. “The Government of Japan sincerely hopes that this project will assist Namibia in overcoming her vulnerabilities to climate change and in developing effective counter measures.”

MOZAMBIQUE: Flood situation "under control"

(IRIN)

11 March 2010

JOHANNESBURG, 11 March 2010 (IRIN) - Rivers throughout central and northern Mozambique are swollen above flood alert level and thousands of people have been relocated to higher ground, but national disaster management authorities and aid agencies in Mozambique say "the situation is under control".

After weeks of torrential rain in Mozambique and its regional southern African neighbours, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the National Institute for Disaster Management (INGC) indicated that 130,000 people were living in risk zones and could be forced to move if water levels kept rising.

A Red Alert was declared on 9 March for the basins of the Zambezi, Pungue, Buzi and Licungo rivers, but the Representative of the UN Children's Agency (UNICEF), Leila Pakkala, who is responsible for coordination in the Humanitarian Country Team, said the government and aid partners had started moving people pre-emptively.

"Thirteen thousand people have already been moved to secure areas," she told IRIN. Although the rain was expected to diminish, they were still "closely monitoring the situation in affected areas to ensure needs are identified and immediately addressed".

The cholera season in central Mozambique is at its peak; given the large populations moving through cholera-affected areas to get to places of safety, Mozambique's Provincial Health Directorate has warned of possible outbreaks in the new accommodation centres.

Pakkala said cholera prevention and response activities - like the rehabilitation of water systems, water chlorination, and informing people that they should adopt hygienic habits - were already ongoing. "Supplies have been dispatched from the pre-positioned locations by the Red Cross and UN partners," she said.

Watching regional water management

The latest National Hydrological Bulletin, released on 10 March by the National Water Directorate, said water levels in the Zambezi, Africa's fourth largest river, would remain above alert level and keep rising, "possibly aggravating localized flooding".

In neighbouring Zimbabwe, water levels in the Kariba Dam – one of the largest on the Zambezi – have been rising and the Zambezi River Authority had to open one of its flood gates on 9 March.

Downstream in Mozambique, the Cahora Bassa Dam has also increased its outflow to 4,700 cubic meters per second, and will maintain this volume until 15 March.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warned in its 10 March Southern Africa Floods Regional Update: "While the opening of one Kariba Dam floodgate is not a significant event in itself, any additional flow from the dam may force another increase in discharge from the Cahora Bassa [downstream], increasing the possibility of flooding in Mozambique."

MOZAMBIQUE: Floods force evacuation

(IRIN)

10 March 2010

JOHANNESBURG, 10 March 2010 (IRIN) - Mozambique's National Disaster Management Institute (INGC) has raised the flood alert level to "red" and some 130,000 people living along three main rivers in central Mozambique are at risk of possible floods and need to be moved.

"Teams are already evacuating people," Casimo Sande, Acting UN Emergency Coordination Support Officer, told IRIN. Weeks of torrential rains have swollen the Zambezi, Pungue and Buzi rivers in the central provinces of Tete, Manica, Sofala and Zambezia.

Sande said government agencies, NGOs, the Mozambican Red Cross, UN agencies and the local Civil Protection Unit, UNAPROC, were assisting affected communities, and assessments of the damage were underway. The National Water Board (DNA) warned of floods in central Mozambique on 2 March.

Mozambique is flood-prone: in 2000 and 2001 over 800 people were killed and hundreds of thousands left homeless. Up to 300,000 people in river communities throughout central Mozambique were affected by flooding in early 2008, when 29 people died.

The government resettled entire communities when the recurring floods caused hundreds of deaths and the displacement of many thousands almost every year, particularly at the onset of the rainy season. This year a drought in the resettlement areas lured thousands back to the fertile flood plains and river banks.

More sluice gates on Mozambique's biggest dam, the Cahora Bassa, were opened to ease pressure on the structure, and rains in the region eased off during the past week. According to Sande, "In terms of water level trend, the situation has improved."

Floods displace thousands in Mozambique and Angola

(Alert Net)

10 Mar 2010

LUANDA/MAPUTO, March 10 (Reuters) - Flooding in Mozambique and Angola has displaced thousands of families, prompting both governments to step up rescue operations and Mozambican authorities to issue a red alert for some areas.

Torrential rain that has swept central Mozambique and southern Angola for weeks has caused some rivers to overflow into villages along their paths and many villagers have fled to higher ground.

Mozambique's government issued a red alert late on Tuesday, one step down from declaring a disaster area, and said it would forcibly evacuate about 130,000 people in areas at risk in the centre of the country.

A government spokesman said flooding was expected to continue along the Zambezi, Africa's fourth biggest river. The floodgates of the river's Cahora Bassa dam have been opened to ease the pressure on its walls and this was also expected to increase the floods.

The poverty-stricken African country said it did not plan to ask for international aid for time being.

"All the conditions have been created to evacuate and relocate 130,000 people living in areas of risk," government spokesman Alberto Nkutumula was quoted as saying by Portuguese news agency Lusa.

"There is internal capacity to deal with the situation."

In Angola, like Mozambique a former Portuguese colony, 10,000 people have lost their homes to floods in the southern province of Cunene, according to the state-owned news agency Angop.

Mozambicans and Angolans are often victims of flooding during the rainy season. In 2000 and 2001, floods in Mozambique killed 700 people and drove half a million from their homes. Last year 20 people died in floods in southern Angola.

Both countries have minimised the loss of life by evacuating people to higher ground at the start of the rainy season. This year, two people were swept to their deaths by the floodwaters in Mozambique.

An official with Mozambique's National Disaster Management Institute (INGC) said the evacuation of thousands of people living along the banks of the Zambezi and other flood-prone rivers would avoid more deaths.

"All the people that were victims of floods in previous years are being moved," Luis Pacheco, the INGC official in the central province of Sofala, told the newspaper O Pais.

S.Africa, India, Indonesia seek top UN climate job

(Alert Net)

08 Mar 2010

OSLO, March 8 (Reuters) - South Africa, India and Indonesia are vying to win the U.N.'s top climate change job, a key post to build trust between poor and rich in 2010 after the U.N.'s Copenhagen summit which set few binding targets.

Many analysts expect a developing nation candidate will succeed Yvo de Boer, a Dutch citizen who said last month he would step down as head of the U.N. Climate Change Secretariat on July 1 after a gruelling four years.

"It is good news for the whole process that it is attracting strong candidates from developing countries," said Mark Kenber, International Policy Director at the Climate Group in London.

South Africa on Monday formally nominated Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk, 50, and a former environment minister, for the job. It said some governments, business institutions and non-governmental organisations had expressed support.

India recently nominated Vijay Sharma, a senior environmental official, to succeed de Boer.

Indonesia, which hosted U.N. talks in 2007 that launched talks on a new climate treaty, has expressed interest but not yet settled on a nominee. It is unclear which other nations may be interested.

Agus Purnomo, Indonesia's lead negotiator in Copenhagen, said there were rumours he might be nominated. "If I had a choice I would stay in Indonesia but if this was given to me as an official assignment I would be interested," he told Reuters.

The Jakarta Post has also mentioned possible candidates including former Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda.

BUILD TRUST

December's Copenhagen summit fell short of a legally binding treaty, largely because of disagreements between developed and developing nations about sharing the burden of emissions curbs.

"Whoever is chosen as de Boer's successor will above all need to be able to build trust between major industrialised and developing economies," Kenber said. De Boer has suggested his replacement should be from a developing nation.

The choice is up to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who says stronger action by all, mainly to curb emissions from burning fossil fuels, is needed to avert more heatwaves, droughts, floods and rising sea levels.

Delegates from 194 nations will meet in Bonn, Germany, next month to try to prepare the next major talks, in Mexico from Nov. 29 to Dec. 10. Few expect a full-blown treaty this year and South Africa will host the talks in 2011.

As environment minister, van Schalkwyk criticised former U.S. President George W. Bush. "We are looking forward to whoever succeeds the present (U.S.) administration, because we believe we can probably only do better," he said in 2008.

South Africa's climate policies are among the most ambitious of developing nations -- envisaging a peak in emissions by 2020-25. Most developing nations merely aim to slow the rise of emissions, without yet setting a firm peak.

India, for instance, has promised to cut the amount of carbon emitted per unit of economic output by 20-25 percent by 2020. And Indonesia aims to cut emissions by at least 26 percent by 2020 below a "business as usual" rise.

Food Security & Health Issues

SOUTH AFRICA: Rift Valley Fever reported in two provinces

(IRIN)

9 March 2010

JOHANNESBURG, 9 March 2010 (IRIN) - An outbreak of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) in two South African provinces has killed one person, while five others have tested positive for the disease, which has also caused "extensive livestock deaths", the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), said in a statement on 9 March.

As of 4 March 2010, the livestock disease - which can be transmitted to humans by handling infected animal tissue during butchering - had been reported on 14 farms in Free State and one farm in the neighbouring province of Northern Cape.

Initial estimates by veterinarians in the affected region are that more than 1,000 livestock have perished. High mortality rates are experienced among young animals and the disease causes pregnancies to be aborted.

NICD director Dr Lucille Blumberg told IRIN the authorities had responded well to the outbreak, but RVF was "difficult to control", and "lots of rain recently" had resulted in ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes - the vector of the disease.

Investigations were being carried out by the health and agricultural departments, supported by the South African Field Epidemiology and Training Programme, and NICD.

Endemic disease

Outbreaks of RVF are common; in 2009 more than 50 animals died in KwaZulu-Natal Province, but the most serious occurrence of the disease in South Africa was between 1974 and 1976, when an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 humans were infected.

"The current outbreak is within the same area, highlighting the importance of timely interventions to prevent further spread," the NICD said.

Blumberg said the disease was "asymptomatic", or mild, in the vast majority of people, but about one percent of those infected could experience a more severe reaction.

According to the NICD website, "complications include: ocular (retinal) disease, meningo-encephalitis, [and] or haemorrhagic fever. Onset of retinal lesions usually occurs one to three weeks after the first symptoms appear, and may lead to permanent loss of vision, necessitating continual follow-up of patients for a one-month period after symptoms resolve. Disease is rarely fatal."

Molefi Sefularo, the deputy minister of health, said in a statement on 8 March that "A 45-year-old patient, who was admitted to a mine hospital on 26 February 2010 with a provisional diagnosis of Congo fever, died a day later and confirmation of RVF was made on the 4th of March."

RVF was first identified by a British veterinary surgeon in Kenya more than 50 years ago, and is endemic to South Africa and the rest of the continent, as well as the Indian Ocean islands of Comoros and Madagascar.

SWAZILAND: Tackling one crisis at a time does not solve all

(IRIN)

8 March 2010

MBABANE, 8 March 2010 (IRIN) - The myriad crises afflicting Swaziland can only be solved with a holistic approach, not a piecemeal one, the World Food Programme (WFP) deputy executive director, Sheila Sisulu, said during a recent tour of the country.

Swaziland, a small landlocked country with a population of about one million people, is ruled by King Mswati III - sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarch - while contending with the world's highest HIV/AIDS prevalence, food insecurity, poor education systems, extreme poverty and a moribund economy.

Miriam Dlamini, a widowed mother of five living in rural Mliba, about 60km north of Swaziland's second city, Manzini, personifies the plight of many Swazis.

"My husband died of AIDS and left me alone to work the fields, but I am HIV positive. I need food for my children, and for myself so my ARVs work properly, but I cannot do the farm work alone, and I have no money to hire helpers or to pay for seeds and fertilizer and a team of oxen to plough," she told IRIN.

In the largely rural economy, where 70 percent of Swazis survive in a state of chronic poverty, her daily burden - like that of many others - is overwhelming. "I don't know where to begin. I wake up tired and when the day is over, so little has been done, and that makes me more tired," Dlamini said. "I receive [WFP food] packages and ARVs from the clinic, but I must travel to both places with no money for transport."

A change for the better could be on the way. On 3 March 2010, Swaziland became a member of the Common Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) - an initiative by the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to address food security and agricultural production.

At the signing ceremony in the Swazi capital, Mbabane, Sisulu told a round table discussion that the spill-over of one crisis into another compounded the effects of each crisis, and the country would be hard pressed to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGS).

Connected problems

"Agricultural production, HIV and AIDS, food security and poverty are interconnected and cannot be tackled in isolation of each other. We believe a comprehensive approach is key to achieving the underlying objective of CAADP ... meeting Goal One of the Millennium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger ... at current trends, Swaziland is unlikely to achieve [this] by 2015."

Swaziland is no longer a net exporter of foodstuffs: drought and a population that has tripled since independence from Britain in 1968 have forced people to farm marginal lands, while HIV/AIDS has decimated the agricultural workforce. According to UNAIDS, about 26 percent of Swaziland's sexually active population are infected with HIV.

Membership of CAADP paves the way for the establishment of an Agricultural Development Bank of Swaziland, which could be used to provide loans or grants for subsidising agricultural inputs.

Such an eventuality would necessitate a sea change in relations between the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which provide vital support in most of the country's social and agricultural spheres.

"Laudable as this show of support is, the question remains whether government can indeed work with NGOs, the private sector and the beneficiaries," said a director - who declined to be identified - of an NGO affiliated to the Congress of Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO), an umbrella organization for NGOs.

"The [government] ministries have always worked independently - they are territorial. It will be interesting to see if they can work together, and if the voices of the rural farmers will be heard, or whether solutions will be imposed," he told IRIN.

A broad front

UNAIDS Country Coordinator Sophia Monico noted that "All the UN agencies are coordinating our work on AIDS. We're setting an example by forging an alliance between specialties."

She said the UN would adopt a comprehensive approach: food security issues would be handled by WFP, AIDS issues would be handled by UNAIDS, the UN Children's agency (UNICEF) would deal with issues concerning children affected by HIV and AIDS, and poverty reduction issues, under the authority of the UN Development Programme, would be strategically coordinated.

"It's like getting relief supplies to areas hit by disaster - it's not enough to put food on the plane, you have to get the delivery infrastructure working, the beneficiaries' needs sorted out, and rebuild the agriculture sector to make food production sustainable again," said Charles Ndwandwe, a food aid distributor in Mliba.

"That's what must be done in Swaziland," he commented. "It's harder when AIDS complicates things, but this is being factored in."

ZIMBABWE: Typhoid kills five people

(Alert Net)

11 Mar 2010

HARARE, 11 March 2010 (IRIN) - Typhoid fever has killed five people in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, and 30 others were being treated for the bacterial disease, the city's health director, Stanley Mungofa, told a media briefing on 9 March 2010.

The epicentre of the outbreak is the high-density suburb of Mabvuku. In the past two years the township has rarely experienced a reliable supply of water, forcing residents to dig shallow wells, which are easily polluted by ablutions and waste.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), "Typhoid fever is a bacterial disease, caused by *Salmonella typhi*. It is transmitted through the ingestion of food or drink contaminated by the faeces or urine of infected people."

Symptoms include high fever, headaches, constipation or diarrhoea, rose-coloured spots on the chest, and an enlarged spleen and liver, usually occurring from one to three weeks after exposure, and may be mild or severe.

The case fatality rate can be about 10 percent, but antibiotics can reduce this to below one percent. According to the Canadian Medical Association Journal, complications occur in

10 to 15 percent of cases, the most serious of which are "gastrointestinal bleeding, perforation and typhoid encephalopathy".

The five deaths in Harare were originally attributed to malaria, but subsequent medical investigation determined the cause to be typhoid. Water bowsers have been deployed in Mabvuku and "health promoters are moving door to door, emphasizing sanitation and hygiene, and establishing if there are new cases of typhoid," Mungofa said.

Cholera

Zimbabwe is still on alert for cholera - between September 2009 and January 2010, 149 cholera cases were recorded, resulting in five deaths. An epidemic of the waterborne disease began in August 2008 and lasted for a year before it was officially declared at an end in July 2009, causing the deaths of more than 4,000 people and infecting nearly 100,000 others. The fatality rate was also nearly 5 percent, much higher than the usual one percent.

In an outbreak of typhoid between September 2004 and January 2005 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 42,564 cases of typhoid were reported, resulting in the deaths of 214 people.

"People can transmit [typhoid] as long as the bacteria remain in their bodies; most people are infectious prior to and during the first week of convalescence, but 10 percent of untreated patients will discharge bacteria for up to three months," the WHO website said. "In addition, two to five percent of untreated patients will become permanent, lifelong carriers of the bacteria in their gall-bladder."

Typhoid Mary

The ability of outwardly healthy people to carry the disease was first identified in 1907 by George Soper, a civil engineer hired by a New York banker to trace the origins of an outbreak during their family holiday.

Soper identified the cook, Mary Mallon, as the carrier - who became known as Typhoid Mary - after research into her employment history found that the incidence of typhoid fever had followed her through seven separate jobs.

Mallon was put into medical isolation in New York for a few years, before being released on condition that she did not work as cook again. However, she returned to the line of work a few years later and was discovered working under a pseudonym after another outbreak of the disease. Mallon thought to have infected at least 51 people over a period of about 15 years, of which three died.

WHO estimates that about 22 million cases of typhoid occur annually, causing 216,000 deaths, mainly in school-age children and young adults.

AFRICA: Funding shortfalls foil new treatment guidelines

(Alert Net)

09 Mar 2010

NAIROBI, 9 March 2010 (IRIN) - Global funding shortfalls for fighting AIDS could make it impossible for developing countries to implement new World Health Organization treatment guidelines, activists have said.

WHO released new guidelines on antiretroviral therapy (ART) in December 2009, raising the CD4 count - a measure of immune strength - at which HIV-positive people should start ART from 200 to 350. Research has shown that starting ART earlier reduces the rate of death and opportunistic disease.

"WHO's new recommendations are excellent in theory, but they did not give us a practical way of implementing the guidelines - already we have shortages of drugs in trying to put people with CD4s below 200 on treatment," said James Kamau, coordinator of the Kenya Treatment Access Movement.

"How will we now put so many more people on ARVs? The increased number of people on drugs means not just more drugs, but more labs, more health centres and health workers, more general care - the expense is enormous."

An estimated four million people around the world are currently on ART - a 10-fold increase since 2003, when the drugs became widely available - but this figure still represents just over one-third of the people who need the medication.

"If WHO's new recommendations are not implemented, the international community risks subsidising less expensive yet sub-standard care for developing countries," said Sharonann Lynch, MSF's HIV/AIDS policy advisor, in a press release.

"Avoiding this will depend on the willingness of donors to make new commitments. Although this is not easy in today's financial environment, donor countries cannot back away from supporting the promise of universal access to treatment made five years ago."

"The situation is now an emergency"

In Uganda, where the government plans to release new treatment guidelines reflecting WHO's recommendations, officials said the number of people needing treatment would rise from 300,000 to about 750,000. The country recently suffered drug shortages in its public health sector, partially caused by funding problems.

"The numbers will be too great for us to manage," said Dr David Kigawalama, head of prevention services at the Uganda AIDS Commission. "We need to sit with our AIDS development partners to forge a way forward."

Ahead of a high-level meeting between Group of Eight (G8) leaders and AIDS advocates in London on 10 March, AIDS activists met with British International Development

Minister Gareth Thomas on 9 March and called on the world's wealthiest nations to honour their 2005 Gleneagles pledge to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care by 2010.

"Instead of building on progress, some donor nations and governments of highly affected countries are backing away from the universal access commitment with a series of poorly funded half-measures on AIDS," the executive director of the International AIDS Society, Robin Gorna, said in a press statement.

"The situation is now an emergency: new treatment enrolments in many countries are coming to a standstill, the risk of drug resistance is increasing, and fragile gains made over the last 10 years may soon erode, with potentially serious consequences for future efforts to control this epidemic."

The activists singled out Canada - the only G8 nation firmly opposed to the Financial Transactions Tax, a tiny tax on financial transactions that could raise the billions of dollars needed to fulfil the universal access pledge.

The global economic downturn forced the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the world's largest funder, to cut disbursements by 10 percent in 2008, while the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has flat-lined funding to many countries, limiting the growth of PEPFAR-funded treatment programmes.

HEALTH-SOUTH AFRICA: More Funds Needed for HIV Prevention and Treatment

(IPS)

08 March 2010

CAPE TOWN, Mar 8 (IPS) - Decreasing or levelling HIV funding will destabilise developing countries' health systems, a group of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) warned. They demand that governments worldwide own up to their promise of achieving universal access to HIV treatment.

The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), the AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) expressed alarm over dwindling commitment to fund HIV programmes in poor countries.

They expressed their concerns on the eve of a high-level meeting on Mar. 9 in the United Kingdom that could determine whether the G20 – the Group of Twenty of finance ministers and central bank governors established in 1999 to stabilise the global financial market – will uphold a 2005 commitment to bolster HIV treatment.

Five years ago, the G8, the group of the world's eight most powerful political leaders, committed to achieving universal access by 2010, a move that was then described as a "historic opportunity". "But now, this has become a historic disappointment, because we

are less than half way to achieving those goals," said ARASA advocacy coordinator Paula Akugizibwe.

"Funders appear to have thrown in the towel and begun to shift their attention elsewhere, while 10 million people still need access to treatment [worldwide]," she added. "This has led to disappointment and anxiety."

Most African countries depend on external funding to sustain their national HIV treatment programmes, but leading funders, such as the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, have not increased funding over the past few years, representatives from the three NGOs stated.

They were also concerned about shifting donor priorities that have made uncertain support for the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which has thus far paid for two thirds of people on HIV treatment worldwide.

"Five years ago, the G8 countries set these targets. Why do they suddenly shift their attention elsewhere?" asked Akugizibwe. "The bottom line is money. HIV treatment is expensive. That's why governments are backtracking."

Some politicians have argued that HIV has received a disproportionate amount of money over the years compared with other diseases, while others say too much money is going towards HIV treatment and not enough towards prevention.

But AIDS activists highlight the fact that HIV cannot be separated from other health needs. "The past decade of increased HIV funding has shown that treatment works. We have seen a decline in HIV infection and a reduction in infant and overall mortality. We have reduced TB cases and improved mother and child health," said MSF Khayelitsha HIV/TB medical coordinator Gilles Van Cutsem.

He also stressed the positive impact HIV treatment had on the Millennium Development Goals. "Research has shown that a one percent decrease in HIV prevalence equals an 80 percent increase in Gross Domestic Product or eight years of economic growth," Van Cutsem explained.

Apart from this, decreased funding is likely to lead to a major health crisis. "Lack of funding will cause drug stock-outs, which will interrupt treatment and lead to increased drug resistance. This will make HIV much more difficult to treat," warned Van Cutsem. "It will also mean slower access to treatment."

The activists warned that pulling funding away from HIV treatment will ultimately destabilise health systems in developing countries. "Governments and donors must continue what they started," demanded Van Cutsem. "Anything less will lead to poor quality programmes and a waste of the initial investment. Flat or decreased funding is not good enough."

TAC HIV educator Andile Madondile further noted that a decrease in funding will have detrimental effects on the four million people currently receiving treatment. "We must not undo this progress," he said.

Madondile further explained that unavailability of treatment is likely to have a negative impact on prevention, for example the number of people accessing voluntary counselling and testing: "Seven out of ten people need treatment urgently in South Africa, but if treatment cannot be guaranteed, it is hard to motivate others to get tested."

Apart from holding the G8 accountable to its commitment to achieve universal access, the activists also noted the responsibility of African countries to fight HIV, for example by upholding the Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases, which was signed by the heads of state of the African Union in Nigeria in April 2001. As part of the declaration, heads of state pledged to allocate at least 15 percent of their annual national budgets to the health sector.

"[Out of 53 African nations], only 16 spend more than ten percent of their budgets on health as promised," complained Akugizibwe. "It's more rhetoric than resource commitments. We need to see more accountability and efficiency in the region."

TAC Ekurhuleni district coordinator Nokhwezi Hoboyi appealed for stronger political leadership in the response to HIV: "We need higher levels of investment in health as well as more transparency. But this cannot happen without stronger leadership."

According to the Global Fund, 20 billion dollars is needed in the next three years to sustain existing HIV, TB and malaria programmes and allow for a slight scale-up of these programmes. The Fund is currently facing a budget gap of at least 4 billion dollars.

"We call for the Global Fund to be replenished. Anything else would cause a tragic regression," said Akugizibwe.

HEALTH-SOUTH AFRICA: Five Years to Children Born Free of HIV

(IPS)

08 March 2010

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 8 (IPS) - A world where all children are born free of HIV infection is possible in only five years if donors continue to fund global efforts to combat the virus.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria says in addition TB transmission will be halved by 2015 and malaria will be eliminated as a public health problem by 2020 if it increases funding for its programmes.

The fund's results report was launched in Johannesburg on Mar. 8 by Professor Michel Kazatchkine, the organisation's executive director. "A world where no children are born with HIV is truly possible by 2015," Kazatchkine said.

Programmes supported by the Global Fund in developing countries saved at least 3,600 lives per day in 2009 and an estimated 4.9 million since its creation in 2002.

By the end of 2009 programmes financed by the fund provided antiretroviral therapy (ART) for 2.5 million people and 790,000 HIV-positive pregnant women were on treatment to prevent mother to child transmission (MTCT) of HIV in developing countries.

The report said that continued and substantial increases in long-term financial commitments by donors will be essential in order to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

"The Global Fund is about getting results. This report clearly shows the world's investments are making a difference," said Michel Sidibe, the executive director of the United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS.

South Africa is one of the countries that have stepped up a rapid expansion of HIV prevention, care and treatment services according to the report. South Africa receives 271.3 million dollars from the fund.

According to South African Health Minister, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, the fund has provided treatment for 400,000 of the 920,000 people who are on ART in the country. "This funding has gone a long way in helping South Africa's progress in achieving the MDGs on time," Motsoaledi added.

"It is our hope as the South African government that donors use this report to see the work the Global Fund is doing in developing countries in assisting in the progress of the MDGs," Motsoaledi said.

The Global Fund has invested in 41 countries and territories in east, southern, west and central Africa with a focus on where there is the greatest need.

According to the report Namibia, Rwanda and Zambia are on track to meet the targets they set for universal access to ART.

In Malawi 37,000 HIV-positive pregnant mothers had received MTCT by the end of 2009 and within eight months of ART introduction overall adult mortality declined by 10 percent.

All these are indicators of good progress, especially on the African continent, said Sidibe.

Sidibe also highlighted the importance of the fund's replenishment. He said that "a withdrawal of funding on Global Fund-supported projects would be a universal

nightmare, as it will mean removing the people who are already on HIV treatment of the medication due to lack of funding."

But in order for this progress to be continuous international donors have to play their part, explained Kazatchkine.

The fund requires 20 billion dollars over the next three years.

Human Rights & Social Issues

ZAMBIA: Stigma and bureaucracy drive maternal deaths

(IRIN)

11 March 2010

LUSAKA, 11 March 2010 (IRIN) - Parity Zulu, 17, constantly recited a Biblical verse asking God for protection from her persecutors while her mother ferried her to hospital following complications from the teenager's illegal abortion.

Her mother, Margaret, was unaware that her daughter had paid K350,000 (US\$74) for a back-street abortion three days earlier. "All the way to the hospital I asked my child what happened. She wouldn't tell me. Then she began to sing Psalm 57, a cry for help. I began to suspect she was aborting a pregnancy," she told IRIN.

At the hospital's emergency admission desk, Zulu's medical condition was immediately apparent to Nurse Serephina Moonde. "I can tell a botched abortion as they come in through the doors - on average I see up to ten new patients a day. Women and young girls coming in, bleeding - sometimes we can save them; other times, like in Parity's case, it's too late - their wombs are rotting and they have lost too much blood."

Moonde said she had seen the results of the horrific methods women sometimes used to induce abortion: drinking crushed glass boiled with coca-cola, inserting crudely sharpened wooden sticks into the cervix, taking heavy doses of anti-malaria tablets, and even ingesting poisons such as battery acid.

Zambia's maternal mortality rate of 591 per 100,000 live births is one of the highest in the world, according to the 2008 Demographic Health Survey (DHS), the most recent.

One-third of maternal deaths are thought to be the result of abortion, but a shocking statistic is that 80 percent of the women who die from abortions are under the age of 19.

Abortion law

The Zambian Termination of Pregnancy Act 1972 is based on British colonial legislation, which permits abortion when continuation of the pregnancy can be proved to be detrimental to the mother, or the child, or both.

The law states that those wanting a termination must seek the consent of three physicians, but this requirement may be waived, if the abortion is deemed an emergency, to save the woman's life or prevent grave permanent injury to her physical or mental health.

In 2009 the University Teaching Hospital (UTH) in the capital, Lusaka, the country's largest medical facility, recorded 5,295 abortions, of which 5,246 were a consequence of incomplete abortions; 31 women died as a result of complications.

Only nine terminations of pregnancies were performed at UTH in 2009, according to the provisions of the law, down from the 2008 figure of 126 legally performed terminations.

Dr Peter Mwaba, UTH's managing director, told IRIN that the hospital was a place of last resort, and the statistics did not include women seeking help for complications from an abortion at other public or private clinics.

He said many women did not have access to effective contraception, and there were gender inequalities as well as deeply entrenched stigmas around abortion, which contributed to women practicing self-abortion or seeking other unsafe procedures. Women seeking to terminate pregnancies were also making use of the greater availability of a variety of drugs at pharmacies and private clinics.

It was the attempts to procure abortions this way [unsafely] that brought on the complications - it was basically guesswork, and that was why women arrived at hospitals "half dead", he said.

Holo Hachoonda, a clinical director at the Planned Parenthood Association (PPAZ), told IRIN that many health practitioners did not understand the abortion law, and were reluctant to provide these services.

"People still do not see abortion as a right backed by law. They still also have not gotten used to the thinking that a woman has rights over her own body, and can make decisions about something like abortion," he said.

Mary Beth Jones, 46, decided to seek an abortion after falling pregnant with her fifth child. At the clinic she was asked why, as a married woman who had no health issues, she wanted an abortion. Had she had committed adultery?

"They wanted me to tell my husband, go through couple counselling, etc. I also felt they were judging me, and I was afraid that there would be no confidentiality, as we were being lumped together like naughty children and lectured. I can imagine how horrible it must be for a young girl seeking an abortion," she told IRIN.

Jones resorted to a herbal remedy from a traditional healer to induce a miscarriage. "I haemorrhaged so badly I ended up in hospital and had to have my womb removed. Needless to say, I am now a divorcee."

Religious barriers

In an effort to improve the efficacy of the Act, in June 2009 the government launched the Standards and Guidelines for Reducing Unsafe Abortion Morbidity and Mortality in Zambia, for interpreting the 1972 legislation.

The guidelines provided for abortions to be performed in the interests of a women's physical or mental health; nurse practitioners had been trained to provide medical abortions and first-trimester abortions; women no longer had to stay overnight in hospital after the procedure. Family planning services, including abortion services, have been extended throughout the country.

However, the biggest challenges to abortion are the deeply held religious views that think girls engage in sex when they should not, and see abortion as a sign of promiscuity.

Zambia's more than 11 million people are predominantly Roman Catholic, but conservative evangelical churches have grown considerably in recent years; in combination these represent a formidable degree of social disapproval of terminating pregnancy.

Suzanne Matala, Secretary-General of the Christian Council of Zambia (CCZ), the Catholic Church's mother body in Zambia, told IRIN that life began at conception. "There are no grey areas, no room for discussion. We condemn abortion. It's an absolute no-no."

Government spokesman Ronnie Shipakwasha, a Pentecostal church elder, told IRIN the abortion law would not be touched until there had been wide consultations with medical authorities, policy-makers and religious bodies.

He did not provide a timeframe, and there has been no call for this dialogue; he said the law, read in conjunction with the guidelines, was sufficient to ensure safe abortions.

"We just need to make this information available," he said. "We are a Christian country, so the church's teachings on morality are a major factor in how we deal with the issues of abortions."

Efforts to Organize Farm Workers Keep Political Activists Busy in South Africa

(Voice of America)

07 March 2010

A ramshackle car with a mud-spattered body shutters along a dusty street leading into the small town of Petrusburg, in South Africa's arid western Free State region. The car – its

rusted exhaust sending acrid black smoke into the air – is driven by Pitso Marumo, an official from the local branch of the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). Marumo is on the prowl for supporters to attend a party meeting. He brings his vehicle to a sudden halt in the middle of the road. His passenger and ANC colleague, Mabozza Ledaka, leans out of the window and asks a woman, “Sister, will you be at our meeting later today?”

His clothing leaves his target in no doubt as to the politics behind the gathering. He’s wearing a black t-shirt depicting a smiling President Jacob Zuma. “I’ve hardly taken this shirt off since Msholozhi won the election (in April 2009)!” he exclaims, using the president’s Zulu clan name.

In the hot and dry western Free State, towns slumber among vast golden maize and yellow sunflower plantations. It’s as if the elections that saw the rise to power of the controversial Mr. Zuma have yet to happen. “Stop Zuma!” proclaims a poster of the opposition Democratic Alliance.

“Too late!” Marumo says, laughing at the banner and shouting, “It’s too late to stop Msholozhi! He will be our president for life; that is what I want!”

Although official campaigning ended with the 2009 polls, it’s still going on in some towns in Free State. People continue to walk the streets wearing buttercup yellow t-shirts encouraging fellow South Africans to “Vote ANC.” Ledaka says, “You still see these election things around here, because that election was the biggest thing ever to hit this forgotten part of the world. People don’t want to forget it; they want to keep it alive....”

Marumo says many issues that were raised during that election are still issues today – especially whether activists can campaign on private farms without permission: “As politicians, we have no choice but to continue addressing these issues until they are resolved.”

‘Politics doesn’t make food.... Only hot air’

In western Free State in particular, political rivalries born during the election are still simmering as a result of some white farmers who allegedly refused – and are still refusing – to allow their laborers to be involved in political activity. Marumo says the farmers threaten to fire any workers who disobey them and refuse to allow political meetings on their land. The farmers say politics interferes with farm work and lowers their production, so it’s bad for South Africa’s economy.

During the 2009 election period, Marumo says, ANC agents were able to ensure that political rallies were held on farms in the largely rural region. “Most of our supporters here work on isolated farms; the only way to reach them is to go and speak about politics on the farms themselves,” he explains. But the ANC official adds that some farmers remain “stubborn,” which means the issue of political activity on farmland is “far from dead.”

He says “government intervention” is sometimes called for, in which case officials from the relevant state agency visit the farmers to “negotiate” access to their land. The officials visit farmers like 72-year-old Barend Reynecke, who’s listening to static-filled commentary on a rugby game on a small transistor radio on his stone porch. Despite the mind-numbing heat, Reynecke is clutching a mug of steaming coffee.

The rancher’s grimaces and groans offer proof that he’s in a bad mood. His team’s losing. To make matters worse – they’re losing to their bitter rivals. “Those big city fancy-pants from Johannesburg!” Reynecke says.

With a large, sunburned hand, he swats a fly away from his face and declares, “We farmers allow politics on our farms. But we have a rule that political meetings must not take place when there’s urgent work to be done. We have a responsibility to produce food for this country. Politics does not make food. It makes hot air.”

Reynecke’s floppy khaki sunhat, decorated with leopard-skin print material, almost falls off as he nods vigorously to the rhythm of his words. “Some workers and the ANC have a problem with rules and discipline. They would like to have a political rally on a farm every day. We can’t allow this.”

The farmers are ‘good people’

A few miles down the asphalt from Petrusburg is another similar town, Koffiefontein. In English, its name is ‘Coffee Fountain’ – the settlement that Afrikaners named centuries ago after a stream, its water the rich dark brown color of the brew. Huge silver grain silos loom over the place. A massive copper kettle – reinforcing Koffiefontein’s association with coffee – welcomes visitors at the entrance to the town.

Resident Storm Parker says the ANC and local farmers “can’t ever be friends” because, she says, “the ANC just arrives on the farms out of the blue and then expects everyone to just jump for them” – a charge Marumo denies, saying “all meetings are organized well ahead of time.”

Parker’s married to a farmer. She says men like her husband “personally” transport their workers into town to allow the laborers to attend ANC rallies and provide the workers with food to eat at such events. The issue, Parker maintains, is not the farm laborers’ support of a particular political party, but rather that “farmers believe politics must be kept off their farms.... But if the meetings are held elsewhere, that’s fine.”

On Koffiefontein’s main street, support for the farmers arrives from an unexpected source – in the form of ANC official Tshokolo Mantjies. He’s wearing a t-shirt – again depicting a grinning Jacob Zuma – and is sheltering from the sun under a tree, the wind chimes hanging from its branches blown gently by a breeze.

Mantjies says “as far as possible, politics must not interfere with farming.... Our country needs food, and farmers must be left to farm, not worry about political gatherings on their land.”

He adds, “From what I have seen in this province, many farmers even go so far as to help their workers to get involved in politics.” Mantjies describes what he witnessed at Koffiefontein on election day in 2009.

“I’ve seen three farmers with vans. And they had their farm workers on the vans and they brought them to the voting stations to come and vote,” he says. Mantjies says most white farmers in the western Free State are “good people” – even though “they don’t like” the ANC.... “But that is their right,” he stresses.

‘The number of the beast’

On a farm not too far from Mantjies’s homestead, opposition Congress of the People (Cope) supporter Azael Mashampi drives his tractor into a strong headwind. “Yes, we lost the election. Zuma won,” he sighs, switching the vehicle’s engine off and climbing down.

Mashampi’s more upbeat wife, Elisa, chips in, “But we weren’t destroyed. We’re still here. We now have people in parliament. At least we stopped the ANC from getting 66,6% (of the vote, which would have given it a two-thirds majority in parliament).”

“And just as well for them!” Azael interjects. “In the Bible, 666 is the devil’s number, the number of the beast....”

Azael says he’s worked for farmers in the Free State for decades and – although there are some “bad types” among them – “they are the biggest providers of jobs in this province. As such, the good they do far outweighs the bad.”

Shielding his face from dust whipped up by a sudden gust, Azael says, “The farmers are with us. Many of them, they vote (for) Cope. So, we are standing together with the farmers. We’ve always said our arms are open for the farmers.”

Dogs, pigs and the egghead

Back at Petrusburg, Jan Tokkel puffs on a cigarette, his arms leaning on a steel fence. Sweat beads on the hairs of his moustache and beard. A homemade sign is mounted on the man’s front gate. Its crooked lettering is scrawled on a chunk of old school blackboard. The sign reads, ‘Hey. Be careful of the pig that’s going to eat you.’

Tokkel laughs uproariously when asked about it. “I am a small farmer – pigs,” he says, strings of white smoke curling out his flaring nostrils. “Did you know that pigs are the best guard dogs on this earth? Dogs are much more stupid than pigs,” he says.

Unlike many small town residents in western Free State, Tokkel says he doesn’t care at all about politics. “In fact, politics is banned on my farm – not that anyone would want to hold a blerrie (bloody) political rally here!” he says, raising his voice in mirth, and casting his eyes across a plot strewn with broken bricks and old car parts. At the back of the yard, some men slouch against a wall, gulping beer from large brown bottles.

A woman pokes her head around a corner, squinting into the sunlight. Addressing the men, she asks, ““What’s going on here?” A man tells her, his voice slurring, “Someone from the American newspaper is here to talk about Zuma.”

Oh! The eierkop (egghead),” she says, using another term of affection for the president – this time referring to Zuma’s large, shiny pate. The drinking men cackle into their beer bottles.

“By the way,” she says, clutching a bundle of dirty washing and simultaneously arranging multicolored curlers in her bush of disheveled hair, “How is he doing? Is he going to do something good for the Free State?” she asks, dipping into the bucket holding a pile of underclothes and arranging one of the garments on a line.

“I don’t know,” answers another man, beer froth lining the sides of his mouth. “Ask the man from the newspaper,” he tells the woman, rolling his calcified eyes.

“Who cares, says Tokkels. “Life is still the same here, nothing’s changed. Zuma must give me money so I can feed my pigs properly. If he does that, then maybe I will also join all you nikswerde (good-for-nothings) who do nothing all day except talk kak (nonsense) about politics.”

Then Tokkels ambles off, his slippers shuffling in the dust. “My pigs are hungry,” he repeats.

The washer woman stares after him. “Everything here is hungry,” she says to Tokkel’s back.

“But not thirsty!” says the man with the dead eyes, smiling as he sucks at the neck of yet another bottle.

Nigerians Fight Crime in South African Coastal City

(Voice of America)

07 March 2010

A cosmopolitan crowd, dressed in multicolored finery, shimmies the night and early morning hours away in one of the many chic bars that line the street. During breaks from dancing, the sweating, smiling revelers sip at gaudy cocktails and nibble at plates of food.

But the vibe in Parliament Street, one of South Africa’s most historic areas, in the coastal city of Port Elizabeth – wasn’t always as “fantastic” as this, says Etienne Barkhuysen, owner of a local coffee shop.

Up until recently, businesses like his had to shut their doors long before midnight because of the threat of armed robbers. Drug dealers and prostitutes lined Parliament Street – named in the 1800s after it hosted the first sitting of the Cape Province parliament. Young men, fueled by alcohol consumed in their parked cars, battled one another with

bottles and fists in vicious street fights. The once vibrant, multiracial, multicultural restaurants, nightclubs and bars closed, relocating to safer, cleaner areas. Economic stagnation hung heavy over the area.

But now, although signs of the previous decay are still evident, the “boom times” are back for Parliament Street, Barkhuysen says enthusiastically. Businesses have reopened. The streets are no longer littered with broken glass, blood and used condoms. Instead, they’re lined with flowering plants and sparkling new signs advertising parties. People in search of entertainment throng the venue nightly, no longer afraid of criminals.

Central to the rejuvenation of Parliament Street is a group of Nigerian immigrants, who took action when locals accused Nigerian criminals of turning the area into a no-go zone.

‘Amazing’ Nigerians ‘clean up the street’

In an initial attempt to manage the crisis, owners of businesses hired private security officers to patrol the street. But the crime continued. “There were some muggings and stuff,” says Barkhuysen. “But the biggest problem was people running after cars, jumping in, trying to sell drugs. A lot of people felt threatened by it; they felt they were being hijacked. And also people in the street being grabbed and (offered) drugs.... Unfortunately, a lot of the crime was being perpetrated by Nigerians.”

Barkhuysen, as chairman of the Parliament Street Business Forum, approached some “respected” Nigerians who also owned enterprises in the vicinity, in a final bid for help to stop the chaos.

“When people started running away from Parliament Street, it didn’t only affect the white (South African) business owners; it also affected the Nigerians that owned businesses in this area,” says Chukwudi Obiezu, a Nigerian entrepreneur.

“So we had to get involved,” says the burly man, who’s also chairman of the Port Elizabeth branch of the Nigerian Union of South Africa, an organization formed to support Nigerians living in Africa’s largest economy. “We became sick and ashamed of always hearing that it was Nigerians doing these terrible deeds,” he says.

Barkhuysen credits Obiezu and his Nigerian partners for “cleaning up” the street. “They were amazing,” says the South African. “They turned things around very fast.” Obiezu adds, “If you’re coming around and we see you doing (crime), we get you and we hand you over to the police – whether you’re a Nigerian or not.”

But sometimes the Nigerian Union’s intervention involves far more than a simple “hand-over” of a suspect to the authorities.... Sometimes, says Obiezu, he and his fellow crime fighters have to get “heavy handed” with alleged criminals.

Nigerian crime fighters ‘go above the law’.... But crime continues

A Parliament Street restaurateur, who wants to remain anonymous, comments, “The Nigerian Union guys don’t mess around. If they catch a criminal, they don’t play. They

are very ruthless – especially if the suspect’s one of their own nationals who is dirtying their names with crime....”

Obiezu acknowledges that he and his colleagues “fight fire with fire” in their war against criminal gangs in Parliament Street.

“You don’t take a knife to a gunfight,” he says, a steely look of resolve hardening his eyes. “Sometimes talking does nothing.”

Obiezu continues, “To an extent, we were able to convince the police to let us clean our own people our own way. So the police gave us just a little power – more than what we should have. The police allow us to use a bit of force. We are allowed to go a little bit above the law, to weed the bad eggs out. And when the criminals experience this, they run like the cowards they actually are.”

But some drug dealers haven’t “run.” When VOA visited the area, we were approached by a young man who identified himself as “Mike.” He said he was “from Lagos.” In the sheltered darkness of an abandoned building, “Mike” displayed an assortment of narcotics – including cocaine, ecstasy and marijuana – and offered the drugs for sale.

According to veteran Parliament Street security guard Mary Van Rensburg, the district’s still “far from safe. Sometimes in the night, things are very bad here. People are getting robbed here,” she says. Van Rensburg herself has fallen victim to the criminals. “Two young men and a grey-haired old man took my money. They had knives,” she recalls. “They caught me off-guard....”

But Van Rensburg maintains that “by far” the biggest problem in Parliament Street remains drug dealing. She voices no doubt as to who the perpetrators are. “The Nigerian criminals are still here,” she says, whispering. “It’s them who bring in the drugs.”

The neon-bibbed security guard says she witnesses Nigerian criminals doing “very terrible things.

But I keep my mouth shut. I am very scared of the Nigerians. They are a very vicious nation. If you tell the police about them, they will hurt you.”

‘We are not drug dealers, we are businessmen’

Another Nigerian, Sunday Smith, manages a store near Parliament Street. He agrees with Van Rensburg that crime still happens in the precinct but insists that “compared to what it was like in the past, this place is heaven.” He points to a shiny new boutique hotel in the street and says “it wouldn’t be here if things were as bad” as Van Rensburg says.

And he’s offended by her contention that only Nigerians are responsible for drug peddling in the area and that Nigerians in general are “vicious.”

“Prejudice” such as this on the part of many South Africans against Nigerians, he says, makes him “shed tears.”

“Most Nigerians in South Africa, we are not drug dealers; we are businessmen, even professionals, like doctors. But when South Africans hear you are a Nigerian, you can see the suspicion in their eyes. They automatically think, ‘Ah, this man, he is a drug man....’”

Folorunsho Jafoluwa is a lawyer and a Nigerian resident of Port Elizabeth. Despite this, he says he’s regularly confronted by South Africans convinced he’s a drug dealer – simply because he’s Nigerian. “They even ask me for drugs!” he says, laughing. “I tell them, ‘I’ve not ever seen drugs, not even in Nigeria; how can you think I know what do to sell you drugs?’ But they never believe me; they just smile and carry on asking me for drugs.”

Obiezu insists that many drug criminals in the country – and in Parliament Street specifically – are not Nigerians. “So many black foreign criminals hide under the cloak of being Nigerian. And to the South Africans, if you are a black foreign African, you are simply called ‘a Nigerian.’ That is how we have come to have such a bad reputation,” he says.

Obiezu adds that Nigerians’ “natural flamboyance” make them “easy targets” to blame for crime. “We are very loud, and also built very big. We have very dark skin. If two or three Nigerians stand together, we look like a big crowd, very threatening,” he explains.

For some, unemployment leads to crime

Smith acknowledges the presence of some “bad eggs” in the Nigerian community in South Africa. He says young Nigerians continue to “stream” into the country. “Some of them are cobblers; some of them are mechanics.... They can’t get jobs, so big time criminals recruit them to sell drugs on the streets.”

Smith’s comments raise another issue that concerns the Nigerian Union and, according to Obiezu, is responsible for some Nigerians in South Africa turning to crime.

“There are over 300 qualified Nigerian medical doctors in South Africa. But bureaucracy means they are not being issued work permits. How are such people supposed to survive?” he asks, continuing, “You get married to a South African. You are given a permit to reside in South Africa for two years. But under that permit, you are prohibited from working. Is that not a ticket to go into crime?”

For Obiezu and many other Nigerians in South Africa, the struggle to be recognized as valuable members of society in the country where they’ve chosen to settle endures. But, on this street in Port Elizabeth, they have plenty of supporters and admirers.

“The fact that I and other South Africans in Parliament Street are now able to make a decent living here is largely because of Nigerians,” says Etienne Barkhuysen. “I hope others realize that, when they are so quick to condemn the Nigerian presence in South Africa.”

UN: IOC and FIFA 'Mega-Events' Violate Housing Rights

(Voice of America)

08 March 2010

A U.N. Special Investigator finds mega-sporting events, particularly the Olympic Games and FIFA Football World Cup, often result in extensive violations of the right to adequate housing. The investigator, who has submitted her report to the U.N. Human Rights Council, is calling for the IOC and FIFA to minimize the abuse by carefully scrutinizing bids before awarding the Games.

In the past, U.N. Special Investigator on Adequate Housing Raquel Rolnik says cities often seized on the Olympics as an opportunity to raise the local economy and upgrade their housing and transportation systems.

She says this rarely happens now. In fact, she says she has received a great many complaints and allegations of violations of housing rights from residents of cities that have hosted mega-sporting events. "Particularly, on the practice of forced evictions and displacement, on criminalization of homeless persons and criminalization of informal activities, on the dismantling of informal settlements without adequate alternative provisions for adequate housing in the context of mega-events," she said.

Rolnik says she has received allegations about housing rights violations in the lead-up to the World Cup in South Africa this summer. She says the complaints allege that more than 20,000 residents from the Joe Slovo Informal settlements have been moved to impoverished areas on the edge of the city to make room for a modernized housing project.

South African officials refute these charges. On a recent visit to Geneva, South Africa's Minister of Internal Relations said not a single community has been forcibly removed from the so-called Gateway Housing Project in preparation for the World Cup.

U.N. Special Investigator Rolnik says she has had constructive discussions with the IOC regarding housing problems. And, she says the IOC has agreed to incorporate housing concerns in their bidding process for the 2016 Olympics.

She notes negotiations with FIFA have been far less successful. "It is [a] much less transparent and clear process of building and selecting as compared to the Olympic committee. So, I urge also FIFA to open up, to be more transparent and to open up the discussion on the impact of football games on this matter," she said.

As the two major sporting events in the world, Rolnik says the Olympic Games and the FIFA Football World Cup have the power to influence and set examples for other events. She says she sees the bidding and selection process, as a key moment to set standards for the protection of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing.

Lack of funding threatens humanitarian efforts in Zimbabwe, says UN

(UN News Service)

12 March 2010

12 March 2010 – Aid agencies in Zimbabwe are appealing to donors to support the \$378 million appeal launched last December to support humanitarian and early recovery efforts in the country, the United Nations humanitarian wing reported today.

“Lack of funding at this crucial time could derail progress made between the latter part of 2009 and now,” warned the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which noted that the 2010 Consolidated Appeal is just over 2 per cent funded.

Zimbabwe has been plagued by widespread humanitarian suffering in recent years, driven in part by long-running political strife.

When the appeal was launched in December 2009, some 6 million people in the country did not have access to safe water and sanitation due to the erosion of basic services. Livelihoods were also threatened by the prolonged economic downturn.

“There is need for vigilance as the humanitarian situation is still precarious and prone to sudden shocks,” OCHA said, adding that the available funding is insufficient to address the country’s humanitarian needs.

The Office reported that the dry spell in parts of the Southern African nation from mid-December 2009 to last month has raised concerns for food security.

Meanwhile, over 70 cases of cholera, including one death, have been reported in a new outbreak that began in early February. During the same period in 2009, there were nearly 75,790 cases and 3,612 deaths in the outbreak that started in August 2008.

In addition, the number of deaths related to a measles outbreak more than doubled, rising to 110 by the end of February, compared to 50 at the end of January.

Africa still hungry despite annual \$3 billion of aid and \$33 billion of food imports – UN

(UN News Service)

11 March 2010

11 March 2010 – One in three Africans is chronically hungry, despite \$3 billion spent on food aid for the continent annually and \$33 billion in food imports, the director of the food security at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has warned.

Much of the \$33 billion that Africa spends to import food could be better diverted to domestic production for regional and global trade, contributing to poverty reduction and repositioning Africa in the global economy, said Josue Dione, Director of Food Security

and Sustainable Development of ECA, at a conference on agribusiness that wrapped up yesterday in Abuja, Nigeria.

“African agriculture is thirsty as less than 4 per cent of the total arable land is irrigated compared to 33 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 29 per cent in the Middle East. African agriculture is hungry as it receives only 14.6 kilograms of fertilizers per hectare, against 114.3 kilograms per hectare for all developing countries,” Mr. Dione said in an address on behalf of the ECA’s Executive Secretary Abdoulie Janneh.

Africa’s share in world agriculture trade fell to 3.2 per cent in 2006 from 5.4 per cent in the 1980s and 15 per cent in the 1960s, according to ECA.

The continent’s small share in regional and global agricultural trade is strongly associated with a shift in world agricultural trade away from bulk commodities, Mr. Dione said.

“Significant part of global agro-food trade has moved downstream along the value chains, and thus become less dependent purely on natural-resource endowment,” Mr. Dione said.

Yet moving Africa’s food and agriculture system towards processed, higher value-added products has been more difficult for the continent than for other developing regions.

Mr. Dione said while Africa is suffering from a competitive disadvantage in agro-processing, better policies can help improve the business environment and create the conditions necessary for higher private investment in agribusiness.

ECA has advocated for the development of regional value chains for selected agricultural commodities, which would allow domestic production to gain more resources.

“Developing agriculture for broad-based economic growth, food security and poverty reduction in Africa now requires an integrated approach to investing in improving productivity and efficiency at all stages of the commodity value chains, from research and development, to input markets, farm-level production, processing, storage, handling, transport, distribution to the final consumer,” Mr. Dione said.

Botswana: UN report condemns government treatment of Bushmen

(Africa Files)

11 March 2010

The UN’s top official on indigenous rights has condemned Botswana’s continued persecution of the Bushmen in a new report. Prof. James Anaya, UN Special Rapporteur for indigenous peoples, highlights the government’s harassment of the Bushmen and Bakgalagadi tribes in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, who, despite winning a 2006 High Court ruling that their eviction from the reserve was unlawful, continue to face ill-treatment. In the report Prof Anaya writes that the ‘denial of services to those currently living in the reserve does not appear to be in keeping with the spirit and underlying logic

of the [2006 High Court] decision, nor with the relevant international human rights standards.’

He states that, ‘Indigenous people who have remained or returned to the reserve face harsh and dangerous conditions due to a lack of access to water, a situation that could be easily remedied by reactivating the boreholes in the reserve. The Government should reactive the boreholes or otherwise secure access to water for inhabitants of the reserve as a matter of urgent priority.’

He also notes that, ‘the Government’s position that habitation of the reserve by the Basarwa [Bushmen] and Bakgalagadi communities is incompatible with the reserve’s conservation objectives and status appears to be inconsistent with its decision to permit Gem Diamonds/Gope Exploration Company (Pty) Ltd. to conduct mining activities within the reserve, an operation that is planned to last several decades and could involve an influx of 500-1200 people to the site, according to the mining company.’

Finally he recommends that the Government should ‘fully and faithfully implement’ the 2006 High Court ruling and facilitate ‘the return of all those removed from the reserve who wish to do so, allowing them to engage in subsistence hunting and gathering in accordance with traditional practices, and providing them the same government services available to Botswanans elsewhere, including, most immediately, access to water’.

Survival’s director, Stephen Corry, said today, ‘Criticism is now growing of the government’s continued, appalling refusal to allow the Bushmen access to water. It is deeply unpleasant, bullying behaviour and shocks those who learn about it. Survival now directly reaches more than a million people, and we will ensure they know about this. It’s astonishing that the government continues to behave in this way. As long as it does so, the Bushmen issue will remain a cancer at the heart of Botswana’s international reputation.’

SOUTH AFRICA: Gender Loses Out in Basic Education Crisis

(IPS)

11 March 2010

CAPE TOWN, Mar 11 (IPS) - With the 15th-year review of the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women taking place at the ongoing Commission on the Status of Women in New York, South African teachers and education experts say they fear that a special focus on the advancement of girls is getting lost amidst the growing levels of poverty in the country.

Any notion that a gender-responsive curriculum, which ensures gender equality, should be taught is taking a back seat to other socio-economic problems plaguing one of the most unequal countries in the world.

Today, 15 years after the official demise of apartheid, government estimates it needs at least 35 billion U.S. dollars just to fit all schools with the basics - classrooms, water, toilets and electricity.

Even if this amount was spread over a ten year period - leaving many schools without facilities until 2020 - government still could "not afford it", officials told parliament 18 months ago.

The situation has worsened since then. Five weeks ago, the government official in charge of delivering primary and secondary schooling Bobby Soobrayan, told South Africa's parliament that the country now faces "a crisis in basic education".

Teachers Thandi Mapalakanye and Andre Marais are right at the frontline in the post-apartheid education system.

Teaching at two of the thousands of derelict schools reserved for "non-whites" by the apartheid system, Marais says, "I can tell you with certainty, gender equity is not taught in poor schools".

Marais teaches 15 year olds at the Rosendal High School in Delft, a typical Cape Town ghetto built on sand dunes about 28 kilometres from the affluent city centre.

The school hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons last year when it's headmaster was accused in the local media of expelling pregnant school girls as soon as their pregnancies became visible – and of not allowing them to return to school after their babies were born.

"I am teaching a class of 67 kids. The kids are sitting on the floor. This school needs so many more teachers but the education department refuses to give us even one more," Marais told IPS.

"Gender is just not an issue to many teachers. There is no idea how to deal with teenage girls getting pregnant; there is absolutely no sensitivity. I can safely say it is the same throughout the whole of Delft," said Marais.

Mapalakanye teaches 16 to 18 year old boys and girls at a historically Black high school near Johannesburg.

More than 1500 kilometres away from Delft, Mapalakanye says her P.T. Xulu Secondary School near Johannesburg shares the same problems as Rosendal High School.

She explains that in her school of 1200 pupils, there are between 90 and 110 pupils in every class.

"It is more difficult for girls but because of these other problems, I haven't even begun to consider the gender implications yet," Mapalakanye told IPS.

University of Johannesburg Centre for Education Rights and Transformation senior researcher, Salim Vally, estimates that gender based violence in schools has become more severe since 2002 when a Lancet study revealed that 33 percent of South African

rape survivors were girls who had been raped by members of the school community, other pupils, or school staff.

Vally told IPS that the government's focus on the Millennium Development Goal on gender doesn't help.

Goals number two and three call for gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2015.

"We have gender parity in schools; in fact there are more girls in secondary school than boys. But gender parity data masks other issues, like how we provide equal safe access to education for girls. It takes more than just an equitable ratio of girls to boys in education to address entrenched patterns of gender based discrimination and violence," he said.

The large amounts of harassment girls are subjected to affects the quality of their education.

"The formal curricula is complete with exhortations against sexism. Compared to apartheid curricula it's a huge advance," Vally says.

But he cautions that whether South Africa's "gender-responsive curriculum" policies are implemented is highly doubtful and contested.

He adds that young women in South Africa's shantytowns, or informal settlements, are not on the same footing as suburban girls. According to the latest Household Survey, 16 percent of South African children don't have one or both parents. Girls from informal settlements or the rural areas, where the rate of unemployment is as high as 60 percent, are more likely to end up looking after younger brothers and sisters.

"There is great pressure on school-going girls because they are seen as primary caregivers," Vally adds.

The class divide is starkly illustrated in an interview with a pupil of colour who attends a well-resourced school that, under apartheid, was reserved for whites only.

Salmah Peters (17) is in her final year at Hottentots Holland High School in Somerset West, a suburb about 40 kilometres from Cape Town.

She seems oblivious to gender issues in general and says of her school experience that girls are encouraged by the teachers to study in formerly male disciplines like engineering.

"For the first two years of high school they separate girls and boys into different classes because they say we girls will achieve better than if the boys are there to distract us. But for the last three years we are back in the same classes" Peters says.

"There is no violence against girls here, although sometimes we fight each other about boys and little things," she adds.

"Life for Black working class girls in South Africa is so much harder. We have to constantly remind people that, post-apartheid, racism, sexism and class divides still exist in society and in the education system," Vally concludes.

NAMIBIA: Female Hip-Hop Artists Challenge Stereotypes

(IPS)

09 March 2010

WINDHOEK, Mar 9 (IPS) - African hip-hop prides itself on a more positive portrayal of women, but traditional cultural attitudes towards women still dominate the industry, say Namibian female rappers.

What started in the late Seventies as an expression of disenfranchised African-American youth in the Bronx of New York city, soon took root in Africa's urban centres. In the townships of South Africa and Namibia, hip-hop morphed into kwaito and afropop and became an expression of post-apartheid identity.

Though the independence struggle and exile that left social networks scattered created a space for Namibian women to break away from convention and take up careers in music, this freedom is fraught with contradictions.

"There are not many places in Africa like Namibia where we can jump around the stage in our mini-skirts without causing an uproar," says Frieda Haindaka from rap duo Gal Level. "But at the same time our biggest challenge is being females in a male dominated industry. We constantly have to prove ourselves. People just want to see two sexy girls on a stage and don't think we can actually do anything."

Other female artists still feel the pull from a traditional Namibian background.

"Of course we feel inferior to men," affirms singer, Sally.

"I used to be afraid of men. I would go to a show and there's a guy after guy wowing the crowd and I would just feel like: 'oh my gosh what am I going to do? Maybe I should just turn around and go away.'

"And men are not helpful," she adds. "I walk into a studio and there's seven guys hanging around with their kwaito attitude and their hip-hop thing going on, and they just stare at you like: 'Pff.... whacha gonna do lil' mama?' It makes me want to curl up in the corner immediately."

Despite the prejudice, some of the country's female hip-hop artists are doing what they can to make music that sends young women listeners an inspiring and positive message.

"In my lyrics I encourage women to work for their own bubblegum so to speak, and not depend on favours," says two-time Channel O Music Award winner 'Lady May' (23), who released her third album last year.

One of her hit singles is called Chokola (high heels) "When you are wearing high heels you feel powerful, you feel sexy, you feel like you can conquer the world. High heels give a woman confidence, but they also require focus and discipline, or you will fall over," she explains.

Sally's track, 'dollhouse', is about a woman who breaks free from an abusive relationship. "Just because you are a man you cannot tell me who I should be," she sings.

But the demands of the industry and the competition for sales in a business where the macho standard is already set provides little space for activism.

"I would love to make songs that really drive the point home, but hey, you also got to make the people dance," Sally tells IPS.

"We only have a handful of female artists that have made it in Namibia and none of them are as successful as their male counterparts," says DJ Chè Ulenga of community radio station Base FM in Katutura township. Ulenga has seen many aspiring girls abandoning their dreams of becoming top selling artists.

Ulenga told IPS pay is meagre in the industry, with managers routinely pocketing 50 percent of the fees, if the women get paid at all.

"Women work on songs or videos that become hits but never get the recognition. Men just don't take them seriously and refuse to invest in girls even if they sing a great hook or chorus."

"Girls are lied to all the time," says Sally. "[Producers tell you] you will have your own album, you are going to make it, you will be a superstar. But soon enough the producer will be after you and the music stops."

The abuse and exploitation Sally recounts is routine in the male dominated music industry where many young women, hungry for a break with a hotshot producer, don't ask too many questions.

"When you are a nobody and desperate you are happy to be behind a mic," says Sally.

SOUTH AFRICA: Community Fears World Cup Will Cause Homelessness

(IPS)

08 March 2010

CAPE TOWN, Mar 8 (IPS) - While South African parliamentarians attended a swanky pre-International Women's Day celebration at Cape Town's International Convention Centre, a group of destitute women in decaying Kewtown, just seven miles away, worried about looming homelessness.

The women were notified by the municipality that their homes will be bulldozed to make way for an extended parking lot for Cape Town's Athlone Training Stadium, while others were asked to vacate their flats for renovations. But residents fear their flats, situated in a prime location for the Soccer World Cup in June, will be rented out to soccer fans.

At parliament's official International Women's Day conference on Mar. 5, themed '2010 FIFA World Cup Legacy for Women', South Africa's minister of Home Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, told the assembled Members of Parliament, cabinet ministers and representatives of local non-governmental organisations that several projects had been established to benefit women long after the World Cup has ended.

"There is a project of reducing carbon emissions. FIFA has called for people to be involved. Women should seize that opportunity. The country will be spending a lot on infrastructure. Women must also look at how to use those possibilities to increase their economic opportunities," suggested Dlamini-Zuma.

The country's deputy minister of economic development, Gwendoline Mahlangu-Nkabinde, was even more upbeat. She promised to send ten corporations working in the field of renewable energy and development finance institutions to women to help them to find jobs.

"Those of you who are into renewable energy, those who want skills and want to get started in renewable energy, come and see me," she said. International football association FIFA has indeed set up several 'legacy projects' across the country that are supposed to generate economic benefits for South Africans.

But these projects are a smokescreen to hide the suffering of poor communities displaced by the World Cup, claim four women from Kewtown, who feel abandoned in poor living conditions, while government funds get spent on making the soccer world cup a "world class event".

Pamela Beukes, Rachel August, Charlene Paul and Mariam Michaels have lived in the run-down community of Kewtown, which was formerly classified by the country's apartheid government as a "Coloured" area, for their whole lives.

Paul is set to find out on Mar. 12 from Cape Town's Wynberg Magistrates Court if she and her three children will continue to have a roof over their heads. They received notice that their home, situated next to Cape Town's Athlone Training Stadium, will be bulldozed to make way for an extended stadium parking lot.

"I don't see the benefit of the World Cup [for us], because we are losing this property," Paul told IPS.

Paul shares a row of five, one-roomed 'houses' with 18 other adults and children. Most of them were born and bred in Kewtown. Because they were never allocated council housing and had nowhere else to go, they occupied the structures illegally many years ago, after seeing them standing empty for years.

"We don't see the need for this structure to be bulldozed when there is a housing shortage," said Paul.

On the other side of the training stadium, Mariam Michaels also says she fears the World Cup will force her into homelessness. After city officials asked her to vacate her council flat for renovations two weeks ago, she has been living with her two daughters and four grandchildren in a converted shipping container.

The Cape Town city council has embarked on major upgrades of council flats near the stadium for the first time in 30 years, painting their derelict exteriors and fixing broken plumbing and roofs.

"They said they would give our place a makeover. It's for the World Cup. I have lived here 27 years and my windows have been broken for the past five, but the city never showed any interest in fixing them before," Michaels told IPS.

"The council officials promised us the renovations would only take six weeks and then we would be moved back. But I don't know yet if that will happen," she added.

There are fears among community members that they will not be able to return to the council flats and instead be abandoned by the city. They are also concerned about their safety. Rachel August, one of Michael's neighbours, told IPS about people running through the shipping container area at night, throwing stones on the metal roofs.

"The council told us it was not true that we were being moved to make way for the World Cup, but we have no guarantee. All we can do is wait and see. If they leave me here, I will cause chaos. That flat has been mine for 35 years, and I want to go back" said August angrily.

Local community organiser Pamela Beukes says the women became apprehensive about the city's true intentions when local councillor Charlotte Tablsher first told community members that the renovated flats would be rented out to World Cup visitors, but later renounced the idea, after vociferous protests.

"What made us suspicious was that people could have remained in their flats while these renovations were done, but the city insisted they move out," Beukes explained. "Because people are sitting in shipping containers and in not their homes, right now we can't say that we have had any benefit from the World Cup."

The Kewtown community will live in anxiety until the renovations, which the city council said will take six weeks, will be finalised at the end of March. If they are not moved back into their flats by then, they say they will hold a protest march to demand their rights.

Politics

Malawi Opposition Figure Slams Untimely Purchase of Presidential Jet

(Voice of America)

10 March 2010

A leading member of Malawi's opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) party says President Bingu Wa Mutharika's government acted irresponsibly when it "secretly" purchased a multi-million dollar presidential jet.

Fahad Assani says last year's purchase signifies the misplaced priorities of Mr. Mutharika's government.

"In our view as a majority of Malawians, the timing was very, very wrong. When you buy a presidential jet when the poor are suffering with poverty, it becomes something that is unreasonable...and also the government and the head of state (are) quite insensitive to the people. Buying a presidential jet at this time just proves how irresponsible that decision can be," he said.

The government purchased the jet for \$13.26 million - - a move opposition parties sharply condemned.

Malawi's minister of finance recently informed parliament that President Mutharika's administration made some payments toward the purchase.

But Assani says the government kept the plane's acquisition a secret.

"The strangest thing is that government did not even advise the nation through parliament or in the budget that they are going to acquire that state of the art presidential jet at the time when it was being purchased. So it was done behind people's knowledge, only to have rumors that it had purchased that presidential jet," Assani said.

Following the transaction, one of Malawi's major donors, Britain, reduced its budget support from 22 million pounds (\$ 32,953,003) last year to 19 million pounds (\$ 28,460,824) this year.

In a statement, the British government said its Department for International Development (DFID) "has reduced budget support to the Government of Malawi to make it clear that our funding must be spent in ways that benefit poor people... We have strong systems in place to ensure our aid is used to reduce poverty and gets to those who it need most," the statement read.

About 40 percent of Malawi's economy is reportedly funded by international donor support.

But information minister Leckford Thotho denied the jet purchase was controversial, saying it was less expensive to buy the plane than to contract outside help and equipment.

"For government to come up with that decision, we had to make a cost-benefit analysis. It is cheaper and more effective to have a jet than to pay hiring. Hiring is more expensive," Thotho said.

Political observers express concern the presidential purchase could deflate donor confidence.

Mugabe's ZANU-PF Deals Serious Blow To Unity Government

(Voice of America)

08 March 2010

Zimbabwe's unity government has suffered its worst blow since its formation a year ago, according to the Movement for Democratic Change and several Zimbabwean political analysts and commentators. President Robert Mugabe has stripped effective power from three ministries, and assigned them to ZANU-PF ministers.

University of Zimbabwe political scientist Eldred Masungure says the move stripping power from three MDC ministries was a "unilateralist" action and deliberate effort to tempt the party to quit the unity government.

He said there was no rational basis for the new law announced by the government on Friday. He said the move was a violation of the political agreement which brought the unity government into power and is designed "to induce the MDC to walk out as they did in October last year."

The MDC disengaged from the unity government when its treasurer, Roy Bennett was arrested.

Tendai Biti, secretary-general of the MDC who also serves as finance minister, said the political agreement of September 2008 did not "give anyone the right to unilaterally alter

a mandate." He said there had been a "serious breach of the political agreement and that the MDC would not take this lying down."

Biti said the MDC will meet on Wednesday to address the matter.

David Coltart, an executive of the smaller MDC party which split from the main branch and is also in the unity government said "at first glance this was a very serious breach of the political agreement because there was no consultation."

He said he hopes that this latest directive was not a decision of Mr. Mugabe's and that it can eventually be reversed.

ZANU-PF justice minister, Patrick Chinamasa, who has inherited some of the powers previously held by MDC ministries, was not available for comment Monday.

S.Africa's Zuma says ANC will not silence youth leader

(Alert Net)

12 Mar 2010

JOHANNESBURG, March 12 (Reuters) - South African President Jacob Zuma said the African National Congress would not silence the outspoken leader of the ruling party's youth wing despite his controversial policy demands and radical outbursts.

Zuma said in a newspaper interview published on Friday that Julius Malema, who has called for the nationalisation of South Africa's mines, did not have control over government policy.

Under Malema, the hardline youth league of the ANC is becoming a more significant political force after it helped Zuma become president in May last year.

Malema earlier this week led university students in a song -- popular during the fight against apartheid -- which called for white farmers to be killed, prompting the opposition Freedom Front Plus to lay criminal charges against him. [ID:nLDE62929R]

Malema's demand to bring the mines under state control alarmed investors who want to see South Africa pursuing business-friendly policies. Zuma has denied it is government policy to nationalise the mines.

In an interview with the Mail & Guardian, Zuma said ANC leaders spoke with Malema regularly and that "there's a leader in him for the future; a man who cares about people and who can take initiative".

"People want us to shout him down. Why must we do that? ... Even Madiba (former President Nelson Mandela), who is today an icon, was one of the most vocal youth league (leaders)," Zuma said.

The ANC youth wing has been vocal in pushing for leftist policy changes, including the nationalisation of mines in South Africa, the world's biggest platinum producer.

Earlier this week the league said it was losing confidence in Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan for not following party policy. Another leftist ANC ally, the COSATU trade union umbrella body, had criticised Gordhan's budget in February.

But Zuma told the Mail and Guardian that "there's no president of the youth league who can just declare policy ... People must differentiate between private views and policy".

Relations between the ANC and COSATU have soured as the labour federation, which also backed Zuma for the presidency, pushes for economic policy to move to the left.

Zuma said debate among the ANC and its allies, which include the communist party, did not mean the coalition was "falling apart".

"(The concern) is that people are talking with anger and fury. That is part of what politicians at times do. But it doesn't suggest the alliance can't hold," he said.

COSATU has also complained about corruption amongst politicians and asked for an audit of their lifestyles.

"We are all agreed on corruption, we are all fighting corruption," Zuma said, adding there was no need for further legislation to deal with the scourge.

Zuma came under fire from opposition parties earlier this week for failing to declare his assets for nearly a year after taking office as required by ethics laws. On Wednesday he submitted a list that showed he had no business interests [ID:nLDE6291GQ]

The ruling ANC will hold a three-day meeting of its decision-making National Executive Committee over the weekend which will, among other issues, discuss the calls for audits of politicians' lifestyles. (Reporting by Phumza Macanda; Editing by Giles Elgood)