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Table of Contents

Headlines	2
Detail of the news	3
China-African Relations	3
Pan-African issues	14
Nigeria News	48
Other W/African State News	64

Headlines

1 China-African Relations:

- China's \$28.5 Billion Deal in Nigeria: How Real Is It?
- China assisted Lamu Port 'dream' on the way to reality.
- Zijin confident Congo deal will survive
- Chinese Support for Increased Rice Production
- Most Chinese investors don't manufacture, only import
- Chinese investors to build cement factory in Mozambique
- Kenyan leader, head of Chinese bank discuss funding projects
- China's bank gives \$50 mln loan to Kenyan bank

2 Pan-African issues:

- AFRICA: Local rice is nice
- WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA: Ending the silence on violence in schools.
- AFRICA: Ten countries desperately seeking doctors: Chad – Burundi- Ethiopia - Tanzania - Somalia - Liberia - Sierra Leone- Malawi - Mozambique – Niger.
- ECOWAS needs review of infrastructural policies
- West Africa transport costs highest
- Experts blame Africa's poverty on research deficiencies
- Africa urged to vet Latin American investors to curb drugs
- Time for an Afribond
- African Challenges Top Assembly President's Talks With Cameroonain Leader
- Export Zones to Boost Africa's Manufacturing Industry
- New Colonialism - Pentagon Carves Africa into Military Zones

Nigeria:

1. Political News:

- Jonathan is qualified to run in 2011'
- Scrap voters' register, Tinubu implores Jonathan
- Jonathan needs just one-point agenda – to fight corruption'
- 2011 - PDP Set to Dump Zoning

2. Economy:

- Nigeria strengthens relations with Ireland
- Naira weakens as banks snap up dollars
- Siemens boss says company ready to pay fine for bribery

3. Energy:

- Oil Sector Shake-up: Northern Elders Slam Jonathan

4. Environment:

5. Immigration/Refugee/Idps:

- Nigerian Shot Dead, 32 Arrested in Poland

6. Health:

7. Human rights/Gender/social issues:

- Police kill, rape, torture and extort says rights group
- Troops avert another crisis in Jos
- Experts Decry Female Genital Mutilation
- 820 Prisoners On Death Row Sue Governors, Prisons Boss

8. Geo-Strategic issues:

Other West African States

Cape Verde:

Chad:

- Country Becomes 100th Nation to Give UN Nuclear Inspectors Greater Access....H4

Gambia:

Guinea- Bissau:

Mali:

- Muslim Conservatives Blocking New Family Law.....H7

Mauritania :

Niger:

- Niger's hungry 'crossing into Nigeria'.....H5

Sénégal:

Details of the News

1 China-African Relations:

- **China's \$28.5 Billion Deal in Nigeria: How Real Is It?**

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) announced on Thursday last week that it had signed an MOU with China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd. to construct three oil refineries (about 250,000 bbl/day capacity each) and a petrochemical plant. The total cost would reportedly be \$28.5 billion.

The endeavor still needs to secure financing: a combination of supplier's credits guaranteed by SINOSURE, and loans from a consortium of Chinese banks (as far as I

know, SINOSURE is simply an export insurance/guarantee agency; it doesn't supply finance itself). The ownership shares of the refineries will be 20% NNPC, and 80% CSCEC, it is said.

How solid is this news? CSCEC is a Beijing firm, a Shanghai stock exchange-listed company, and a subsidiary of China's largest state-owned construction company. It's a very respectable company, unlike the mysterious Hong Kong-based China International Fund we've seen a lot of lately.

But it's still early. An MOU is a sign of intention: more than a first date, but much less than a wedding ceremony. The chances of this being derailed, like other large Chinese projects in Nigeria, are high. Yet it also has all the hallmarks of China's more successful deals in Africa. No bids. Creative loan financing. Chinese concern about loan repayment. "Agency of restraint" that locks some of a county's natural resources into directly useful infrastructure. Note these provisions, in particular:

Ladan said the operational mode of the new refineries will be different from that of the existing ones, adding that government will have no shares or financial contribution to make in the construction and management of the plants as the entire project will be executed with loans sourced by NNPC and the Chinese firm. The refineries are to be managed by CSCEC consortium upon completion until the full recovery of their loan used on the project.

With this much detail, it sounds like the project(s) are indeed fairly advanced. It's not entirely clear whether this is a BOT (Build, Operate, Transfer), or a BOOT (Build, Own, Operate, Transfer). Probably the latter, with a joint company set up between NNPC and CSCEC, along the lines of Sicominex in the DRC. If it adopts that model, the investment will be loan-financed, not equity.

Chinese lenders will expect the loans to be secured, probably with oil export proceeds sent to a Chinese escrow account. In contrast to the DRC, though, there is no talk of a resource concession linked to the deal.

SINOSURE is very conservative. If they do get involved in guaranteeing the loans, they will want to make very sure they don't lose their shirt. But will the Nigerian government provide a sovereign guarantee? There could be more wrangling around sovereign guarantees such as we saw in the DRC with the \$9 billion (now \$6 billion) copper project.

Could this still be win-win for Nigeria? It would be terrific if Nigerians could finally refine their own oil. They presently import about 85% of their fuel needs, despite being a major oil producer. Some 20,000 Nigerians are expected to find direct and indirect employment through the construction and operation of the plants. But ultimately the benefit for Nigerians rests not just in employment and in the national pride of refining their oil, but in the cost of refining versus importing it. International tenders and

competitive bidding are supposed to ensure that countries get value for their money. Not that this always works.

A quick search of refinery construction costs yielded one recent report of a refinery planned for Kuwait of 615,000 bbl/day capacity, for \$19 billion. But that contract was canceled after opposition members objected that even though it was an international tender, it had not been done properly. (The companies were South Korean, Japanese, and American). The projected costs of the Nigerian project seem to be in line with the estimates for the proposed Kuwait construction.

I remember analyzing the cost of producing irrigated wheat in Nigeria while on a World Bank mission there in 1987. We found that it cost 10 times as much in foreign exchange to produce irrigated wheat in Nigeria as was saved by not importing the wheat. If they do come to pass, let's hope these oil refineries are a more efficient venture. But if they don't come to pass, this will reinforce what Peter Bosshard said in response to my post on Nigerian power plants: Because of financial and political spoils, signing a contract for a big infrastructure project is more attractive than actually building and operating it. This is one reason why so many deals are announced but then never materialize.

- **China assisted Lamu Port ‘dream’ on the way to reality.**

To many, the reality of what is coming up in Lamu town is too good to be true.

The obscure port along the Kenyan coastline is about to rival world famous ports and business hubs like Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Never again has Kenya seen a project of such magnitude unfold before their eyes. But the Government Chief Consultant of the Lamu-Addis Ababa-Juba-Kigali corridor project, Dr Mutule Kilonzo, says you can now hold your breath.

When it was first mooted in the early 1970s, the plan was way ahead of the two famous ports in Dubai, which were constructed in the late 1970s. Lamu was to be the ‘little Singapore’ of Eastern Africa.

In 1972, the Government, through the then Ministry of Power and Communications, embarked on a study deemed the most ambitious mission in the region.

But 38 years down the line, Lamu Port is still considered the most ambitious project, estimated to cost Sh1.2 trillion.

By the end of the 1960s, Kenya, then one of the most promising Third World economies, urgently required a second port to cement her position as the regional commercial hub.

Between 1972 and 1975, the Government carried out a study along Kenya's coastline to establish the best location for a new, bigger port. But that is as far as the project went, until last year when the current administration revived the idea.

Three decades

The key areas considered fit for a port included Shimoni in Kwale District, where Chinese vessels docked centuries ago at Wasini Island, Kilifi and Manda Bay, which is a few kilometres north of Lamu Island.

An enthusiastic Dr Mutule says today's team is not concerned with the location, since this was decided more than three decades ago.

The vision to connect Ethiopia, Southern Sudan, Uganda and Rwanda through the Port of Lamu is not new.

In fact, the Ethiopian Government constructed a highway linking Addis Ababa to the border town of Moyale back in 1977. Ethiopia has been waiting for Kenya to do the same since.

Lands Minister James Orengo says the Government has set aside 1,000 acres for the port's quay. The area is envisioned to become the heartbeat of a new metropolis in a few years. It will also be the nexus of the first ever trans-continental transport complex linking East to West Africa.

A standard gauge railway with bullet trains cruising at 160km per hour will be the hallmark of the network. It will run from Lamu to Garissa, Isiolo, Lokichoggio and finally Southern Sudan. The current train speeds in Kenya can only reach a maximum of 25km per hour, which is considered agonisingly slow for a modern economy.

The network will also provide linkages to Darfur. From Lokichoggio another line will branch off to Uganda and pass on to Bangui in Central African Republic from where it will head to Douala, in Cameroon, thus completing a land bridge between Eastern and Western Africa.

A transcontinental highway will run parallel to the railway envisioned to shorten the route between Asia and West Africa by a half. Once completed, the land bridge will save shippers the long and costly journey through the cape at the southern tip of Africa.

"The project will be in phases. The land bridge will make transporting cargo from Lamu to Douala Port in West Africa take only half a day, which is precisely 12 hours. The complex will rope Kenya to Uganda, Central African Republic, the DRC, Southern Sudan, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Rwanda in a seamless web where goods will be transported faster," says Kilonzo.

Economic boom

Currently, only South Africa, Egypt and Algeria have high-speed railway systems in Africa. But transcontinental railway systems are a new idea in Africa and the Lamu-Douala experiment will be a pioneering case study. The benefits, says Kilonzo, are mind-boggling for the people of the countries where the network will traverse.

"We are going to see an unprecedented boom of economics of conglomeration for the first time. We are also likely to see the emergence of a new city near Lamu that will be a major economic centre for the region," he says.

For a long time, land-locked Ethiopia has always wanted a sea route through Kenya. The current route through Djibouti is not feasible in the future because the port in Djibouti is shallow and small to cater for a population of 85 million people. It is this population Kenya targets through the envisioned Lamu Port. It is the same case for the 15 million people of Southern Sudan.

Even as the completion of the studies for the whole network is awaited by August, some project agencies have started work. The road linking Isiolo to Moyale, which is under construction, is a part of the project. The road from Garsen towards Garissa is also part of the project.

In addition to the port and the transportation network, another jewel of Lamu Port will be an oil refinery. Designed as the biggest and most sophisticated in the region, the modern refinery will be connected to a pipeline running to and from Southern Sudan.

Kenya and China have agreed to prioritise the port's construction as a pillar project under the Vision 2030. The two countries will appropriate modalities on financing arrangements to avoid any gaps on the resources required. This was agreed at the bilateral talks between President Kibaki and China's President Hu Jintao during Kibaki's recent visit to China. So far, the march towards the glittering reality looks unstoppable.

• **Zijin confident Congo deal will survive**

A ZIJIN Mining Group executive yesterday said he was confident that any legal "misunderstandings" surrounding its bid to buy copper mine developer Platmin Congo would be resolved.

Zijin vice-chairman Lan Fusheng said at the Mining and Asia Focus 2010 conference in Shanghai that the governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo and China would probably approve its joint 284m bid for Platmin Congo once a legal "misunderstanding" was resolved.

Zijin, China's largest gold producer, and state-backed China- Africa Development Fund had two days earlier announced a joint agreement to acquire Platmin Congo, which holds stakes in two copper-cobalt projects.

Congo's government, a shareholder in Platmin Congo through its Gecamines interest, said on Sunday the proposed transaction was illegal. Gecamines had a 32% stake in both Platmin's projects.

The mining minister's chief of staff, Alexis Mikandji Penge, said that since August last year the Congolese government had prohibited a partner in a joint mining venture in Congo from changing the partnership or transferring shares before the commercial production phase.

China-Africa Development "obtained the project first and they sought us to take over the development", Zijin's Lan said yesterday.

Congolese Mines Minister Martin Kabwelulu learned about the transaction from a story on the internet, said Dona Kampata, head of the mines ministry's technical committee for planning and co-ordination. "They need to come and talk to us," Kampata said on Monday.

Fusheng said in Shanghai he was confident the deal would materialise. "I believe this will eventually receive approval from Congo because the project needs investment." Bloomberg.

• **Chinese Support for Increased Rice Production**

The Mozambican Ministry of Science and Technology is envisaging dramatic increases in rice yields thanks to the support of Chinese scientists.

According to the National Director of Research and Innovation in the Ministry, Vasco Lino, that Chinese assistance could boost the productivity of Mozambican rice farmers from their current average of 1.2 tonnes per hectare to 10 tonnes per hectare (which would be an increase of 733 per cent).

Speaking to reporters on the occasion of the visit to Mozambique of the deputy governor of the Chinese province of Hubei, Li Xian Sheng, Lino said that for the past two years tests have been underway on a Chinese variety of rice, on 35 hectares in the southern province of Gaza, and the results are regarded as promising.

Lino said this experiment will be extended to other parts of the country in the 2010-2011 agricultural year. For his part, Li said that China will ask the Mozambican authorities for larger areas, on which the Chinese experts can work

"The results are good and we shall request more areas from the Mozambican government, so as to supply the entire Mozambican market", said Li.

Currently, Mozambique consumes around 600,000 tonnes of rice a year. Domestic rice production only covers 285,000 tonnes, while the remaining 315,000 tonnes are imported.

The Mozambican government hopes to overcome this rice deficit as from 2011, under its Food Production Action Plan. Government officials point out that Mozambique has 36 million hectares of potentially arable land, of which only five million hectares is under cultivation.

- **Most Chinese investors don't manufacture, only import**

Researchers from the Centre for Chinese Studies at the University of Stellenbosch have said that although many Chinese economic actors have secured licences to invest in Tanzania, most still continue to import Chinese-made goods into the country instead of producing locally.

The researches carried out by Senior Analyst Johanna Jansson, Research Fellow Christopher Burk and Tracy Hon from Centre of Chinese Studies and made available to The Guardian on Sunday shows that also there was a strong perception among the respondents that Chinese activities in Tanzania were slanted towards trade rather than investment.

It says that some respondents believe that this could be transient a strategy to test the market before establishing manufacturing operations.

On the other hand, the Chinese community in Tanzania is generally perceived as a group of diligent people who work hard to meet objectives, the study says.

"As mentioned, they are predominantly traders and have shared much of their trading skills with the local population. Some Tanzanian traders have even started importing goods directly from China, thereby bypassing the resident Chinese importers. These Tanzanian economic actors import technology to help improve economies of scale and this has enabled some technology transfer." The study report says.

However, several Tanzanian government representatives argued that they welcome Chinese firms bidding for infrastructure projects as this would broaden their range of prospective contractors and offer a cost effective alternative to Western ones.

"In terms of occupational safety, health standards and workers rights, a research carried out by Burke and Corkin in 2006 indicates that local Tanzanians from construction companies, factories and smaller traders (restaurants, retailers, etc) find that due to the country's labour law obligations, most citizens were paid sufficient wages by Chinese firms," the study shows.

The level of safety and health standards was also found to comply sufficiently with local labour laws, it says, adding that although more training programmes in skills and technology were needed, local labourers were gaining on-the-job training, particularly in machine operations.

The study further says that Chinese firms active in Tanzania prefer using local workers where possible as they are more accessible and incur less cost than Chinese expatriate workers.

For their part, representatives from Chinese firms argue that the main constraint to hiring many local labourers is the lack of appropriate skills, knowledge and experience. As regards the impact of Chinese development assistance, Tanzanian government representatives contacted by the researchers acknowledged the fact that China was assisting Tanzania a great deal in terms of financial assistance over the years. They also said that it was also recognised that follow-up support had been provided for the projects.

Also during the on-going research, the respondents expressed that strengthened follow-up assistance in terms of maintenance and rehabilitation for existing Chinese development aid projects, for example, Tazara railway and Urafiki textiles mill, would be of great use to the country.

"In terms of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) commitments made to Tanzania, it is difficult to quantify the developmental impact at this stage given that the projects are yet to be implemented," the research says.

As for the zero-tariff treatment of 466 African export items to China, the measure is perceived to have had little impact on the Tanzanian economic actors, the study says, adding that interviewed respondents last year cited the case of coffee which they said continue to suffer a large number of non-tariff barriers when entering the Chinese market. According to the respondents, more trade barriers were experienced in China in the areas of product-, health- and packaging standards, than is the case in terms of the customs and tariffs leveraged by the European Union.

Apart from that, it was furthermore acknowledged by Tanzanian stakeholders that a great deal has been done in terms of Sino-Tanzanian cultural exchanges, and that Mandarin is currently being taught at the University of Dar es Salaam.

However, it is perceived that increased cultural exchanges and knowledge of both Mandarin and Kiswahili would greatly increase understanding of both cultures and enable increased cooperation and integration between Chinese and Tanzanian communities, the study says.

In terms of the Chinese mode of engagement with Tanzanian stakeholders, several Tanzanian government officials noted that Chinese government and private sector representatives place importance on the President's office rather than the other levels of government including the relevant ministries and this was perceived by several respondents to be a challenge to effective engagement.

Tanzanian civil society representatives argued that they have not managed to establish relationships with representatives of Chinese government and private firms working in the country and that this remained a challenge to them.

It also noted that in December 1997, the China Investment and Trade Promotion Centre was established in Dar es Salaam to provide assistance in linking businesses in the two countries.

And as a result of this, according to Burke and Corkin, more than 85 Chinese-funded enterprises are active in Tanzania, and the number of Chinese entrepreneurs active in services such as construction, health and restaurants are ever-growing.

It was revealed by a Tanzanian government official during interviews that around 90 per cent of foreign construction firms presently operating in Tanzania are Chinese.

It also noted that in April 2008, Chinese President Hu Jintao and his Tanzanian counterpart Jakaya Kikwete met and discussed the possibility of Chinese investment in a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in the latter country as a key initiative to stimulate trade and employment creation.

• **Chinese investors to build cement factory in Mozambique**

The China Development Bank is to fund construction of a cement factory in Beluluane, in Mozambique's Maputo province costing US\$100 million, the director of the Centre for Investment Promotion said Monday in Maputo.

Mohamed Rafique said that construction work on the cement factory, a project promoted by Chinese investors that have obtained funding from the China Development bank via the China-Africa Development Fund, could begin within the next few days and that next week a government team would visit the location where the factory was to be set up.

Rafique also said that the new factory would have capacity to produce 1 million tons of cement per year and added that as well as regulating the price of cement on the Mozambican market, it could also supply some countries in Southern Africa.

The poor supply of cement and the high construction costs are two of the most serious obstacles to construction projects moving ahead, particularly those of the State.

The director of the CPI said that his institution had approved four investment projects for construction of cement factories in Southern Mozambique.

Amongst the interested parties there are investors from China, India and Tanzania, who now have a period of two years to launch their projects.

The Mozambican cement market is currently dominated by Cimentos de Moçambique – a Cimpor (Cimentos de Portugal) group company, which owns 82 percent of its capital, with the remaining 18 percent shared by the Mozambican state, insurance company Emose and railway company CFM.

Cimentos de Moçambique places some 500,000 tons of cement on the domestic market every year and has an estimated annual average turnover of some US\$83.8 million.

As well as the factory in Maputo province, Cimentos de Moçambique also has a unit in Dondo, Sofala province, and another in Nacala, in Nampula province.

The other, smaller, slice of the Mozambican market is shared by cement imported from neighbouring South Africa and some Asian importers.

- **Kenyan leader, head of Chinese bank discuss funding projects**

Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki on Monday held discussions with visiting Governor of China Development Bank Jiang Chaoliang in Nairobi where they discussed modalities of funding various projects in the country.

A statement issued after the meeting said the two discussed the modalities of funding various priority projects forwarded to the bank for consideration under the framework cooperation agreements signed with the government three years ago.

"Among the projects under consideration by the bank include Civil Servants Housing project, Tana ad Ewaso Nyiro Rivers Hydro Comprehensive project, development of the port of Lamu and Mombasa – Uganda New Gauge Railway line," the statement said.

During the talks, President Kibaki thanked the bank for funding development of a low and middle income housing project and Jay Ceramic Tile Factory, which were completed and commissioned last year.

He also acknowledged China's continued support for Kenya's efforts to improve on infrastructure and strengthen the foundations of the country's socio-economic development.

President Kibaki said Kenya and China enjoy cordial relations which continue to gain momentum over the years due to exchange visits at various levels.

The Chinese bank had earlier extended a 50 million U.S. dollars loan to Equity Bank, Kenya's largest bank by customer base.

The loan facility will go towards supporting small and medium enterprises in Kenya to grow to corporate companies.

Key beneficiaries of this funding are those involved in agro- processing for value addition for exports. The credit line will be spent on factory establishment and imports of machinery. "It is significant that Kenya and Equity bank becomes the first beneficiary of this SME fund for Africa. It reflects the growing relationship between Kenya and China," CDB chief Executive Officer and Governor Jiang Chaoliang said during the signing ceremony in Nairobi.

The facility is for a six year period and will be advanced to SMEs at interest rates of between 3 and 7 percent, making it the cheapest source of funding for sector in the country.

● **China's bank gives \$50 mln loan to Kenyan bank**

China Development Bank (CDB) on Monday extended a 50 million U. S. dollars loan to Kenya's largest Equity Bank.

The loan will be used to boost small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kenya.

Key beneficiaries of this funding are those involved in agro- processing for value addition for exports. The credit line will be spent on factory establishment and imports of machinery. "It is significant that Kenya and Equity bank becomes the first beneficiary of this SME fund for Africa. It reflects the growing relationship between Kenya and China", CDB Chief Executive Officer and Governor Jiang Chaoliang said during the signing ceremony in Nairobi.

The facility is for a six-year period and will be advanced to SMEs at interest rates of between 3 and 7 percent, making it the cheapest source of funding for sector in the country.

The signing of the facility is a culmination of years of study on the Equity Bank's model and how it can be replicated on rural China. On its part, Equity has been seeking funding and transfer of low cost housing technology and long term funding for SMEs.

The facility was signed in Nairobi today after three years of negotiation. "The signing signifies south to south cooperation and collaboration to address our common challenges," Jiang said.

The facility will allow Equity Bank advance long term development loans to the SMEs sector at affordable interest rates in a bid to spur the sector which plays a crucial role in the social economic development of the country "We are proud to be the first beneficiary of this support by CDB and will allow us grant our SME customers long term facilities for development at very affordable interest rates", Equity Bank chief executive Dr James Mwangi said.

Equity now becomes the first beneficiary of the Chinese 5 billion dollar fund for the development of small and medium enterprises in Africa.

The funding will address, lack of access to affordable credit cited as one of the key challenge facing the development of the SME sector in Kenya, thus stifling its growth and profitability.

2 Pan-African issues:

- **AFRICA: Local rice is nice**

"Local is best" for Africa, said a leading rice research centre as it announced on 21 May that it would focus on improving an indigenous species more than 3,500 years old to feed the continent's rice consumers.

The *Oryza glaberrima* rice species, found only in Africa, was better suited to the continent's hostile growing conditions than the Asian species, *Oryza sativa*, the only other species to adapt to Africa, said AfricaRice, a Benin-based intergovernmental research organization, also known as Africa Rice Centre.

"The growing conditions will become even more harsh as the impact of climate change unfolds, and the *Oryza glaberrima* is highly adaptable," said Koichi Futakuchi, an eco-physiologist at AfricaRice, one of two researchers developing the African species.

The decision to focus on *Oryza glaberrima* is quite significant, as AfricaRice has devoted the last decade to developing a new variety of rice called NERICA - an acronym for New Rice for Africa - from cross-breeding the African and Asian types.

"Our research shows that ... the African rice species is able to compete better with weeds, infertile soils, even with toxic levels of iron," said Futakuchi.

NERICA has had a fair amount of success - more than 80 NERICA varieties that could thrive in rain-fed conditions have been developed and adopted by farmers in about 20 African countries. The best NERICA varieties combine the stress tolerance of *O. glaberrima* with the high yield potential of *O. sativa*.

"African rice was initially ignored by mainstream research," said Futakuchi. "Later, when scientists realized that it had valuable characteristics, they began using it as a source for desirable traits to improve the higher-yielding Asian rice."

Although varieties of the African rice are still grown in small pockets on the continent, the species was abandoned by most African farmers, who preferred to grow varieties of Asian rice brought in by traders about 450 years ago, bringing the African species to the brink of extinction.

"But now, for the first time, we're reversing the gene flow, extracting desirable traits from the Asian rice and transferring them into the African rice," Futakuchi said.

Tewelde Egziabher, head of Ethiopia's Environment Protection Authority and a global campaigner for protecting biodiversity, welcomed the initiative on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity, saying: "It makes sense to start with work on the local [species], which are already adapted to local conditions." The introduction of foreign species was only justified if work on local species had been exhausted, without result.

In a paper by AfricaRice, Futakuchi's collaborator, Yoboué N'Guessan, cited two reasons for devoting attention to the African species: "I liked the taste so much that I didn't wait for the sauce! The second was, during trips I took to collect various rice varieties from farmers' fields in 1982, farmers told me, 'glaberrima is farmers' rice, sativa is for office workers'."

The African species still has problematic traits that reduce yields: the plants tend to fall over when the grain is ripe - known as lodging - and also suffer from shattering, or shedding ripe grain.

In 2009 AfricaRice began work on its entire *O. glaberrima* collection of 2,500 samples, which are being screened for major diseases and environmental stresses such as acidity, iron toxicity, cold, and salinity.

"I think it will take at least five years to have a line [of the rice variety] ready," said Futakuchi. There is a tremendous need to boost production, as Africa currently imports 40 percent of its rice needs - at an estimated US\$3.6 billion in 2008 - leaving most of the main rice-consuming countries with big import bills.

Rice production in sub-Saharan Africa increased by between 16 and 18 percent in 2008, and a further 4.5 percent in 2009, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). During the food crisis in 2007/08, rice production rose by 44 percent across the Sahel, and by a huge 241 percent in Burkina Faso.

The NERICA varieties led a boom in West African countries like Nigeria, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali and Togo, but Africa Rice noted that in the five years from 2002 to 2007, Uganda and Ethiopia also reduced their rice imports.

- **WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA: Ending the silence on violence in schools.**

Bullying, sexual violence and corporal punishment are still rife in West and Central African schools, according to an 18 May report which calls on governments to harmonize laws on child protection and education, and impose stricter standards on schools to reduce violence.

Violence against children hardly features in justice or governance debates, and governments focus more on women's rights than children's rights, say child protection agencies.

"The violence against children debate has been here for a while but there hasn't been sufficient follow-up, especially here in West Africa," West Africa UNICEF protection adviser Joachim Theis told IRIN. "You light a match and it doesn't always catch fire. Structures here are weak; here you can push and things don't always happen."

Violence in school leads to high drop-out rates, and reduces the chances of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on gender parity in primary and secondary schools being achieved, according to NGO ActionAid.

Violence can also destroy children's psychological well-being; impact their grades; and has health consequences, while sexual violence can also cause early pregnancy and affect children's future sexual behaviour, says the report entitled *Too Often in Silence: Addressing the Roots of School-Based Violence in West and Central Africa*, by NGOs Save the Children Sweden, ActionAid, and Plan International, alongside the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In Benin, Senegal, Central African Republic and Gambia, over half of primary school children were victims of corporal punishment in schools, according to studies. Evidence from Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia reveals Koranic students are at particular risk of being beaten - in Mauritania 76 percent of Koranic school teachers admitted they beat their students.

Sexual abuse occurs on the way to and from school, in school, and in teachers' houses, according to the report. Perpetrators are almost always male school staff or students while the vast majority of victims are girls, though boys are also abused.

"It's only girls"

Most educators are now aware of the problem of sexual violence against girls in schools, ActionAid's Education Research and Policy Coordinator Victorine Kemonou Djitrinou told IRIN. "But it's 'only girls' so people don't do much about it. Violence against girls it not always a priority. Girls are all alone."

There is little information on violence against children in general in the region, says UNICEF's Theis, and the evidence there is, does not portray girls' own experiences of sexual, psychological and physical violence, says ActionAid's education research and policy coordinator Akanksha Marphatia.

Schools tend to mirror surrounding social structures and relationships so solutions cannot be found in isolation, said the report. Violence against girls is linked to gender relations

in which male violence is sometimes accepted, as is female submission and passivity, it said.

UNICEF surveys in Benin, Togo and Mauritania have shown many parents support corporal punishment as an integral part of education; while some see sexual relations between students and teachers as a viable way for the child to get ahead, according to Theis.

Weak institutions, scattered laws

Partly because of these norms, the political will to tackle violence against girls is not high, said ActionAid's Djitrinou.

Furthermore, the justice, social affairs, women and development, and education ministries have separate policies and do not work together to stamp out violence.

Of the states in the region, only Ghana, Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo address school-based violence in their national education plans; just six West or Central African states have national codes of conduct for schools against sexual abuse and violence; while Southern Sudan is the only African state to have outlawed corporal punishment in schools, according to Save the Children Sweden's Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children's 2009 global report.

The ministries leading the fight are not always the strongest "and the institutional response is just not there," said ActionAid's Marphatia. National child protection systems are in general weak in West and Central Africa.

However, responsibility also lies with international policy-makers who have to date not yet stressed violence in schools, said ActionAid. Not a single MDG mentions violence.

Opportunities

The UN Girls' Education Initiative, which pushes MDG attainment, is currently meeting in Senegal and violence is one of its three central themes. [LINK](#) This presents an opportunity for specialists in education, women's rights and child protection to start working together, said.

These specialists are developing country action plans - albeit legally non-binding ones - on how to reduce violence in schools. "We need to come at this from all angles - legislation, standard-setting, setting up complaints mechanisms," he said.

Child protection agencies suggest these action plans include: Recommendations for schools to recruit more female teachers; improved teacher training on violence and children's rights; a push for governments to improve child protection systems by training legal professionals; and a start to the monitoring and reporting of violence against children.

International donors including the World Bank also have a "huge role" in insisting on compliance in reducing violence as part of their education aid packages, said Theis.

Several NGOs in the region are working with teachers' unions to develop codes of conduct. "We can't victimize teachers - only a small percentage of teachers are abusers," stressed Marphatia.

Save the Children and teachers' unions have developed a teachers' code of conduct in Côte d'Ivoire, which has been presented to the Ministry of Education; ActionAid has done the same in Ghana; while in Mauritania, religious groups have enacted a `fatwa' against corporal punishment in the school and home.

• **AFRICA: Ten countries desperately seeking doctors**

Shortages of medical staff have been identified as one of the major impediments to achieving the health-related UN Millennium Development Goals. For example, one of the poorest countries in the world, Mozambique, has just 548 doctors for a population of more than 22 million, according to the UN World Health Organization (WHO).

The WHO's baseline estimate for achieving the health-related MDGs is at least 23 health workers per 10,000 people - against an average of 13 in Africa. IRIN/PlusNews has compiled a list of 10 African countries - in no particular order - that are critically short of skilled personnel:

Chad - With less than one doctor for every 20,000 people and just four hospital beds for every 10,000, Chad has one of the worst health-worker shortages in the world. Many countries are bolstering their staff with community health workers, but according to WHO's World Health Statistics Report 2010 [http://www.who.int/whosis/whostat/EN_WHS10_Full.pdf], Chad has just 154 of these.

The country requires 300 percent [http://www.who.int/whr/2006/whr06_en.pdf] more health workers because of increased healthcare needs and a reduction in the medical workforce from HIV-related illness or death.

Burundi - Malaria is responsible for 40 percent of health-centre consultations and 47 percent of in-patient deaths in Burundi, but there is just one doctor per 34,744 people [http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccsbrief_bdi_en.pdf] and two nurses per 10,000.

The government provides free maternal and child healthcare [<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=59267>] and free treatment and care for people living with HIV, but the country's lack of skilled health professionals has severely hampered this programme.

Ethiopia - One of Africa's most populous nations, Ethiopia is extremely short of doctors, with less than one doctor for every 36,407 people.

Research [<http://www.human-resources-health.com/content/7/1/29#B3>] shows that Ethiopia's public health sector is losing as many as 26 percent of its physicians to private healthcare and to other countries.

To cope, the Ethiopian government has rolled out a "health extension worker" programme, [<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=72371>] training an estimated 30,000 lay health workers to improve primary services in rural areas. Today, there is one health extension worker per 2,500 people.

Tanzania - The Ministry of Health reported [http://www.moh.go.tz/documents/4.%20M%20&%20E_Health%20Sector%20Review%202007%20-%20Rubona.ppt] in 2007 that the country had 1,339 physicians, mostly in the Dar es Salaam region, which had at least one doctor per 10,000 population, six times the national average. Many regions have a ratio as low as 0.1 doctors per 10,000 people.

The country has trained "assistant medical officers" [<http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?Reportid=88194>] to cope with the shortage. There are about as many AMOs as there are physicians in Tanzania.

Somalia - Ravaged by civil war for nearly two decades, it is unsurprising that Somalia has one of the worst health-worker shortages in Africa. A poor road network and limited number of health facilities compounds the lack of access to healthcare.

A 2009 study [<http://www.malariajournal.com/content/8/1/100>] of three districts in south-central Somalia found just 11 doctors serving a population of about 600,000; the same population was also served by 161 nurses and auxiliary nurses and 32 community health workers.

Liberia - Still recovering from a 14-year civil war that ended in 2003, Liberia has just 51 doctors, according to the WHO.

Fewer than half of all births are attended by a skilled health professional, and maternal mortality is very high, at 994 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

NGOs such as Merlin [<http://www.merlin.org.uk/Where-we-work/Liberia.aspx>] are training midwives and community health workers to boost numbers, but the situation remains critical.

Sierra Leone - In March 2010, health workers in Sierra Leone won a six-fold pay rise from the government to cope with a likely deluge of patients seeking treatment following the introduction of free medical care

[<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=88948>] for pregnant women and lactating mothers and children under five.

Nevertheless, Sierra Leone has a serious health worker gap, with about three doctors per 100,000 people. The country is using Cuban and Nigerian doctors to fill part of the personnel gap, but concerns remain that the limited health workforce will not cope with the burden of free healthcare for large sections of the population.

Malawi - With an estimated two doctors for every 100,000 people and a 60 percent vacancy rate for [http://www.msf.org.za/docs/Help_Wanted_FINAL.pdf] nurses in rural areas, Malawi has turned to "task-shifting" - the use of less qualified health workers. A new cadre of health worker, called a health surveillance assistant (HSA), carries out tasks usually handled by highly trained physicians. In 2007, for example, 95 percent of 625,000 HIV tests were performed by non-medical counsellors.

Malawi's task-shifting seems to be paying off, but there has been some criticism of the short training period of 10 weeks for HSAs, and suggestions [<http://www.aidsmap.com/cms1277941.aspx>] that rigorous selection is being sacrificed in the attempt to meet recruitment targets.

Mozambique - The country has fewer than three doctors per 100,000 people, half of whom operate in the capital, Maputo. Political instability and economic structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s hit Mozambique's health system hard, forcing the closure of up to 50 percent of public health centres.

The country relies largely on "técnicos de medicina" - non-physician clinicians who undergo training for 30 months - to provide the clinical and managerial tasks carried out by doctors. It aims to have trained close to 1,000 técnicos by the end of 2010.

Mozambique has been able to significantly scale up its antiretroviral rollout [<http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=86813>] through técnicos, but a 2007 evaluation [<http://www.go2itech.org/what-we-do/operations-research-and-evaluation/quality-improvement/qi-program-examples/evaluation-of-the-training-of-tecnicos-de-medicina-in-mozambique>] found that their training had not adequately prepared them for clinical responsibilities, while existing health-system resources were inadequate for providing care. The government is re-evaluating the técnicos scope of practice.

Niger - The country has just 288 doctors for a population of 14 million and one of the worst health crises in the world. Niger is in the grip of a severe food crisis [<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88541>], and health centres are struggling to cope with high numbers of cases of severe malnutrition.

Almost 90 percent of health workers are in cities - leaving rural areas with 885 medical staff, according to 2008 Health Ministry data; 40 percent of all health workers operate in the capital, Niamey.

- **ECOWAS needs review of infrastructural policies**

The idea behind the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) over 30 years ago has not been fulfilled, Josephine Tapgun, the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, said yesterday in Abuja. Ms. Tapgun said the objectives of achieving trade and economic integration within a borderless sub-region remain largely unfulfilled.

Speaking at the opening of the 3rd West African Monetary Zone Ministers of Trade Forum in Abuja, Ms. Tapgun stated that external factors have contributed a great deal to this problem, hence the need for a review of the existing infrastructural policy of ECOWAS, to increase the volume of trade across the member nations.

"Issues that need to be addressed urgently include the policy and regulatory environment that will ensure transparency, predictability, and business and investment friendly environment," Ms. Tapgun said.

"There is, therefore, the need to critically examine our infrastructural policies with a view to enhancing intra-West African Monetary Zone trade," she said, insisting that ECOWAS members need to trade more among themselves to foster economic integration and ensure regional development.

For this to be achieved, she said, member countries have to demonstrate a strong political will to carry out the necessary social and economic reforms that will bring about effective regional integration, socio-economic growth, and development within the sub-region.

Developing the infrastructure both in hard and soft forms is germane for a credible settlement system. The soft infrastructural challenge is visible in the fact that dispute resolutions across borders, like payment problems, are nonexistent and there is no institutional framework for it.

No free movements

Also, capital movements are not free across borders, with all countries applying exchange controls; membership in monetary groupings and trade groupings pose problems, as there about 30 such groupings with an average of each country belonging to about four; markets are restricted to local banks; while economies of scale from regional single market is not available.

Equally, Temitope Oshikoya, Director General of West African Monetary Institute, remarked that the institute is assisting some African countries in developing trade policies, insisting that a good trade policy is of particular importance to promote trade integration in the region and enhance economic growth.

"WAMI, with support from its development partner, has developed trade policy for the Gambia. It is my fervent hope that when fully implemented, business will expand, jobs created, more revenue for government generated, and greater income for the people," Mr. Oshikoya said.

• **West Africa transport costs highest**

Transportation costs in West Africa are among the highest in the world only East Africa is higher, according to a study of one of the primary trade corridors in West Africa.

The route connecting Tema Port in Ghana to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso was used for the study. The study, centred on the reason for the high cost of transportation and what can be done to reduce it, the organisation concluded that reducing transportation cost will result in the increase of export and job creation.

For instance, a study of the cost of transportation along the Tema- Ouagadougou corridor shows that it cost \$4,800 (about N710, 400) to transport a container and it takes 13 to 22 days to transport container across the route while in comparison, it cost \$650 (about N96, 200)to move a container the same distance within the United States and it takes only five days.

Joe Lamport, Communications and Outreach Coordinator of West Africa Trade Hub, a USAID funded project that promotes trade across West Africa carried out the study alluded to a Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) report that said that West Africans spend almost 80 per cent of their income on food and much of it is spent on imported products: powdered and concentrated milk, rice, tomato paste among others and so if trucking costs were half what they are now for imports, consumer prices will likely be lower.

Reasons for high costs

While stating that the bottleneck and the cumbersome documentation process in the ports are veritable reasons for this high cost of transportation, the organisation also highlighted retrogressive regulation as another factor responsible for the hike in the cost of transportation.

West African Trade Hub identified the "one-third two-third rule" between Burkina Faso and Ghana as one of such regulatory hindrances.

"The rule stipulates that two-thirds of the cargo should be carried by Burkinabe trucks while one-third can be transported by Ghanaian trucks", said Mr. Lamport.

Experts have warned that regulations like these kill competitions and competition to clear goods at the port is a factor in the reduction of cost.

The report also pointed at the stripping of containers as another hiccup militating against the prompt clearance of goods at the ports. The delay trucker experience on the way to delivering their consignment often means that they sometimes might miss the ship meant to carry the goods and sure delays automatically means added cost due to damaged goods and additional port charges.

Cutting the cost

Lowering West Africa's transport costs - among the highest in the world - is critical to poverty alleviation and food security.

"High transport costs ultimately mean consumers pay more for goods at market," said Trade Hub Director Vanessa Adams. "High transport costs make it hard for exporting companies to compete in world markets. When they cannot compete, they do not create the jobs that West Africans need." The statement further suggested that implementation of the ECOWAS integrated regional market, the elimination of truck queuing rules as well as the elimination of excessive documentation for importing and exporting and the streamlining of procedures to reduce delays will reduce the transportation cost to the level that will spur economic activities leading to the reduction of poverty.

• **Experts blame Africa's poverty on research deficiencies**

Research is one of the core functions of higher education and can determine the reputation of a university.

Hence government, policy makers and donor agencies are concerned with the quality and impact that research from the institutions has on society. This is because research and innovation have been acknowledged as critical factors for fuelling long-term sustainable economic growth, generating employment, and alleviating poverty.

However, recently, the issue of research uptake has become very contentious as governments, communities and industries for whom research has been undertaken to address their needs prefer to have nothing to do with it.

One reason for this, according to a lecturer at the University of Jos in Nigeria, Jonah Akpa, may be the issue of who determines the priorities before the researchers go to work.

Communities, governments and industries have their priorities, which do not always align with a funding organisation's desire for investing in a research project.

"Researchers in the ivory towers look for grants to undertake research that will not only enhance their financial status but also earn them a promotion," Mr Akpa said. "But

regrettably, most governments in Africa don't fund research even though they have the greatest need for it."

Other reasons for the seeming disconnect between town and gown is the inability of researchers to communicate their research to governments and the communities effectively, the absence of relationships between researchers and the media, research undertaken mainly for purposes of promotion, or dubious study samples utilised as part of the research.

Michael Ranson and Sarah Bennett at The Alliance for Health Policy and System Research, which is part of the World Health Organisation, said in a recent publication that donor funding for health-system-financing research is inadequate and often poorly aligned with national priorities.

This position is supported by Goski Alabi of the Institute of Professional Studies in Ghana, who says it is important that research aligns with the priorities of national, community, university, and funding organisations to ensure that the results of such research are not shelved.

"Today, most research is undertaken not because it is targeted at addressing a problem but because there is available funding," she said. "So, it is important we have a change of mindset about what research is supposed to be and should result to." The African deficit Bassirou Bonfoh of the Swiss Centre for Scientific Research in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, says no country can develop without investing heavily in science and technology. Mr Bonfoh also said scientific research is instrumental in determining the rank of national economies.

"Unfortunately, most research is still funded by external funds and African governments still fail to use at least one per cent of their gross domestic product to support research as stipulated by the African Union. Africa cannot wait exclusively for outside solutions and funds to the problems faced by the continent," Mr Bonfoh said.

The position of African governments, according to Ogoh Alubo of the African Population and Health Research Center in Kenya, is informed by the lack of partnership between the policymakers and the researchers. "There is little evidence to show that policies in Africa are research-driven," Alubo says.

The position of African governments has caused sleepless nights for funding agencies and this has led to the several workshops to evaluate and advise on how donors can get governments, communities and industries to develop interest in the research they are funding.

Abel Olorunnisola of the University of Ibadan said it remains a surprise that, in spite of the huge investment in engineering education in Nigeria, the country is still grappling with a myriad of engineering challenges. "While the challenges exist, much of the research output from the universities lies fallow on laboratory shelves," he said.

In 2009, the UK's Department For International Development (DFID) convened a meeting of experts across the African continent in Ghana to discuss the issue. One of the findings was that research was not being prioritized. The group also acknowledged that there has been weak flow of communication between the media and researchers, and researchers and governments, resulting in each group working in isolation and with a lack of access to relevant and timely information.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC), a public entity created by the Canadian government to aid researchers in the developing world, is convinced that the creation of new knowledge remains vitally important to humanity's ability to grapple with challenges.

Linking research to need

Wallace Udoh, with the Nigerian ministry of Works and Housing, believes, however, that the application of the IDRC mandate has been limited to universities and research institutes.

"There is no way you will be able to affect or enhance the development of developing countries without aligning your priorities with that of the government of the day. Otherwise you are only interested in undertaking academic exercises whose outcome is of no use to society," Mr Udoh said.

At the recent INORMS 2010 Congress, a meeting of research managers from around the world that was held in Cape Town, South Africa where the issue of research uptake came to the fore, the conference participants stressed the need to align research funding organisation's priority with that of the applicable government, universities, and society for maximum impact.

South Africa's Minister for Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor, said it was a government's obligation and duty to invest in fundamental research.

"Business cannot do that. Business has to rely on governments to educate scientists and technologists; innovation depends on an educated workforce and to maintain the basic infrastructure of research at universities and research institutes," she said.

"It is governments who have to look to the long term and invest in basic research." she says.

Ms Pandor also said governments must lay down policies and standards that will promote research and innovation, adding that such innovations must be to social and economic benefits. Chris Nhlapo of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in South Africa, agreed that research must align with the economic activities of the region in which it operates.

“University research policy and strategy must align with national policies and strategies because society wants research to result in beneficial and measurable impact,” he said.

- **Africa urged to vet Latin American investors to curb drugs**

West African nations should do more to vet investors from Latin America, especially Colombia, to curb an influx of drug dealers posing as legitimate businessmen, a top British law enforcement officer said.

Over the last five years, Latin American cocaine-smuggling cartels have turned the unstable region into a transit point for about 40 percent of the 200-300 tonnes of cocaine destined for Europe each year, Neil Giles, deputy director of Britain's Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), estimated.

"There is lots of evidence of groups of Colombians arriving in countries in West Africa, with money, setting up small businesses," Giles said in an interview late on Thursday.

"But beware of Latin Americans bearing gifts is the message I am selling here," he said after a trip round the region.

"I know Africa is keen to have inward investment, and I understand that, but I would just encourage them to see what value they have derived from that investment over the last decade."

Giles said thousands of Latin Americans had come to the region, some of whom are using hotels and nightclubs as bases for operations such as overseeing the transit of jets packed full of cocaine.

The drug is worth some \$25,000 per kg in Africa but fetches around \$73,000 per kg once in Europe, he said.

"Experience has shown us that wherever flights arrive, we tend to discover there is a Latin American community," he said.

"I wouldn't seek to tar all Colombian or Latin American investment in West Africa. I'm just saying you need to ask more questions," he added.

In the past three years, Latin Americans have been linked to a series of cocaine seizures, all in excess of 600 kg, made in Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Mauritania.

International narcotics investigators say fishing lodges in Guinea Bissau have in the past provided a cover for the trade, which is seen benefiting from high-level protection in the tiny coup-prone state. The United States has named two of the country's senior military officers as drug dealers.

CONSTANTLY PLOTTING, AHEAD

Giles said that drug flights are running again after a pause of a year after several anti-drugs operations in 2008, though arrivals are more sporadic and not near 2007 levels, when one or two jets packed with cocaine would land in Africa every week.

A discovery in November of a burned-out jet in the Malian desert, which investigators think could have ferried some four tonnes of cocaine, has fuelled speculation that the drug is now plying ancient trans-Saharan smuggling routes too.

Some fear a spike in cocaine smuggling in the desert could help swell the coffers of al Qaeda-linked groups there.

Though Giles doubted the November incident was the only flight, he said most drugs appear to be sent on other routes, hidden in legitimate trade, such as timber or food exports.

European, U.S. and United Nations drug experts are trying to boost collaboration within the region, where the threat ranges from political instability to a rise in local consumption.

Giles said more work should be done on the threat cartels pose to the states. "I don't think anybody has done the work to understand how undermining of good governance this stuff is."

• **Time for an Afribond**

A nice quip from Henry Kirimania of The Cooperative Bank of Kenya and a reminder of just how much better placed Africa is now in terms of its debt burden than it once was and particularly in relation to what might now be regarded as the world's Heavily Indebted Formerly Rich Countries.

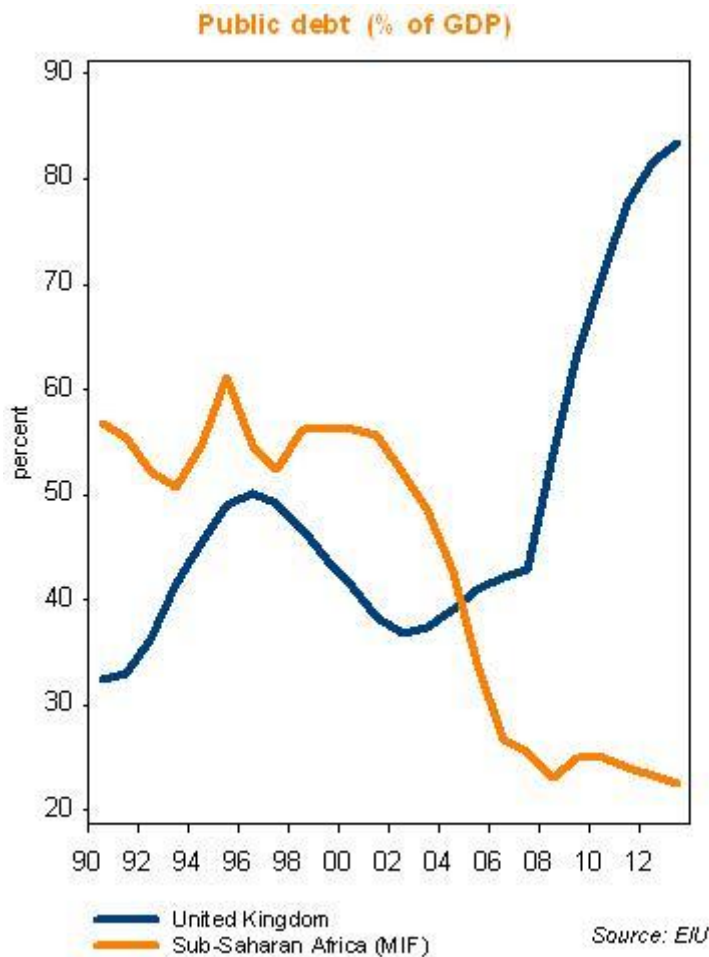
"It used to be that when you thought about highly indebted countries, you thought about those in our part of the world," Maria, head of South Africa's Absa Bank told the recent World Economic Forum on Africa. "You can't any longer."

By global standards, African debt has also performed fairly well during the crisis over Greece. Although the yield on Ghana's Eurobond spiked when concerns over Greece reached fever pitch before the EU and IMF safety net announced at the weekend, it has been on a steady downtrend and has fallen back somewhat this week.

Ghana, set to be the world's fastest growing economy next year after it starts pumping oil later in 2010, is especially well placed, but debt yields have been falling elsewhere in Africa too.

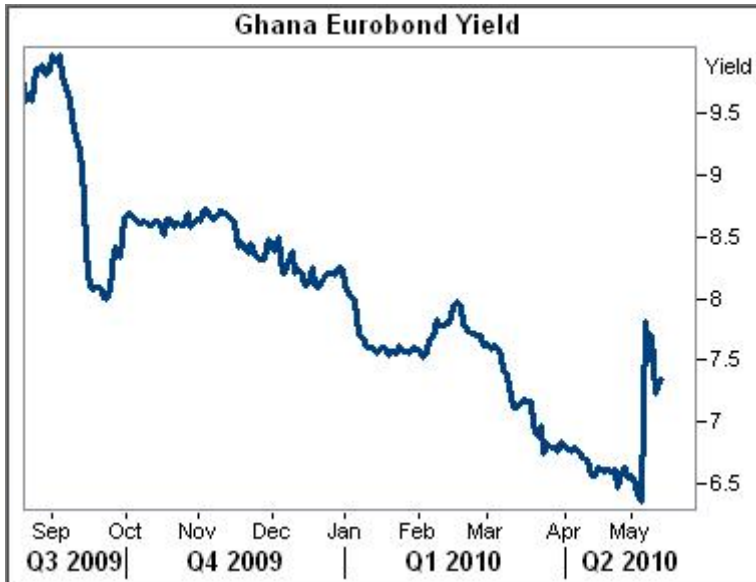
Rising commodity exports, helping to feed Asian demand, generally better economic management, increased political stability and technological change such as the explosion of mobile phone networks have all helped to put Africa on a sounder footing than it was before.

Many African countries were also among those that received debt relief as Heavily Indebted Poor Countries over the past decade, significantly reducing their indebtedness now.



That means they may have room to borrow. Although many African countries have plans for eventual Eurobond issues, following those by Ghana and Gabon before the global crisis hit, plans for issuing debt in foreign currencies appear largely on hold given the global market uncertainties.

But with borrowing needs driven up by government deficits and the need to build or repair shambolic infrastructure in much of the continent, the more advanced African states also have growing local debt markets to turn to – where they don't face the same currency risk if things turn against them.



“As you can see from the case of Greece, if the national savings rate is low and you are to borrow from abroad it has to be done carefully,” Donald Kaberuka, president of the African Development Bank told us.

- **African Challenges Top Assembly President's Talks With Cameroonian Leader**

The challenges and opportunities for Africa's peace and development were the focus of discussions between General Assembly President Ali Treki and Cameroonian President Paul Biya this week.

During the meeting yesterday in Yaoundé, the capital of the African nation, the two leaders emphasized that the continent's true potential must be enhanced.

At the invitation of Mr. Biya, Dr. Treki, whose official visit to Cameroon wrapped up today, took part in the country's 50th anniversary celebrations. Cameroon is one of 17 African countries that is marking five decades of independence this year.

Earlier today, the Assembly President attended a military and civilian parade commemorating Cameroon's golden jubilee.

In a speech at the start of an international conference on Yaoundé focusing on African development on Tuesday, he called on the continent to take measures to play a more active role in world affairs, highlighting the UN's historic role in the decolonization and independence of Africa.

At the same gathering, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro urged African nations to harness the continent's "boundless potential" to put an end to brutal conflicts and make headway on the road to economic and social development.

"Without durable peace, there will be no sustained development, and without sustained development, Africa will not attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)," Ms. Migiro said, referring to the targets to reduce poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy that world leaders have pledged to achieve by 2015.

In September dozens of world leaders are expected to gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York to chart the progress so far towards the MDGs and to spotlight the areas in which the most work still needs to be done.

In her keynote address to the Yaoundé conference, Ms. Migiro noted that Africa faces a number of challenges, including high rates of maternal and child mortality, lack of access to education, and the impact of climate change.

Africa also urgently needs an end to the brutal conflicts that have cost so many lives and destroyed so many hopes in recent decades, she added.

- **Export Zones to Boost Africa's Manufacturing Industry**

Export processing zones (EPZs) have mushroomed across Africa. Their logic is to attract export-oriented manufacturing investment to boost economies. EPZs, although they create controversy in certain circles, have been highly successful in Asia, central and Latin American countries. Is the attempt by Africa to follow suit bearing fruits?

African states, from Egypt in the north to Zambia in the south, have embraced export processing zones (EPZ) as a strategy to attract foreign investment. Also known as special economic zones, industrial development zones or free trade zones, the EPZ aims to attract export-oriented manufacturing investment by setting aside enclaves where investors receive a wide range of incentives and developed infrastructure.

They have been very successful in Asia. Industrialisation in countries such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore was propelled by implementing policies that promoted the creation of special investment and export processing zones.

China, for instance, established - between 1979 and 1988 - five major special economic zones (SEZs), and opened a further 14 coastal cities to investors. The strategy helped to attract foreign direct investment into industry and increased manufactured exports, ultimately creating GDP growth and employment.

While most nations were developing the foundations of an export-based economy which focused on the development of a manufacturing sector, Africa stagnated, relying on the

export of raw materials. But the trend is gradually changing with countries adopting strategies and policies that will improve their standing on the world economic stage.

The establishment of EPZs is one such strategy. A sweeping wave of EPZ legislation in the early 1990s enabled over 20 countries to establish zones which offer exemption from normal tax codes, custom, duty and labour restrictions. These exemptions have allowed businesses to flourish. Tax exemptions include:

Kenya provides EPZ investors with a 10-year tax holiday

Egypt offers entities operating in free zones a life-long exemption from all taxes

Mauritius' EPZs offer a flat 15% corporate tax rate and dividends tax free for 20 years

Cameroon's zones give investors 100% tax exemption for 10 years, followed by a 15% tax and free repatriation of profits. Investors also have "flexible labour laws", and an exemption from the standard wage classification scheme.

South Africa's industrial development zones (IDZ) offer direct links to an international port or airport, good infrastructure, a zero rate of VAT on supplies bought locally, latest ICT, and duty free importation of production-related raw materials and inputs.

Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia, Namibia, Mozambique and the Ivory Coast offer similar incentives packages.

However, attempts in Africa to follow on the successes of Asia in developing free trade zones for kick-starting industry and diversifying the economic base have seen less success. A number of factors including inadequate infrastructure and entrepreneurial capacity, institutional challenges, political aspects, and even investor ignorance, have made the implementation of most EPZs sluggish.

Ron Sandrey, a research associate at the Trade Law Centre (Tralac) says the concept can work in Africa, but must be implemented under the correct circumstances.

'With the right enabling environment the effects of SEZs can be positive and stimulate greater foreign exchange earnings, while promoting strong backward and forward linkages within national economies and regions.'

Sudir Chuckun, an advisor at NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), concurs: 'EPZ's should be part of a country's economic strategy and not the basis of strategy. Africa will first need to address internal challenges; otherwise we can not emulate Asia's success.'

For sceptics who doubt the likely success of the African EPZ strategy, its proponents have a two-word answer: Mauritius and Madagascar.

Mauritius has successfully relied on EPZs to fuel its development since 1970. The country has turned the entire island into an EPZ, offering EPZ status and benefits to exporters. The EPZ sector grew rapidly through the production and assembling of apparel, watches and jewellery. Since 1993, Mauritius adopted an explicit policy of promoting more technologically advanced production in the zones.

Mauritius, like the Asian giants, pursued an export-oriented strategy at a time when other nations were looking inward.

Will the global recovery renew interest in EPZs?

Recent data from Kenya's Export Processing Zones Authority (EPZA) shows the number of foreign firms applying to set up in the export processing zones has risen to 12 since August 2009, double the annual average of six in the previous years. EPZA estimates the new applications could add Sh2 billion to the value of Kenya's EPZ exports, which stood at Sh31.3 billion in 2008.

Acting EPZA chief executive Joseph Kosure attributes the increased investor interest in the EPZs to the ongoing global recovery, and also the marketing that Kenya enjoyed when it hosted the African growth and opportunities act (AGOA) conference in 2009. EPZA has received hundreds of enquiries from local and foreign investors since the Agoa conference.

Kenya's EPZ investors, like their counterparts operating in African countries which are signatories to the AGOA act, have benefited immensely from the Act that offers preferential, duty-free access to the US market for more than 6000 goods and services from Africa.

61% of companies in Kenya's 35 EPZ's are from China, UK, USA, Netherlands, Qatar, Taiwan and India. They offer downstream linkages by buying a wide range of local raw materials and goods, thereby promoting domestic businesses. Only 14% of the companies are fully owned by Kenyans.

Minimal local ownership in Africa's EPZs has been a big issue with domestic investors complaining some governments invest too much in the development of free trade zones and forsake to create infrastructure and more jobs for the same amount of money to benefit businesses outside the special zones.

'The idea is to strike a balance between infrastructure development in FTZ with a commensurate upgrade and maintenance for areas outside the zones. FTZ infrastructure plans should be integrated within the broader regional and national infrastructure master plans in order to complement the overall need and goal for infrastructure development,' says James Chakwizira, senior researcher in the built infrastructure department of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

Nigeria is serious about enticing domestic investors to set up in its free trade zones. Ananda Sivaram, the managing director of the Lagos Free Trade Zone Company, says domestic investors could avoid the bureaucratic bottlenecks associated with getting approvals from various government ministries and agencies if they invested in a free trade zone, where decent infrastructure exists.

'The biggest challenge facing developing economies today is that of infrastructure and Nigeria is not an exception. Investors are looking for production cost reduction, safety and security of their investment as well as good return on investment in their bid to break even and compete favourably in the international market. Nigeria's free zones will facilitate this.'

The Jebel Ali Free Trade Zone in the United Arab Emirates was key to that country's successful diversification of the economy from the oil sector. Nigeria, in a bid to boost its manufacturing capacity, followed suit and developed about 20 free trade zones (only 11 are functioning), most of them situated in ports so access to regional and international markets is maximised.

Now the focus of federal and state governments is increasingly on areas where every kind of infrastructural support is put in place to support manufacturers. A wide range of tax holidays, customs incentives and other special concessions apply to investors operating in the FTZs, especially if they use locally sourced raw materials and export the end product.

Ten years after they were born, South Africa's five industrial development zones continue to attract investment. Although the country is a favourite investment destination, many investors have kept away from the IDZs due to the government's refusal to back down on labour regulations.

A 2008 paper on the Coega IDZ authored by Vanessa Tang says South Africa could easily outshine Mauritius because of its good infrastructure and existence of some incentives Mauritius did not offer. Tang opines South Africa will have to build a good brand reputation to match Mauritius in order to attract IDZ investors. The paper advocates for an IDZ policy that promotes economies of scale and innovation. Local businesses neighbouring the IDZ's have been the biggest beneficiaries of the infrastructure development in the zones.

Lower taxes, lower wages?

While incentive packages and infrastructure networks have acted to pull investors to EPZs, the chief attraction has been cheap labour.

'Particularly of concern in terms of negative effects has been the "race to the bottom" theory. Neighbouring countries lower their standards in terms of labour regulations and investment laws to compete for special economic zones investment,' says Sandrey.

A report he co-authored with Hannah Edinger for the African Development Bank warns competition to attract Chinese SEZ investment could threaten development of countries, including the deterioration of labour standards, progress towards regional integration and cooperation initiatives.

China has invested heavily in Africa's special economic zones, as well as the manufacturing sector, relocating factory work from Asia to start-up projects in Zambia, Nigeria, Mauritius and Ethiopia in export processing zones.

EPZs growing the manufacturing and services sectors

Until recently, very little diamond polishing and cutting has been based in Africa, although it is home to five of the top seven global diamond producers.

Botswana, the world's largest producer of diamonds, was determined to get more cash for its bling and insisted on the development of a local processing industry as a pre-condition for awarding mining licences. Over 10 manufacturing factories are now in operation. The country is competing with processors in India, and has added a good percentage to the value of its exports.

Botswana's budding diamond processing industry is one example of efforts across Africa to boost the manufacturing industry. Pockets of success include Kenya's horticulture and Lesotho's garments industry.

Implementing policies and reforms to attract foreign direct investment into manufacturing industries can be complex to establish throughout a whole country. Sub-Saharan Africa, unable to fully develop its infrastructure, has focused on creating EPZs where every kind of infrastructural support is put in place to support manufacturers.

The result has been a burgeoning manufacturing industry, made profitable by a huge domestic market and a growing export market.

• **New Colonialism - Pentagon Carves Africa into Military Zones**

Last year the commander of US African Command (AFRICOM), General William Ward, said the Pentagon had military partnerships with 35 of the continent's 53 nations, 'representing US relationships that span the continent'.

That number has increased in the interim.

As the first overseas regional military command set up by Washington in this century, the first since the end of the Cold War and the first in 25 years, the activation of AFRICOM, initially under the wing of US European Command on 1 October 2007 and then as an independent entity a year later, emphasises the geostrategic importance of Africa in US international military, political and economic planning.

AFRICOM's area of responsibility includes more nations - 53, all African states except Egypt, which remains in US Central Command, and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara), a member of the African Union but which the US and its NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) allies recognise as part of Morocco, which conquered it in 1975 - than any of the Pentagon's other Unified Combatant Commands:

European Command, Central Command, Pacific Command, Southern Command and Northern Command (founded in 2002).

The US is alone in maintaining regional multi-service military commands in all parts of the world, a process initiated after the Second World War as America pursued its self-appointed 20th century 'manifest destiny' as history's first worldwide military superpower.

Until 1 October 2008 Africa was overwhelmingly in the European Command's area of responsibility, with all African nations assigned to it except for Egypt, Seychelles and the Horn of Africa states (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan) overseen by Central Command, and three island nations and a French possession off the continent's eastern coast (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Reunion) placed under Pacific Command.

The month before AFRICOM began its one-year incubation under US European Command in 2007, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Ryan Henry said: 'Rather than three different commanders who have Africa as a third or fourth priority, there will be one commander that has it as a top priority.'

The Pentagon official also revealed that AFRICOM 'would involve one small headquarters plus five "regional integration teams" scattered around the continent' and that 'AFRICOM would work closely with the European Union and NATO', particularly France (a member of both), which was 'interested in developing the Africa standby force'.

The US Defense Department official identified all the key components of African Command's role and adumbrated what has transpired in the almost three-year interim: By subsuming nations formerly in the areas of responsibility of three Pentagon commands under a unified one, the US will divide the world's second-most populous continent into five military districts, each with a multinational African Standby Force (ASF) trained by military forces from the United States, NATO and the European Union.

Later the same month, the Pentagon confirmed its earlier disclosure that AFRICOM would deploy regional integration teams 'to the northern, eastern, southern, central and western portions of the continent, mirroring the African Union's five regional economic communities...'

The Defense News website detailed the geographic division described in Defense Department briefing documents issued in that month: 'One team will have responsibility for a northern strip from Mauritania to Libya; another will operate in a block of east African nations - Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Madagascar and Tanzania; and a third will carry out activities in a large southern block that includes South Africa, Zimbabwe and Angola ... A fourth team would concentrate on a group of central African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Congo [Brazzaville]; the fifth regional team would focus on a western

block that would cover Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Niger and Western Sahara, according to the briefing documents.'

The five areas correspond to Africa's main Regional Economic Communities, starting in the north of the continent:

- The Arab Maghreb Union: Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia
- The East African Community (EAC): Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda
- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo
- The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS): Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa), Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda and Sao Tome & Principe
- The Southern Africa Development Community: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Africa's far northeast, in and near the Horn of Africa, is in a category of its own, having long been subordinated to the US's Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) based in Djibouti and where the Pentagon has approximately 2,000 personnel from all four branches of the armed services. The Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa area of operations takes in the African nations of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda as well as Yemen on the Arabian peninsula. In addition to Seychelles, the CJTF-HOA is expanding its purview to include Comoros, Mauritius and Madagascar in the Indian Ocean.

Three years ago it was reported that the Pentagon had already 'agreed on access to air bases and ports in Africa and "bare-bones" facilities maintained by local security forces in Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia'. That is, in northern, eastern, western, central and southern Africa.

The US has maintained its military base in Djibouti, Camp Lemonnier, since 2003, established a naval surveillance facility in Seychelles last autumn, and has access to base camps and forward sites in Kenya, Ethiopia, Morocco, Mali, Rwanda and other nations throughout the continent.

AFRICOM, as noted above, plans a central headquarters on the continent - its current headquarters remains in Stuttgart, Germany, although Djibouti's Camp Lemonnier functions as a de facto one in Africa - with five regional satellite outposts in northern, southern, eastern, western and central Africa.

The African Standby Force is nominally under the control of the African Union, but its troops are being trained and directed by the US, NATO and the military wing of the European Union.

The website of the African Standby Force contains links to the following sites:

- ASF Headquarters (Addis Ababa)
- Eastern
- Western
- Southern
- Central
- Northern.

The African Union's secretariat, the African Union Commission, is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Ethiopia is also one of the nations - Liberia and Morocco are others - that has been discussed as a potential site for AFRICOM's main headquarters on the continent.

Each of the five geographical units listed above is to supply a contingent of up to brigade size (4,000-5,000 troops by NATO standards) for the African Standby Force that is projected to be launched this year.

Two days before AFRICOM was established on 1 October 2007, the American armed forces newspaper Stars and Stripes reported that 'The command, scheduled to become operational this week, will focus much of its activity on helping to build the fledgling African Standby Force.

'It is hoped the force, being organized by the Ethiopia-based African Union, or AU, will be ready by 2010. It would consist of five multinational brigades based in the giant continent. Each brigade would perform missions in its given region, such as peacekeeping when the need arose.

'Gen William E. Ward, nominated to become the first AFRICOM commander, last week told the US Senate in writing that US troops would help the brigades come to life.' Ward, earlier head of NATO's Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia in 1996, said in his own words: 'AFRICOM will assume sponsorship of ongoing command and control infrastructure development and liaison officer support. It would continue to resource military mentors for peacekeeping training, and develop new approaches to supporting the AU and African Standby Forces.'

This February a NATO website detailed the North Atlantic military bloc's role in complementing AFRICOM efforts to build the African Standby Force:

'NATO began providing support to the AU Mission in May 2005 based on specific requests from the AU. NATO nations supported [the] AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) by providing airlift for 32,300 personnel ... NATO continues to support the AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM) through the provision of strategic sea and air-lift for AMISOM Troop Contributing Nations on request. The last airlift support occurred in June 2008 when NATO transported a battalion of Burundian peacekeepers to Mogadishu.

'Joint Command Lisbon is the operational lead for NATO/AU engagement, and has a Senior Military Liaison Officer at AU HQ in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. NATO also supports staff capacity building through the provision of places on NATO training courses to AU staff supporting AMISOM, and support to the operationalisation of the African Standby Force - the African Union's vision for a continental, on-call security apparatus similar to the NATO Response Force.'

The NATO Response Force (NRF) completed what was described at the time as its final validation in the two-week, 7,000-troop Steadfast Jaguar military exercises in the African island nation of Cape Verde in 2006.

Africa was the testing ground for the NRF and the NRF is the model for the African Standby Force:

'Since June 2007, NATO has assisted the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) by providing airlift support for AU peacekeepers. This support was authorized until February 2009 and the Alliance is ready to consider any new requests from the AU. NATO also continues to work with the AU in identifying further areas where NATO could support the African Standby Force.

'NATO is also providing, at the AU's request, training opportunities and capacity building support to the AU's long term peacekeeping capabilities, in particular the African Standby Force.'

Since the Berlin Plus agreements between NATO and the European Union in 2002, the military components of both organisations not only overlap and complement each other, but are being integrated at a qualitatively higher level for overseas missions like those in and off the coasts of Africa.

Three years ago French General Henri Bentegeat, then chairman of the European Union Military Committee, met with EU defence ministers in Germany and an account of his comments included: 'The European Union's drive for a stronger global military role includes an upgrading of ties with the United Nations, NATO and the African Union.' In addition to last year's military mission in Congo and logistical help for African Union forces in Darfur, Bentegeat said the EU wanted to help an ambitious AU programme to create a standby force for peacekeeping missions.

Even before AFRICOM was activated as a separate military command in the autumn of 2008, US European Command was conducting large-scale multinational military manoeuvres in various regions of Africa to train units for the five regional brigades that will form a unified, continental African Standby Force.

Starting in 2006 US European Command (and subsequently Africa Command) has conducted annual Africa Endeavor multinational communications interoperability exercises - frequently in nations on the strategic Gulf of Guinea - with the participation of the armed forces of African, NATO and European Union nations. Africa Endeavor 2007 was held in Ghana and the contributing countries were the US, Algeria, Angola, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Gambia, Lesotho, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sweden, Uganda and Zambia. It was jointly run by US European Command, US Central Command and the nascent US Africa Command.

'AE [Africa Endeavor] fosters better collaboration in the Global War on Terrorism and supports the deployment of peacekeepers in Sudan and Somalia.

'Furthermore, AE assists in establishing critical communication links to enhance the African Standby Force's developments in command, control, communications and information systems (C3IS) and strengthens national, regional, continental and partner relationships...'

Africa Endeavor 2008 was held in Nigeria and included military personnel from 22 African and European nations as well as the US.

'During the course of the exercise, participating nations and organisations also continued their efforts to develop standard practices and procedures for the African Union and its African Standby Force.'

In 2005 the US launched the first of regular Flintlock multinational military exercises to initiate and expand the Pentagon's Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), formed in the same year, to train the military forces of Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Morocco, Nigeria and Tunisia. Washington's NATO allies Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain are also involved in the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative.

The exercises are run by US Special Operations Command Europe. In 2007 NATO announced that its Special Operations Coordination Center would be headquartered at the same Kelley barracks on the US base in Stuttgart where AFRICOM headquarters are located.

An account of the initial 2005 operation divulged that 'The US Government reportedly plans to spend \$500 million over five years to make the Sahara Desert a vast new front in its war on terrorism ... During the first phase of the program, dubbed Operation Flintlock,

700 US Special Forces troops and 2,100 soldiers from nine North and West African nations [participated].'

This year's 22-day Flintlock 2010, launched on 2 May, includes 600 US special forces and 150 counterparts from Britain, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Spain.

'The objective of Flintlock 10 is to develop military interoperability ... Centred in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, but with tactical training conducted in Senegal, Mali, Mauritania and Nigeria, Flintlock 10 will begin 2 May and end 23 May, 2010 ... Flintlock 10 looks to build upon the successes and lessons learned during previous Flintlock exercises, which were conducted to establish and develop regional relationships and synchronisation of efforts among the militaries of the Trans-Saharan region.

'This exercise will take place in the context of the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP). Supported by the US Africa Command (USAFRICOM) and the Special Operations Command (SOCAFRICA), the exercise will provide military training opportunities...'

AFRICOM recently announced that the Special Operations Command Africa 'will gain control over Joint Special Operations Task Force-Trans-Sahara (JSOTF-TS) and Special Operations Command and Control Element - Horn of Africa (SOCCE-HOA)', to centralise special forces activities in Africa.

Efforts to create the proposed African Standby Force brigade in the north of Africa have floundered for several reasons. Egypt is not a member of the Maghreb Union nor is it in AFRICOM's area of responsibility. Libya is one of the most vocal opponents of AFRICOM. There is residual tension between Algeria and Morocco over Western Sahara, which Algeria recognises as an independent nation. But Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia are all members of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue partnership program.

AFRICOM's plans for regional military intervention contingents are proceeding more favourably in the east, west and south. In June of 2008 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) conducted a military exercise, Jigui 2008, in Mali with its 15 member states, and 'for the first time, the regional force exercise involved the African Union, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade based in Denmark (SHIRBRIG) and the Ethiopia-based Eastern African Standby Force (EASTBRIG).

All the exercises were supported by the host governments as well as France, Denmark, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the European Union.

'Jigui 2008 is consistent with previous training programmes of ECOWAS and is within the framework of the African Union (AU) Standby Force, which seeks to have ready by 2010 one force by each of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa.

'The ECOWAS target is to create a 2,770-man Task Force of the 6,500 troops of the regional force which will be available under the control of the AU.'

A year before Senegal hosted military manoeuvres with several other West African nations - Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, the Republic of Guinea (Conakry) and Mali - to 'test the [troops'] deployment ability' with military aircraft, vehicles and ships provided by France 'ahead of the planned creation of an ECOWAS standby force'.

The participating states were trained to 'form the western battalion of the 6,500-men intervention force which ECOWAS wants to set up by 2010.

'Army chiefs of ECOWAS member countries agreed in June 2004 to create the permanent 6,500-man force, including the 1,500-strong rapid reaction unit for troubleshooting missions.'

Jigui 2009 was held in Burkina Faso with the participation of US Army Africa and the Vicenza, Italy-based army component of AFRICOM.

Last month ECOWAS held a field training exercise in Benin, Exercise Cohesion Benin 2010, which 'aimed to evaluate the operational and logistics readiness of the Eastern Battalion of the ESF, which is part of the overall preparation for the operationalisation of the African Standby Force by December 2010'.

In October of last year the Kenyan press reported on Western involvement in building the African Standby Force brigade at the eastern end of Africa:

'Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish officers will assist the region in the ongoing establishment of a united military force to deal with conflicts on the continent.

'Once functional, the East African Standby Brigade (EASBRIG) will be deployed to trouble spots within 14 days after chaos erupts, to restore order ... The brigade will have troops from 14 countries.

'The experts from the European countries ... are based at the EASBRIG headquarters, at the Defence Staff College in Karen, Nairobi.

'Vice-Chief of General Staff Julius Karangi said the foreign experts would help fast-track the process of setting up the standby brigade.'

EASBRIG consists of troops from Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, and through the Eastern African Standby Brigade Coordination Mechanism is moving toward the consolidation of the eastern wing of the African Standby Force.

The East African Standby Brigade is to be headquartered in Kenya, and last November a field training exercise was held for it in Djibouti where the US has its main military base

in Africa and France has its largest anywhere abroad. A Rwandan news source wrote of it months afterward: 'The historical exercise brought together approximately 1,500 troops, police and civilian staff from 10 countries working side-by-side for the first time.' The most immediate site for the use of the East African Standby Brigade is Somalia, where member states Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Kenya are already involved. EASBRIG will also be available for operations in Sudan, Congo and the Central African Republic, as well as against Eritrea. In March of last year AFRICOM chief General William Ward 'cited three areas of current conflict on the continent, including border disputes between Eritrea and Djibouti on the Horn of Africa and in North Africa [with] the Western Sahara, and clashing in the Democratic Republic of Congo'.

Speaking of the command he heads, Ward added, 'the United States was able to lend assistance to Uganda, Rwanda, Congo and to a lesser degree ... the Central African Republic.'

The European Union, already involved in the first naval operation in its history, European Union Naval Force Somalia - Operation Atalanta, in the Horn of Africa, has deployed a military mission to Uganda to train 2,000 Somali troops to defend the Western-backed Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu.

AFRICA PARTNERSHIP STATION: US WARSHIPS PATROL AFRICAN COASTS

In recent years US Naval Forces Europe-Africa has developed the Africa Partnership Station (APS) as a naval component of AFRICOM. Its first deployment took the APS to Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Senegal, Sao Tome & Principe, and Togo - all on the Gulf of Guinea except for Senegal, which lies to the north of it.

In the same year, 2007, NATO's Standing Maritime Group 1, with one warship each from Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and the US, started a circumnavigation of Africa with stops in the Gulf of Guinea and ending with 'exercises in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Somalia...'

At the time Admiral Henry Ulrich, commander of US Naval Forces Europe, said: 'The Global Fleet Station concept is "closely aligned" with the task to be provided by the still-developing US Africa Command', and later announced the departure of the USS Fort McHenry and the High Speed Vessel Swift for a seven-month deployment to the Gulf of Guinea in November of 2007 as part of the Navy's Global Fleet Station programme. The Africa Partnership Station is one of several Global Fleet Stations recently set up by the US, others being assigned to the Caribbean Sea and Oceania. 'As a dock landing ship, the Fort McHenry is designed to help get US personnel onto "hostile shores", according to the Navy.'

Phil Greene, director of Strategy and Policy, Resources and Transformation for US Naval Forces Europe, added that the USS Fort McHenry would have a multinational staff,

'partnering with nations such as France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal and others who have an interest in developing maritime security in that region'.

In fact the USS Fort McHenry first arrived in Spain 'to take on passengers from several European partners - Spain, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Germany, among them - before heading to the Gulf of Guinea', where it was joined by the High Speed Vessel Swift to 'transport students as well as trainers during visits to Senegal, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe'.

In 2007 US warships visited Mozambique for the first time in 33 years and Tanzania for the first time in 40.

As part of Africa Partnership Station port visits last year, the guided-missile destroyer Arleigh Burke travelled to Djibouti, Kenya, Mauritius, Tanzania and South Africa, in the last case holding a week of joint exercises with one of the nation's warships.

In February of 2009 'for the first time the US Navy [had] warships on each side of the African continent as part of Africa Partnership Station's ongoing teaching mission with African nations.' To wit, a frigate in Mozambique, Kenya and Tanzania and an amphibious transport dock in Senegal.

The month before a US frigate became the first navy warship to anchor off Equatorial Guinea's mainland city of Bata 'as part of the Navy's Africa Partnership Station initiative', after visits to Cape Verde, Senegal, Benin and Sierra Leone on its way to Tanzania and Kenya.

The US chargé d'affaires in Equatorial Guinea was quoted as offering one reason for the visit: 'It's the third largest oil and gas-producer in sub-Saharan Africa, with a significant foreign investment footprint...'

'The October 2007 initial deployment of the Africa Partnership Station (APS) to the Gulf of Guinea and the coincident rollout of A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower signalled a strong American commitment to leveraging US sea power ... The APS is a Global Fleet Station (GFS) sea base designed to assist the Gulf of Guinea maritime community in developing better maritime governance ... The Global Fleet Station, born out of a need for military shaping and stability operations ... is a proven concept for this mission in such areas as the Gulf of Guinea and the Caribbean basin.'

Currently AFRICOM is leading the Phoenix Express 2010 maritime counter-insurgency exercise in the Mediterranean Sea with Morocco and Senegal among other African nations.

Paralleling NATO's almost nine-year Operation Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean, which patrols the northern coast of Africa from the Suez Canal to the Strait of Gibraltar, the US Navy now regularly roams the African coastline from where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic Ocean down to the strategic oil-rich Gulf of Guinea and all the way

south to Cape Town, then north again along the entire Indian Ocean coast to the Red Sea. Africa is encircled by US and NATO warships.

PENTAGON BUILDS SURROGATE ARMIES TO CONTROL AFRICA REGION BY REGION

On the mainland, the Pentagon has transformed the armed forces of Liberia, Rwanda, Uganda and Ethiopia into military surrogates on both ends of the continent. Since 2006 'a US State Department-led initiative ... has completely rebuilt the military in Liberia', according to AFRICOM.

Last October the commander of US Army Africa, Major General William B. Garrett III, visited Rwanda (whose military is a US and British proxy) and 'stressed that the US army is interested in strengthening its cooperation with the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF)'. Garrett confirmed that the US was ready to send more advisers and trainers for the Rwandan army and added, 'Likewise, we hope that the Rwandan Defence Forces can also participate in our exercises. So we are hoping to increase the level of cooperation between the US and the Rwandan defence forces.'

Earlier in the year AFRICOM's General Ward also visited Rwanda, where he 'met with Rwandan defence leaders and watched displays of Rwandan Defense Force (RDF) capabilities during a two-day visit April 20-21, 2009'

Late last year Ward visited Morocco, a US military partner for several decades, where he had paid two visits the preceding year, and 'discussed bilateral military cooperation and opportunities to strengthen partnership between the Royal Armed Forces and the US Army'.

Recently US marines trained Moroccan troops in Spain ahead of 12-nation naval manoeuvres in the Mediterranean Sea.

On 28 April this year Ward paid his third visit to Botswana, 'where he discussed ongoing regional security efforts and potential future military-to-military activities with the BDF [Botswana Defence Force] ... The BDF and US military conducted 40 cooperation events together in 2010.'

The following day the AFRICOM chief paid his first visit to Namibia where 'he met with Namibia's National Defence Force officials to discuss potential future cooperation activities'

On 27 April Brigadier General Silver Kayemba, chief of training and operations for the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF), visited Washington to meet with Major General William B. Garrett III, commander of US Army Africa.

The Ugandan general was quoted saying on the occasion: 'This visit strengthens our relationship with the US Armed Forces, particularly with US Army Africa. We are looking forward to even closer cooperation in the future.'

Under an Africa Partnership Station programme, a 130-troop Security Cooperation Marine Air Ground Task Force has been training military forces in Ghana, Liberia and Senegal. The marine commander in charge, Lieutenant Colonel John Golden, said: 'This is the cutting edge of phase zero counterinsurgency', an aspect of 'military-to-military training in a very austere environment in areas where there hasn't been a lot of US military presence in the last 235 years.'

A report by the Stars and Stripes on 2 May disclosed that 'At a remote military base in the jungle city of Kisangani, an elite team of US troops is attempting to retrain a battalion of Congolese infantrymen.'

The feature laid emphasis on the humanitarian facet of the operation, as reports on AFRICOM activities generally do, but also contained these excerpts:

'There are economic and strategic incentives to bringing more security to the Congo, which is rich in natural resources such as cobalt, a key component in the manufacturing of cell phones and other electronics. The country contains 80 percent of the world's cobalt reserves ... An April 2009 report to Congress by the National Defense Stockpile Center made clear that ensuring access to mineral markets around the world is of vital interest to national security.'

The US is not dragging almost every nation in Africa into its military network because of altruism or concerns for the security of the continent's people. AFRICOM's function is that of every predatory military power: The threat and use of armed violence to gain economic and geopolitical advantages.

'EU Subsidises Companies Guilty of Illegal Fishing'

The European Union has for years been paying subsidies to the tune of one billion euro annually to industrial fishing companies based in its member states, including companies that have been caught fishing illegally in African waters.

"The fact that the EU pays subsidies to vessels fishing in African waters is already a problem because, by doing so, European taxpayers are exacerbating poor African people's difficulty to sustain livelihoods," Isabella Loevin, member of the European Parliament's (EP) fisheries committee, told IPS.

"But that the subsidies go to European vessels violating international law is highly embarrassing and immoral," Loevin added.

Fishsubsidy.org, a London-based watchdog group, compared records of 42 court convictions with data on EU fisheries subsidy payments. The study focused on two major EU fishing nations, Spain and France.

Vessels were caught violating national or international laws on fishing in the east central Atlantic Ocean region in African waters where, according to several environmental organisations, illegal fishing is the most rampant in the world.

One prominent beneficiary of EU subsidies is the Spanish fishing company Vidal Armadores, which received at least 2,8 million euros in financial support in 2004 and 2005. In 2004, vessels of Vidal Armadores were caught with some 24 tons of illegally fished patagonian toothfish.

Two years later a U.S. court sentenced the company's owner, Antonio Vidal, to a suspended sentence of four years and a fine of 400,000 dollars.

The EU also paid substantial subsidies to the Mediterranean port of Sète, base of the French blue fin tuna (BFT) purse seiners. This French fleet is considered the largest operating in the Mediterranean Sea, including in Libyan waters. Environmental groups estimate that illegal overfishing of BFT in the Mediterranean has put the species on the brink of extinction.

The Fishsubsidy.org study reveals that 36 law-breaking vessels received more than 13.5 million euro in EU subsidies between 1994 and 2006. Five of the vessels on the list received more than one million euro each in EU subsidies.

The vessels' owners have been convicted of serious infringements ranging from logbook misreporting and capturing fish below the minimum size to the use of illegal fishing gear and exceeding quotas.

Loevin said that the EP has questioned the European Commission (EC) on its subsidy policy for fisheries. "The EC position is that the national governments are responsible to check that their fishing companies receiving subsidies do not break international law."

Jack Thurston, co-founder of Fishsubsidy.org, told IPS that previous studies have shown that many EU fisheries subsidies have directly contributed to the over-fishing of fish stocks. "But our study is the first one that draws the link between subsidies and illegal fishing."

The study gives only "a snapshot of the problem of illegal fishing and the prevalence of EU subsidies being paid to vessels that have been convicted of illegal fishing, or that have gone on to break the law after having received subsidies," Thurston told IPS.

Thurston said that the researchers collected the data "from government websites, press reports and court records. The prosecution information is not centralised and it has never been made public".

"European governments should publish comprehensive lists of convictions for illegal fishing so that we can know who is breaking the law," he urged. "This is the only way to ensure that public money is not going to fishers who break the laws that protect our precious fisheries."

For Loevin there is no doubt that the criminal behaviour of some fishing companies is a sufficient reason to be excluded from European subsidisation.

For Western Sahara, the problem extends beyond subsidies. The European Parliament's legal department has concluded that fishing vessels operating under European flags in Western Saharan waters violate international laws.

Under an agreement between the EU and Morocco, European vessels are allowed to fish in Western Sahara's waters. But the EP legal service concluded in a recent study that "the Saharawi population of Western Sahara has never been consulted nor received any benefits from the exploitation of their own rich fisheries resources".

The United Nations (UN) classifies the Western Sahara region as a non-self-governing territory. The territory is under dispute between Morocco and the Polisario Front independence movement, with its Algeria-based Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic government.

According to a UN study of 2002, any economic activities that are not in accordance with the wishes and interests of the people of Western Sahara would be in violation of international law.

In their own analysis, the EP lawyers urged the EC to suspend or amend the EU-Morocco agreement to ensure that "EU-flagged vessels are excluded from the exploitation of the waters of Western Sahara".

The analysis by the EP legal department was originally dated Jul 2009 but it remained under wraps until recently. EU parliamentarians have complained that the EC, in addition to holding back the findings, ignored the study for it failed to even place the issue on the agenda at the most recent yearly meeting with Morocco's authorities in early Feb 2010.

"The EU places respect for international law at the heart of its foreign policy but has turned a blind eye in the case of Western Sahara," Portuguese member of the EP Miguel Portas told IPS.

"The illegal and unethical EU fishing activities in Western Sahara's waters are nothing short of theft and constitute implicit support for what most countries worldwide regard as an illegal occupation by Morocco in Western Sahara," Portas added.

Nigeria:

1. Political News:

- **Jonathan is qualified to run in 2011'**

The National chairman of the National Unity Party and the current chairman of the West Africa Political Parties (WAPP) that monitored the Ghanaian general elections last year, Perry Okpara, spoke on Nigerian democracy and next year's election. Excerpts:

His assessment of Nigeria's democracy

It has not been so bad, but not good enough because the impact of democracy has not been felt generally - especially at the grass root, which is where the majority of the people that vote reside. But in terms of elections and people showing interest in election, there is an improvement. They wish to come out and cast their votes but, unfortunately, nobody cares for their developmental needs. Nobody pays attention to providing democratic dividends to them by political leaders. President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua did one good thing by setting up a constitutional review headed by the retired justice, Mohammed Uwais so that we can have a better election and so that maybe people that won clear elections can emerge victorious. By and large, it is better than to have been under the military dictatorship.

Prognosis for next year's election

The removal of Iwu cannot be the solution to election rigging in Nigeria. Iwu is just an individual, while the commission is an institution that has over 10,000 staff working in it. Iwu happened to be the chairman of the commission. I know he doesn't take decisions without consulting his commissioners. He doesn't even have the power, because there are other 12 commissioners that work with him.

So, the removal cannot be an answer to our electoral problems. I am thinking that the process needs overhauling and I want to commend both chambers of the National Assembly for amending certain obnoxious aspects of the electoral act.

If they are done properly, elections in Nigeria will be better and I also want to take the blame of our electoral problems to the domain politicians, which is also where I belong. Our politicians have not behaved well in the past. I am also thinking that we need to evaluate our conduct and do attitudinal change and if we can change our attitude towards politics, I think Nigeria will stand for something good.

Setting the agenda for the president

One of the first things that should occupy his mind is not to interfere with the electoral management body. He should allow election to hold the way it held in Anambra State. We watched and monitored the election. Jonathan shouldn't allow himself to be involved in election matters. He should just remain focused and provide the enabling environment that would allow business to thrive. He should also work towards ensuring stable power supply because business cannot thrive without stable electricity and thank God the man has brought the challenge of tackling energy issue to himself for effective supervision. Within the few months that he has spent, he has taken some steps that have shown that he is a good man that can steer the ship of this country and I am calling on Nigerians to rally round him.

On calls for Jonathan to contest in 2011

He is qualified to run and if I find him fit. I will campaign for him, despite the fact that we don't belong to the same political party. As far as I am concerned, I am interested in Nigeria moving forward. Political party is just a means to get to power. If I see that my own party does not have a good candidate for the presidency and I see a better candidate from another party, we will join hands with that person. Given what the president has done within a few months in office, he has demonstrated that he has the capacity to rule this country. And if by extension he shows this capacity between now and few months to come, Nigeria will stand by him to run regardless of where he comes from.

But you don't expect everybody to support him.

Democracy in the West Africa sub-region

I am not too happy but I think there is an improvement. That was why, when in 2008 I became President of WAPP, I instituted the West African Election monitoring team and we have been going around monitoring elections. We monitored Ghana election and before the election we had talks with the Ghana elections boss who told us some of the problems they were likely to face and we advised him on what to do. We equally have been advising our own INEC here on how to remove some hiccups in our electoral system so that 2011 polls can be better than what we witness in 2007.

But generally, some of the election violence in Nigeria now is beginning to disappear and give way to peace and I think that is a major achievement.

- **Scrap voters' register, Tinubu implores Jonathan**

Former governor of Lagos State, Bola Tinubu, has called on the country president, Goodluck Jonathan, abolish the current voters' register, describing it as a "fraud."

Mr. Tinubu, who spoke to journalists at the presidential wing of the Murtala Mohammed Airport (MMA) on his way to Benin, Edo State yesterday, argued that the integrity of the voters' registry has been tarnished.

“Where is the integrity of the voters registry? The register is a fraud,” he said. “I am going to address it clearly today and I am going to write a petition to the acting president. If he wants this country to move forward, you have to scrap the voters register.”

The former governor disclosed that the country needs to start afresh, adding that the data base housing the registry itself is a fraud.

“I am going now to Edo State to campaign for the integrity of our election, because the future of our country is the stability of democracy, We depend on it,” he said.

“If we now procure it through the court, we will not establish coalition of democracy for electoral reforms, and would not be moving around the country to sensitize the general public on the need for one man, one vote based upon reliable verifiable data of registered voters.”

On Iwu’s Sack

Reacting to the sack of Maurice Iwu, as chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Mr. Tinubu said that the move by the acting president was a step in the right direction, stressing that whoever takes over the job should be thoroughly scrutinized.

“That is just the beginning of the response to our cry,” he said. “He (Mr. Jonathan) has to clean these people,” he said. “There is another man that Iwu would handover to, what has he been contaminated with?”

The former governor also called on the acting president to suspend all contracts signed by the sacked INEC chairman.

“There are various contracts that Iwu had embarked upon to rush through before he leaves, they (Presidency) should suspend all those contracts,” he said.

- **Jonathan needs just one-point agenda – to fight corruption’**

Supo Sonibare is the Chairman of Lagos chapters of Afenifere and the Democratic Peoples' Alliance Party (DPA). He speaks on leadership problem in Nigeria and the expectations from President Goodluck Jonathan.

Below is an interview he had with NEXT's Segun Balogun:

We do not seem to have a system to replace leaders, what is the problem?

There has been a shortage of leadership materials participating in the polity from the second republic. In the first republic, no one nurtured the likes of Zik, Ahmadu, and Awolowo, and others we had then. They had this overriding interest and zest of wanting to improve their society to the benefit of the masses. Though, we still had charlatans who

attempted to contest elections but we were fortunate that we had the participation of a larger portion of the professional class. The trend in subsequent republics have been the dwindling of the participation of the professional, artisans, and labour class and the increase in the number of charlatans wanting to hold political offices.

What is responsible for the dwindling participation?

We must understand that even if you are able to escape the poor economic hardship and build substantial wealth, you are likely to lose it all the day the unstable society you live in explode or implode. I think our selfishness and the notion that politics is dirty have also contributed to our leadership problems.

How did our politics come to be known as a dirty game?

It's simple. Most of us keep having a stereotype idea of who our governor or leader should be without actively supporting somebody that fits the bill. So, charlatans took over and for them, politics is not exchange of ideas that bring the best to the society, it is a life and death game because they have no other means of staking a gainful employment or livelihood.

This is what I hope we can change in the next election because we are at a precipice that will push us into a failed state and the consequences of that will affect those who are not even participating in the polity as well.

So what motivation is there for politically apathetic Nigerians?

We only need to look at those we considered as icons of leadership in this country called Nigeria - we are not yet a nation. All that Tafawa Balewa had to himself was a bungalow in his hometown. These are people who value education and want the best for the society. Awolowo, Zik, Ahmadu all had an unbridled passion for societal transformation. I don't think we can call politics a dirty game when we look at these icons.

May be for the temporary moments, the crooks have seized the Nigerian treasury but they are people we won't remember with any positive inclination in the next 40 to 50 years.

Do we need leadership institutes as we see in other developed nations?

I don't think having institutes that teach best practices in governance will change anything in Nigeria at the moment. We are probably more religious than any other country in the world and religion is supposed to nurture people to be God-fearing. So, if religion has been largely effective, we shouldn't have leadership problems because respected leaders like Martin Luther are religiously motivated people.

If the Church has not been able to produce credible political leaders, despite the fact that we are more church-going and if Islam hasn't been able to do the same despite been the most literary based religion, I don't think any institute can do that in Nigeria.

Any elected leader who disappoints his constituency naturally gets booted out as we see recently in the UK. What we need most is active participation in politics and credible electoral system.

What does Nigeria needs now to move forward?

We need that somebody that will change things for better. Institutions don't just spring up; somebody must sacrifice to make the change. I saw President Goodluck's swearing-in ceremony and realised our oath-of-office has more undertakings than that of Ghana, South Africa, and US.

If a Nigerian president abides by the oath alone, he doesn't even need any 7-point agenda before he would have done credibly well.

What should be President Jonathan's agenda?

He must first combat corruption. Look at the amnesty programme, a good idea that does not lack funding but is failing to yield positive result because of corruption. The same thing will happen with the power project too.

What is DPA most critical about in the current Lagos State administration?

We've always taken the view that the current administration can be more prudent in managing public funds, though we always submitted that the incumbent governor has also done better than the previous one. We also believe this administration should fare better than Jakande's who did so much to affect the lives of the majority of Lagosians because the State has more financial and human resources than many other States in Nigeria.

• 2011 - PDP Set to Dump Zoning

THERE are indications that the national leadership of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP ahead of the release of its guidelines for its primaries, is set to dump its zoning arrangement at least to accommodate President Goodluck Jonathan.

However, as the debate on the PDP zoning arrangement, rages some leading Nigerians have criticised the policy if it exists.

According to the eminent citizens, including Third Republic Senator Uba Ahmed, leading scholars, Prof. Anya. Anya and Dr. Uma Eleazu, the zoning arrangement is irrelevant, undemocratic and meaningless.

Some of them, such as the Elder statesman Zikist Nationalist, Chief Mbazulike Amechi, went ahead to say that even if zoning presidency should be adopted, then the South East

and South South geo-political zones that have not had a fair share in ruling the country should produce the person for the number one seat.

Third Republic Senator Uba Ahmed told Saturday Vanguard that the 1987 NPN zoning system, unlike the present arrangement, was not based on sectarianism as the North would have voted for any southerner.

What is happening today is part of the distortions of the Obasanjo era and it is the creation of Obasanjo himself. There was a misconstrued perception of what democracy is all about. In fact, what is happening is an abuse of the process of democracy.... Zoning does not mean sitting down in one place to just decide on one person.

There must be congress, primaries for a candidate to emerge. There was nothing like preferred candidate. Zoning is losing its substance. It was not the kind of zoning we had in our time that we have now. It has lost meaning and content., "he said.

But President General of the Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Ambassador Ralph Uwechue said that though President Goodluck Jonathan has not declared his intention to run for the 2011 elections, Nigerians, including the Igbo, should support him. However, the Igbo ethnic group, he went on, is fine tuning a strategy that would help it realise its political goals in the country.

PDP Set to put aside zoning for Jonathan

Meanwhile, the National Auditor of the PDP and member of the National Working Committee, NWC, Dr. Samuel Ortom who noted that though there is zoning formula in PDP's Constitution, it is not rigid as it may be subject to change when the need arises, adding that it was a flexible arrangement by the founding fathers of the party.

Speaking with journalists in Abuja, the PDP National Auditor stressed that since the inception of the party and when conventions were held, no one from any zone had ever been excluded from vying for positions, especially, the most exalted one which is the president of the country. He said that former Vice President, Alex Ekwueme, Chief Barnabas Gemade, late Abubakar Rimi had contested for the presidency, even when the party zoned it to the West during ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo.

"So, I am calling on Nigerians to put this thing to rest, that at no time did we as the National Working Committee discuss and zoned the position of presidency. What the National Chairman said last time was just a clarification on what was done before in the past regime and not during our current tenure.

"The whole thing is flexible and President Jonathan is a Nigerian, and by all standards and qualifications that the party and the constitution require, he is free to contest the election.

"It has become imperative for me to make this clarification. Though there is position of zoning in PDP's constitution, it is not a rigid arrangement. It is a flexible arrangement made for the forefathers of this party who wrote this constitution.

"But I want to let the public know that since 1999 when this party came into existence and started election and appointment of political offices, there has never been a time that anyone has been excluded who is interested in vying for any position in this party, whether you are from the South or East or from the North or West.

"From 1999, you will recall that the election was keenly contested by Ekwueme and Obasanjo who come from different zones and in 2003, the election was keenly contested by the incumbent president, Chief Obasanjo and Barnabas Gemade who was from the North Central and at no time did the PDP screen them out.

"They were allowed to participate. They went through the process as enshrined in the constitution and the guidelines and a candidate emerged at the end of the day and we jointly worked together for the success of our party.

"So, I want to make it very clear that the controversy about 2011 zoning or no zoning, Article 7.2 (c) of the PDP constitution talks about rotation and zoning but it is not rigid. And so, President Goodluck Jonathan is free to contest election if he so wishes or desires at any time. If he decides to contest, nobody can stop him. He is free to do that; the constitution allows him because the constitution of our party is subject to the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"Though there can be zoning arrangement in the PDP constitution, which is an internal arrangement, the most important and ultimate thing is the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which allows every Nigerian the freedom to associate and the freedom to express himself and so, every Nigerian is free to contest not minding the zone he is from. Zone is not going to stop anybody from contesting.

"So, those who are heating the polity unnecessarily about zoning or no zoning should stop and allow Mr. President to face the challenges that we have in this country. I think that instead of wasting energy talking about zoning, we need to jointly put our hands together and pray and support the President to ensure that he brings dividends of democracy to the Nigerian people.

Uwechue, Anya, Amechi, Eleazu, Obi kick

For former university don, Prof. Anya O. Anya, said zoning is undemocratic. The competition should be thrown open so that the best candidate will emerge. Even the zoning arrangement that is being done in PDP, he said, was a gentleman's agreement and did not have the backing of the people.

Former Zikist Leader, Chief Mbazulike Amechi said if the presidency must be zoned, the South East and the South South should produce the next president come 2011. Senator

Ben Obi advised the PDP to reconsider its zoning formula if it is no longer is no relevant. But another scholar, Dr. Uma Eleazu, wrote off zoning, preferring instead, federalism based on the ethnic nationalities.

2. Economy:

- **Nigeria strengthens relations with Ireland**

The Federal Government said it is determined to take advantage of improving the business environment in the country to attract more foreign direct investments, particularly from Europe, in the hope of growing the nation's economy into one of the world's 20 biggest economies by 2020.

An international business forum is being planned for Dublin, Ireland, early next month, as part of efforts to mobilise European investors to participate in the development of the different sectors of the nation's economy.

The 2nd Business Forum of the International Gateway Partnership (I-GEP 2010) Summit, according to Nigeria's Ambassador to Ireland, Kema Chikwe, will provide political leaders and business executives from Nigeria, Ireland, and other countries, the opportunity to come together to share ideas on new partnerships and investment destinations in the country.

The three-day summit will feature a bankers' financial forum and exhibition, as well as a tour of business and industrial sites across Ireland by Nigerian business delegation.

It will also feature sessions on a wide range of investment opportunities and businesses, including power and energy, agriculture and agro-allied industries, construction and property development, transport, solid minerals, education, health, tourism, ICT, and manufacturing.

Opportunities for networking

"Building on the successful forum held last year, I believe that I-GEP 2010 will yield practical ideas on enhancing trade, mobilising investment, and strengthening economic links between the participating countries. I am confident that the opportunities for commercial networking through the forum will be highly valuable to facilitate the continued growth in trade relations between Nigeria and Ireland," Mrs. Chikwe said in Abuja.

"It will highlight new global economic partnership arrangements to promote trade and investment in key market sectors in the Nigerian economy, while the business forum will present the useful platform for fostering partnerships and collaborations among participants. It is predictable that sustainable recovery and development of the regions,

especially post-global meltdown, will depend greatly on the strength of these collaborations."

The forum, which the ambassador said will help in the liberalisation and deregulation of the country's economy, will be hosted in collaboration with the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) to stimulate domestic investment and attract direct foreign investment.

Key participants in quest for funding, equity share, and regional business partnerships are also expected to take advantage of the forum to exchange proposals on portfolio of investment, while countries and financial institutions in the emerging markets would find common grounds for collaboration.

Bamanga Tukur, the chairman, African Business Roundtable (ABR), added that the forum would provide opportunity for networking and business partnership. It would also serve as business exchange centre for delegates to engage with potential investors, investment bankers, and knowledge partners in sharing business ideas.

"The summit will provide the option where project and business summaries can be made available in advance to interested investors and partners, while all project holders will be made available and accessible for one-on-one meetings," Mr. Tukur said.

- **Naira weakens as banks snap up dollars**

The naira weakened to 152.40 to the U.S dollar on Tuesday, from 151.75 previously, in the interbank market after heady buying of dollars by some banks, traders said.

"A couple of banks are buying up dollars for reasons we don't know and this has driven the rate beyond market resistance level," one dealer said.

"We are completely in the dark on the basis for the prevailing exchange rate at the interbank."

Dealers said a lack of dollar inflows from sources other than the central bank and the need by some businesses to buy dollars to meet their immediate obligations also helped weaken the naira.

The naira also depreciated at the official window after the central bank failed to supply all \$530 million demanded at its auction on Monday.

The regulator sold \$450 million at ₦148.85 to the dollar compared to \$250 million it sold at ₦148.81 per dollar at last Wednesday's auction.

Traders said the bulk of demand at the auction came from local fuel importers.

"I don't see the naira falling further because the rate at the interbank is already 2.0 naira above the official rate and there will be another auction on Wednesday," another dealer said.

Nigerian banks are not allowed to trade the dollars they purchase at the central bank's bi-weekly auction among themselves. Lenders in sub-Saharan Africa's second-biggest economy can only trade dollars they purchase from oil majors and other importers.

- **Siemens boss says company ready to pay fine for bribery**

Multinational German telecommunications firm, Siemens AG, has assured Nigerians that it will pay the price for the bribery scandal involving it and some top government officials, if fined by the federal government.

The Chief Executive Officer of Siemens Nigeria Limited, Alain De Cat, said this on Thursday at the Nigerian Economic Summit Group's (NESG) Executive Business Roundtable in Lagos, held to discuss business principles as tools to strengthening ethics and transparency in the conduct of business in Nigeria.

Mr. De Cat, who stated that the company had paid over a billion dollars in fines and sanctions to regulators in both Munich and Washington, said investing in Nigeria's future is, however, a more profitable venture for the nation than paying fines.

"Siemens will be willing to pay Nigeria back by investing in Nigeria's future, which is by investing in training for capacity building of Nigerians to develop the nation's local content, which the federal government is very particular about," said the telecoms company boss, who just assumed his office in Nigeria last month.

Siemens AG in 2008, agreed to pay \$1.3 billion in penalties to U.S. and German authorities, for bribing government officials in several countries, including Nigeria, from 2001 to 2007.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), last week, renewed its investigations into the bribery case, saying it is going to question three former ministers implicated in the corruption scandal involving Siemens AG.

Promoting self regulation

"We always underestimate what can happen in one year and over-estimate what can happen in 10 years," he said, urging Nigerian companies and business to develop the attitude of 'self-regulation', which he said can be strengthened via some sort of public vigilance, such as using independent feed-back mechanism. He enumerated steps taken by Siemens Nigeria Limited to enhance the efficiency of its operations in Nigeria to include publishing of business guidelines, collective action, encouraging whistle-blowing from staff, and a no cash transaction policy, amongst others.

The chairperson of the occasion and former Nigerian envoy to the United Kingdom, Christopher Kolade, admitted that the Nigerian business environment is entering a season where regulators have become very important and dominant. "They (the regulators) may be tempted to give a knee-jerk reaction to challenges," he said, calling on the business community to look for sustainable ways of planning how to do business and doing business the right way.

"Recent dictates from the corridors of power show that a method of catching criminals is what is being developed, rather than building methods to support those who want to do business rightly. In focusing on codes and law, we look for people who practice compliance. Rather, what we need to get are people who will generate commitment to the fulfilment of the responsibility they are assigned to," he said.

3. Energy:

- **Oil Sector Shake-up: Northern Elders Slam Jonathan**
- **' NNPC boss' appointment not induced**

A group, Northern Elders Assembly, has accused President Goodluck Jonathan of contravening his oath of office and violating the constitution over the recent appointments made in the Ministry of Petroleum Resources and the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

The Assembly said the shake-up were against the constitutionally enshrined principle of federal character and do not reflect the oath he had taken to do justice to all manner of people without fear, favour, affection or ill will.

In a communiqué signed by Alhaji Bashir Mohammed Dalhatu (Walin Dutse) and made available to THISDAY in Kano yesterday after a meeting chaired by Alhaji Bello Kirfi (Walin Bauchi) who was the nation's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, stressed that out of the 20 senior officials of the ministry of petroleum, 10 are from the South- South zone, the area where the president comes from.

Lamenting that with the whole of the North having only four and the South East and South-West having only two each, they cautioned the president to remember that he is the president of the nation and not a regional president. The elders also resolved to send a powerful delegation to the National Assembly to meet with the Senate President, Mr. David Mark, Speaker Dimeji Bankole, and the leadership of Northern caucus in the upper and lower chambers of the legislature in order to present a case against the negative tendencies which are capable of affecting the political stability of the country.

"We frown at the way and manner the immediate past chairman of the PDP, Prince Vincent Ogbulafor, was forced to resign his position simply because he insisted on the adherence to the PDP zoning arrangement," the Northern Elders Assembly explained.

Meanwhile, Group General Manager, Group Public Affairs of the NNPC, Dr. Levi Ajuonuma has dismissed insinuations that the recent changes in the Corporation was induced by extraneous factors, stressing that the Nigerian oil industry is a professionally run sector in line with international best practices, which do not give room for ethnic or religious sentiments.

Speaking during an interactive session with journalists in Lagos over the weekend, Ajuonuma also stated that the Minister of Petroleum Resources, Mrs Diezani Alison-Madueke, and the newly appointed Group Managing Director of NNPC, Mr. Austen Oniwon, are poised to ensure that the industry witnessed significant growth and sustained development.

4. Environment:

5. Immigration/Refugee/Idps:

- **Nigerian Shot Dead, 32 Arrested in Poland**

A yet-to-be-identified Nigerian was shot dead in the Polish capital of Warsaw yesterday after a struggle with policemen who chased him through a crowded open-air market.

Traders' pelted officers with bricks, in the process, police said after making 32 arrests. According to the Polish police, 32 other Nigerians are under detention following the development. The 36-year-old man took flight when a police patrol entered the market in the central Praga district, Police Spokesman Mariusz Sokolowski told AFP. Traders threw bricks and other objects at police when they began to pursue him, Sokolowski said.

“According to certain witnesses, the man tried to wrestle a gun away from a policeman,” when it went off, he said.

“A police officer was wounded and hospitalised. Thirty-two people were detained, most likely all Nigerians, but we are still checking their identities,” Sokolowski added.

Investigators have opened an inquiry into the circumstances of the man's death. A similar case in Greece, another European country in 2007, had led to a massive protest by African immigrants.

The Nigerian in his 20s had died after he jumped from a building where he was selling pirated DVDs in a café in the Northern city of Thessaloniki.

He had fled when he believed police in the cafe were trying to arrest him.

The prefect of the region of Greece, Panayiotis Psomiadis, had condemned the action stating: “The tragic death of the young man from Nigeria reminds us all of the difficult days we Greeks experienced a few decades ago when we emigrated to make a living.” The protest that ensued attracted immigrants from all over Africa while the police had a tough time trying to restore peace and order.

They fired tear gas while the crowd threw stone at them outside the police station holding up photographs of the dead man.

According to the prefect, it is the duty of the Greek state, whose development was influenced by emigration, to show sensitivity and attribute blame where necessary. Poland has diplomatic relations with Nigeria with its embassy in Abuja and that of Nigeria situated in Warsaw.

Many Nigerians had travelled to the European country on scholarship in the last three decades especially in the area of medicine and pharmacy. Intermarriages between them and Nigerians have led to the formation of Niger wives, an association of foreign women married to Nigerian men.

6. Health:

7. Human rights/Gender/social issues:

- **Police kill, rape, torture and extort says rights group**

Nigerian police routinely carry out summary executions of suspected criminals, use torture to extract confessions from detainees, and rape as an interrogation technique, according to a report by the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI), a rights group, which appeals to President Goodluck Jonathan to make good on promises to urgently reform the force.

Police kill on average 4.6 people per day, according to statistics provided to Human Rights Watch in April 2004 by Tafa Balogun, then Inspector-General of Police.

In November 2007, Acting Inspector-General of Police Mike Okiro, during his first 100 days of office, claimed the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) killed 785 people. One week later the late President Umaru Yar'Adua promoted him.

In 2006 police reported killing 329 robbers and injuring none, suggesting a kill-to-punish policy, said OSJI. Records show that in the same year 111 police were killed and 53 injured.

In July 2009, while responding to violence instigated by members of the Boko Haram sect in Borno State in northeastern Nigeria, the NPF killed hundreds of suspected sect members, including its leader.

The Nigeria Legal Defence and Assistance Project found 2,987 extrajudicial executions by police in 2004, but no force member was convicted.

Police Force Order 237 uses vague language regarding extrajudicial killings by police: "These rules practically provide police carte blanche to shoot and kill at will," the UN Special Rapporteur said in the 2006 Presidential Commission report on police reform.

Every major police station has an "Officer in charge of Torture", according to a researcher at the Network of Police Reform in Nigeria (NOPRIN), a civil society organization.

Victims reported the following slang terms being used for torture: "V.I.P treatment" - shooting a detainee in both legs; "J5" - prolonged sleep deprivation in a standing position; "suicide" - being suspended upside down by a rope tied around the ankles and being kicked, or beaten with machetes, gun butts or electrical wires.

Other forms of torture include beating; forced stress positions; tear gas applied to eyes or genitals; clubbing the soles of the feet; burning with cigarettes, hot irons or a flame; sexual torture by rape or violation; psychological manipulation; sleep deprivation; water or food deprivation.

The crime of torture does not exist in Nigerian law.

In Nigeria's second city, male officers in the Lagos Police Command often demand sex from female detainees as the price of bail - one NPF member said sex with sex workers was "one of the fringe benefits attached to night patrol".

The Police Service Commission, which is responsible for police discipline, routinely refers all extrajudicial police killings to the police for investigation, and the Commission's quarterly reports to the President are not published.

The new president, Goodluck Jonathan, insisted in his inaugural address on 6 May 2010 that "The security of life and property around the entire country will be of topmost priority in the remaining period of this administration." To achieve this, he must begin by according priority to a comprehensive reform of the Nigeria Police Force, said the OSJI.

IRIN could not reach police spokesperson Emmanuel Ojukwu to elicit a response to the report, but earlier this year he replied to allegations of human rights abuses, in a local newspaper, Daily Trust.

"In the past 10 years in Nigeria the police force has grown tremendously in its respect for human rights and values of decent conduct," he was quoted as saying, "[but] there are bad eggs in the police force who are guilty of human rights violations, making the force not immune to these accusations."

- **Troops avert another crisis in Jos**

Troops of the Special Task Force (STF) on the Jos Crisis, have averted renewed violence in Bukuru, Jos, Donald Oji, a brigadier general and the leader of the task force said in a statement on Thursday.

According to him, three persons, including the Divisional Police Officer of 'B' Division, Bukuru, was injured, while four suspects were arrested during the aborted violence.

He stated that the incident, which started about 5.30pm, involved two persons who started fighting after a game of football, and later developed to a situation in which youth started blocking the major roads and attacking passers-by.

Guerrilla attacks

Residents of some of villages have also complained of guerrilla attacks on individuals in their villages, with some children missing and dead bodies being found in hidden places.

Confirming the development, the state commissioner of information, Gregory Yenlong, said, "In the last two weeks, not less than 20 people have been killed in selective killings."

The dead and missing were mostly street hawkers, commuter drivers, and those that work outdoors till, some residents confirmed.

According to Mr. Oji, "While we continue to perform our lawful duties, we also appeal to parents and elders to reciprocate our gesture of restraint by admonishing their youths in this dangerous path of perpetrating violence, which they have resorted to."

The task force said in the statement that it is exercising restraint not to bring the necessary force to bear on the undisciplined.

While urging the general public to go about their normal businesses without any fear, it assured that the STF was well-positioned to protect them. It added that the STF had also on Wednesday, assisted the Fan Community in Barkin Lad Council Area to recover their cows that were rustled in the early hours of that day. The STF said five cows were recovered; while efforts were still on to recover the remaining 25. It said troops responded to a distress call by community leaders and arrested two people in connection with the incident.

The statement also emphasised that the STF was on the alert to restore normalcy in Jos and its environs.

A spokesperson for the Hausa Community, Muhammad Sani Mudi, had told a foreign media organisation that, "We now live in fear, as a result of killings in the city, which makes it difficult for us to move about freely. We have lost 23 members to such secret killings in the past two weeks, while 58 others are still missing."

The police spokesperson, Emmanuel Ojukwu, in an interview with NEXT earlier in the week, had said that 41 people would be charged for murder, while others arrested will face different charges based on what their interrogation reveals.

• **Experts Decry Female Genital Mutilation**

Participants at a training workshop in Ekiti State have identified female genital mutilation as one of the harmful health practices that cause complications for every expectant mother during child deliveries in most of the developing countries.

In the light of this, at the end of the workshop, participants, urged health workers to abstain totally from female genital mutilation practice. Rising from a three- day Training Information Communication Workshop (TIC) held in Oye Ekiti , participants agreed that such complication often account for high maternal mortality rate in three countries.

The sensitisation campaign organised by Inter-Africa Committee (IAC) Nigeria in collaboration with Ekiti State Ministries of Health and Women Affairs had traditional rulers, religious leaders, school counselors, health workers, students among others as participants.

According to the communiqué, governments at all levels were also charged on the need to promote the eradication of the habit through the media and establishment of Female Genital Mutilation Monitor Clubs in all secondary schools.

They also tasked counselors and parents to guard the adolescents on the changes in their stages of development to enable them consciously guide their growth.

Besides, they further observed that poor communication between parents and children accounted for high level of child abuse in the society and requested parents and teachers to be role models for their wards.

Speaking earlier, in his opening remarks at the commencement of the workshop, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Dr. Dare Ojo, described the workshop as a collaborative intervention in ensuring efficient health care delivery in the state. He said that the state government would do all within its resource to promote the good maternal/childhood health conditions for which the government had opened blue health facilities in the state.

• **820 Prisoners On Death Row Sue Governors, Prisons Boss**

Lagos — The 820 prisoners on death row in prisons across the country have dragged the 36 state governors and the Comptroller-General of Prisons before a Federal High Court sitting in Lagos, seeking an order to stop their planned execution.

The governors, it will be recalled, had recently announced that they will start signing execution warrants to kill prisoners sentenced to death, as a way of decongesting prisons in their states.

The announcement, according to the prisoners, had caused them great shock, anxiety and trauma and they, therefore, want the court to stop any planned execution because it would be cruel and inhuman to kill them after such trauma.

They also want the court to intervene to save their lives because some of them have cases in court challenging their conviction and sentences, and in some cases, challenging the mandatory provisions of the criminal law under which they were sentenced.

The death row inmates, through their counsel, Mr. Chino Obiagwu, who is also the national coordinator of Legal Defence and Assistance Project, LEDAP, are asking the court for leave to sue in representative capacity for themselves and on behalf of all prisoners on the death row in Nigerian prisons.

8. Geo-Strategic issues:

Other West African States

Cape Verde:

Chad:

- **Country Becomes 100th Nation to Give UN Nuclear Inspectors Greater Access....H4**

Chad has become the 100th nation to agree to give the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) more information about its nuclear activities, which the agency hailed as a milestone in efforts to bolster global nuclear verification efforts.

The so-called Additional Protocol furnishes IAEA inspectors with enhanced access to information and locations of nuclear activity.

"I welcome this latest entry into force and call on all States that have not yet done so to bring into force Additional Protocols without delay," IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano said in a press release issued in Vienna.

The Protocol, he stressed, is of "vital importance," since it allows the IAEA to determine both whether declared nuclear material is being diverted from peaceful uses and whether countries are in possession of undeclared nuclear material.

More than four decades ago, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) tasked the IAEA with verifying that nuclear material and activities in non-nuclear-weapons States are not used for military purposes.

In 1997, the agency's Board of Governors adopted additional measures to boost the effectiveness and efficiency of the safeguards system.

Chad's notification yesterday comes as more than 100 nations are taking part in the five-yearly review conference of the NPT, the cornerstone of the world's nuclear non-proliferation regime, to discuss how to further full implementation and enhance the universality of the pact.

At the start of the nearly month-long gathering last week, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon exhorted countries to take decisive action to build a safer world.

"We have a choice: to leave a legacy of fear and inaction or to act with vision, courage and leadership," he told the conference.

"We all know it is possible," the Secretary-General said of disarmament and non-proliferation, which have been among his top priorities since taking office in 2007.

He characterized the NPT as one of the most important global treaties ever reached. With the nuclear threat still real, "we need this regime as much as ever," Mr. Ban underscored.

The last NPT review conference in 2005 was a failure, he said, having wrapped up without any substantive agreement having been reached. "This time, we can - and must - do better."

Gambia:

Guinea- Bissau:

Mali:

- **Muslim Conservatives Blocking New Family Law.....H7**

Bamako — A new family law has raised tension in Mali. This controversial law, intended to give greater freedoms and rights to women, has been sent back to the National Assembly for a second reading after protests from Muslim radicals.

The Muslims are threatening to make the country ungovernable if the law is enacted in its original form as voted by parliament in August 2009.

"Those who oppose the new family law have started threatening legislators, railing against them in sermons and organising protest meetings.

They're also using newspapers and radio since they learned that the law is on the agenda of the current parliamentary session," Salimata Kouyaté told IPS. Kouyaté is an activist with the Malian Network of NGOs and Women's Associations.

"Article 32 of the old law on marriage and guardianship stated that the husband was responsible to protect his wife, and the wife had to obey her husband.

This article makes the woman a lifelong minor whose every act is subject to her husband's approval who may, as we've seen in daily practice, abuse this power."

The new law says that, "Spouses owe each other fidelity, protection, relief and assistance. They commit themselves to the community of life on the basis of affection and respect."

Elsewhere, the new law states that women and men have equal inheritance rights, while in Muslim tradition a woman is entitled to only half the share given to her brothers. Another change is that women would no longer need their husbands' permission to work.

For Malian public figures, merely expressing support for the law is enough to attract trouble.

"The High Islamic Council (HCI), on behalf of all Muslims, challenged twenty provisions in the draft family law that clash with our religious and societal values," the council's president, Mahmoud Dicko, told reporters.

"The president promised to take our claims into consideration during the rereading period, but HCI was never contacted," he added.

While the debate on the new law has taken an alarming turn, human rights advocates are trying to warn the authorities in Mali to stand firm.

Women represent nearly 51 percent of the total population of Mali, according to provisional results of the general census of population and housing, released in late 2009.

Over 70 percent of them live in rural areas, 83 percent have never attended school, and 14 percent have only a primary school education while only 0.1 percent has a university or postgraduate degree.

The same source shows that Malian women occupy just fewer than 11 percent of leadership positions in decision-making bodies. There are only seven women mayors out of a total of 703, and only three of the country's 22 ambassadors are women.

Mauritania :

Niger:

- **Niger's hungry 'crossing into Nigeria'.....H5**

Reports from northern Nigeria say a growing number of people from Niger are crossing the border into Nigeria because of the food crisis at home.

A BBC correspondent in the northern Nigerian state of Katsina says many women and children from Niger are seeking shelter with local families.

Aid agencies say about seven million people in Niger - about half the population - are short of food.

Niger's transitional government has started distributing food in the north. The BBC's Abba Muhammed Katsina in Katsina says some of those arriving from Niger are selling water or tea to make money.

There are also reports of women going from house to house begging for food, he says. A significant number of Nigeriens are also reported to have arrived in Sokoto State. The chairman of Nigeria's Senate foreign affairs committee, Jibril Aminu, told the BBC's Hausa Service that he would call a meeting when the chamber resumes next week to discuss the matter.

Last month, John Holmes, the UN humanitarian chief, told the BBC Niger was threatened with total crop failure in some areas and the situation is worse than the 2005 crisis.

Sénégal: