

REPORT - A
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Details of the News

1 China-African Relations:

- **How a strong Yuan may affect Kenyan consumers**

Kenyan consumers may be headed for a period of pricing turbulence as the economy adjusts to a much stronger Chinese currency whose peg to the dollar has been a key anchor against global inflation.

The Bank of China on Saturday announced that it was ditching the policy of pegging the Yuan against the dollar, ending nearly four years of a trade spat with the US and Europe and buoying stock markets around the globe.

Economists said appreciation of the Yuan could have far reaching effects on Kenya, raising the cost of Chinese imports and increasing the public debt burden.

“This new policy means that China will allow market forces to determine the direction of the exchange rate,” said John Akoten, an economist.

Depending on how fast Beijing moves with the new exchange rate policy, Kenyan manufacturers, who have had to shield every inch of their domestic market against swamping by cheap goods from China, could get a new lease of life as Chinese goods begin to cost more.

“A better priced Yuan should raise the cost of Chinese goods, erode their competitiveness in foreign markets and allow our manufacturing sector to compete,” said Mr Polycarp Igathe, the managing director of Haco Industries.

Economists however warned that the pricing relief for local manufacturers could be short lived.

“A flexible Yuan could disrupt the flow of trade between Kenya and China as the cost of capital goods imports that are mostly dollar-denominated rises, pushing up the cost of production in Kenya and eroding all the possible gains in consumer market,” said Dr Samuel Nyandemo, a senior lecturer of Economics at School of Economics University of Nairobi.

Dr Akoten reckons that any substantial loss in business could see Beijing take deliberate steps to reduce the price margins for Chinese goods to retain the market share.

Other possible lines of action for China include offering subsidy to manufacturers to increase their competitiveness in the global market.

The biggest loser in Beijing's currency policy change could however be government, which will bear a heavier debt burden should the Yuan appreciate significantly.

A strong Yuan means Treasury will need more dollars to service the Chinese debt – especially because most of the debt is dollar -denominated and it will take more dollars to buy the Yuan.

The Yuan has been pegged to the dollar at the rate of 6.83 since 2008 a move that has soured relations between China and its biggest trading partners – the US and European Union.

Little change in the balance of trade is expected because the volume of Kenya's imports from China is set to continue growing in the medium term bending the tilt in favour of the Asian nation.

“The balance of trade will continue to be in favour of China as we import more from them than we export,” said Judd Murungi, the head of research at CFC Stanbic Financial Services. “We can only expect a change if the appreciation continues to a level that substantially impacts on the cost of the capital goods forcing importers to shift to other source markets.”

The shilling has been trading at the rate of Sh11.83 to the Yuan and moved marginally to a rate of Sh11.9 following the decision to ditch the dollar pegging policy.

Joshua Anene, a currency dealer with CBA Bank, said the immediate result of Beijing's currency policy shift may be flight by traders from riskier basket of currencies such as the shilling making the Yuan even more expensive.

Economists welcomed China's currency policy change as positive, saying it could only improve trading relations between major powers.

“Anything that helps promote a healthy relationship between China and the US is important for the global economy,” said Sandy Mehta, the principal and chief investment officer at New York-based Value Investment Principals.

Major European and Asian stock market indices closed higher on June 21 while in the US, major market benchmarks were narrowly lower.

Although commodity markets were mixed on Monday, a Yuan revaluation is expected to eventually push prices of oil, metal, and other materials higher.

“With a stronger currency, the Chinese can buy more commodities,” said Mr Mehta.

Chinese companies can buy other things, too — including foreign companies, real estate, stocks and other investments.

“You’ll see acquisitions being made all across the spectrum,” says Randy Bateman, president of Huntington Asset Advisors.

Key targets for Chinese mergers and acquisitions, he says, could be companies specialising in energy, materials, or technology.

A stronger currency could also help develop China’s consumer market as the Yuan enables the Chinese to buy more products from the US and elsewhere, Lincoln says.

In particular, he says, there could be demand for consumer and health-care products.

The change of policy is also expected to bring to a close China’s role as an anchor of consumer goods pricing across the globe.

Between 2005 and September 2008 as economic activity rose to a peak across the globe causing fears of price surges, China, with its large exports of cheap goods was credited with keeping consumer goods within the reach of most households saving governments and policy makers the pain of inflation-driven unrest.

But economists now say this could be a turning point in which China gets its own inflation under control while raising prices—both of commodities and its exported manufacturing goods—for the rest of the world.

“This is the beginning of a long process where China stops exporting deflation and starts exporting inflation,” he said.

Trade between Kenya and China has been growing steadily helped by Kenya’s importation of capital goods from the Asian nation.

The value of Kenyan imports from China rose to Sh74.5 billion last year, a threefold rise from Sh23 billion in 2005 compared to exports worth Sh2.49 billion in 2009 from Sh1.29 billion in 2005.

Kenya’s imports from China include telecommunications equipment, office machinery, industrial machinery, motor cycles, rubber tyres and flat rolled products of iron and steels. Kenya export to China is largely tea which is used for blending.

China has become the second most important source of non-oil imports to Kenya after India — replacing traditional markets such as the UK, Japan and US.

Globally, a more flexible Yuan is however expected to increase the cost of Chinese imports sparking a trade realignment process with India, Malaysia, Taiwan and Japan as the major beneficiaries.

Although Beijing made the exchange rate policy shift announcement on Saturday, it gave few details on how rapidly it would be implemented.

Few observers expect quick moves, pointing to the fact that communist China rarely changes economic policies in a dramatic fashion.

“Rather, Chinese officials prefer to move in a very deliberate fashion to minimize the probability of negative shocks to the economy,” Wells Fargo global economist Jay Bryson said in a June 21 note.

This means that the actual effect of this policy shift may take longer (an average of three years) to filter into the Kenyan economy.

China’s position as a development financier in Kenya has continued to grow since President Kibaki came to power in 2003.

Beijing is, for instance, the main financier of major infrastructure projects such as the ongoing construction of the Nairobi-Thika Highway, the Nairobi-Namanga road, Nairobi-Oloitokitok road and the Nakuru-Eldoret highway.

The Chinese government is a partner in the ongoing expansion and modernisation of Nairobi’s Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.

And in a recent visit to China, President Kibaki signed a new funding agreement for the construction of the Lamu Port which is expected to improve Kenya’s maritime business.

In the next financial year of 2010-2011 Kenya is expecting Sh16.79 billion financing from the Chinese government, making it the single largest bilateral donor to the country.

The funds will be used for the Nairobi-Thika Highway improvement project, Nairobi Eastern and Northern Bypass project and drilling of Olkaria IV Geothermal wells.

- **Fahamu and Syracuse University host Africa and China Conference**

The Africa Initiative of Syracuse University and Fahamu recently co-hosted an international conference to assess and deliberate on the nature and future of the pre-eminent phase of Sino-African relations. The conference, held from 8th–10th April 2010 on the main campus of Syracuse University in New York, brought together progressive intellectuals, scholar-activists, diplomats and civil society representatives. In his keynote and opening address, H.E. Ambassador Tete Antonio, permanent representative of the African Union (AU) to the United Nations, noted that the meeting was important not only because it provided a much-needed space to further this important debate on the emerging role of China in global politics and international development, but more importantly that the conference at Syracuse aimed to proceed from a perspective that sought to strengthen and better the relationship for the benefit of African and Chinese peoples. Noting the historical friendship between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and African nations through the decades, the African Union representative concurred

with his Chinese counterpart Counsellor Du Xiacong, Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, who traced the friendship to a much earlier time that went beyond 1971 when African nations voted overwhelmingly to allow for the admission of China into the United Nations.

The meeting brought together young and established scholars from Africa, North America and China, and underlined the increasing need for a sustained debate focused on how Africa-China relations can be harnessed for the good of the African peoples in ways that break away from underlying assumptions based on the traditional colonial debate that has focused on models of exploitation that have characterised the continent's relationship with traditional powers, donors and their institutions. Subsequently, the meeting notably sought to transcend the emerging Sino-phobic scholarship and analyses that have conceptualised Africa-China relations only through the limited lens of exploitation, new imperialism and anti-democratic practices. The conference consciously chose optimism and constructive critique over fear and trepidation that dominate the debate and conversation about Chinese engagement with African peoples. This awareness aside, the conference sought to avoid falling into the traps of intellectual astigmatism associated with constant citation of the West's dark legacy in Africa as sufficient justification for granting African governments the freedom to explore relationships with other actors and corporates that could equally not be conducive to the progressive development of African people. Subsequently, through their presentations, the participants' critiques sought to provide an impetus and intellectual basis for a better relationship between China and Africa.

Subsequently, during the three days, participants took part in a rigorous intellectual exercise that covered topics ranging from the role and place of the African Union; a comparative look at labour conditions and rights of African workers both in Africa and China; and an analyses of China's win-win strategy through the lens of actual Resources-for-Infrastructure (R4I) contracts involving the extractive industries in select African countries.

The conference deliberations were guided by, among others, the following concerns and questions:

1. How can we ensure and evaluate the tenets of 'sincerity, political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and common development...' are realised as encapsulated in Beijing's official policy on development cooperation especially in the context of the past five years of Africa-China cooperation?
2. What kind of scholarly output can break the old realist understanding of the new South-South relationship?
3. How can this cooperation be harnessed while at the same time be weaned off potential negative trends and legacies associated with Africa's traditional development partners?

4. How can Africa and African institutions position themselves for a fruitful engagement with China and Chinese institutions?

5. To what extent can African peoples, workers, civil society organisations and institutions play a role in the development and respect of Chinese workers' rights through the Chinese workers' proven use of protest towards treatment on projects implemented in Africa? In addition, attention was drawn to how Africa could, and has already managed to effect the implementation of Chinese foreign policy.

6. To what extent is there a 'Chinese model'? And what is its potential impact on the democratic, economic and social transformation of Africa?

The level of preparedness and technical capability of African countries and their delegations to safeguard national interests during important international negotiations came into sharp focus during the conference. It was noted for instance that most African countries have yet to concretise their rules of engagement with China and Chinese companies. Similarly, Africa has remained largely reactive in response to proposals and initiatives developed by its partners who continue to set the priority for exchange, development and transformation. As such, there is an urgent need for African governments and the African Union to invest in research and skills training so as to better advance the strategic interests of African peoples in this relationship.

Participants learnt of Chinese engagement and contribution to peace and security in Africa as well as its cultural penetration through Confucius institutes in Africa, two areas that are not as prominent in public discourse on Sino-African relations as the economic, resource and political aspects. On the cultural front, it was noted that while China was establishing Confucius institutes in Africa, there was no similar trend of African cultural and philosophical institutions in China, as yet, to balance out the cultural exchange aspect of Sino-African relations. And because culture is transmitted principally through people-to-people exchanges and interactions, there has to be a better examination of the cultural context of the Africa-China relationship.

In his remarks, Ambassador Adonia Ayebare, Africa Program director at the International Peace Institute in New York, similarly spoke of the pivotal role played by China in resolving crises in Burundi, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Horn of Africa and suggested that China is contributing to peace in Africa through multilateralism and a new form of diplomacy that balances the stated commitment of political non-interference with a continuous behind-the-scenes engagement with regional organisations and specific African governments. This new strategy of conflict prevention adopted by the African Union ensures that resources, both diplomatic and financial, are invested in preventive diplomacy rather than reactive mechanisms like peace keeping.

It was noted that China may be taking lessons on how to deal with Africa from sources that may be less committed to Africa's transformation and more to their strategic interests. As such, the meeting strongly felt that China should respectfully conduct

dialogue with Africans rather than through the mushrooming of trilateral fora including the USA, China and Africa, and the EU, China and Africa. However, according to China, the requests for these dialogues have always originated from the EU and USA respectively.

Finally, there was a clear call to strengthen partnerships and collaborative work between scholars and research and political institutions, as well as progressive civil society organizations in Africa and China to support and complement the work done at the governmental level.

2 Pan-African issues:

- **W'Bank's Commitment to Sub-Saharan Africa Rises to \$13.85bn**

The World Bank, yesterday, said its commitments to Sub-Saharan Africa, which is its top priority area, rose to \$13.85billion in fiscal year 2010, a 28 per cent increase from the \$9.9billion recorded in 2009.

The bank also said it committed more than \$72 billion to fiscal year 2010 to assist developing countries as the world faces a fragile and uneven recovery.

A release issued in Washington DC, US said the bank's commitments to Sub-Saharan Africa include "\$7.2 billion from IDA, or 49 per cent of total IDA commitments; \$4.3 billion from IBRD; a record \$2 billion from IFC; and \$345 million in MIGA guarantees for projects in the region."

Apart from that, IBRD and IDA disbursements in sub-Saharan African countries stood at \$6 billion in fiscal year 2010.

The bank also noted that despite the severity of the global crisis, the downturn did not result in an emerging market sovereign debt crisis of the type seen in the 1990s and 2000s. This, it attributed mainly to prudent macro-economic management and debt management on the part of developing countries, and the technical assistance and risk management tools it provided to governments and sub-national entities in reducing their vulnerability to market volatility.

It said in fiscal year 2010, the volume of risk management transactions executed by the bank increased more than threefold compared to pre-crisis levels as member countries sought to manage the risk on their debt portfolios more actively.

The bank also said between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010, it "supported an estimated 875 projects to promote economic growth, overcome poverty, and promote private enterprise, with record commitments in education, health, nutrition, population, and infrastructure providing much-needed investments in crisis-hit economies."

This assistance, according to the bank, were provided in loans, grants, equity investments and guarantees to help countries and private businesses contending with significantly diminished private capital flows in the wake of the global downturn.

"Private flows are forecast to recover only modestly from \$454 billion in 2009 to \$771 billion by 2012, still far below the \$1.2 trillion in 2007. Overall, the financing gap of developing countries is projected to be \$210 billion in 2010, declining to \$180 billion in 2011—down from an estimated \$352 billion in 2009", it added.

Quoting the President of the World Bank Group, Robert B. Zoellick, the release said: "The harmful effects of the crisis on the poorest will be felt long after the global economy rebounds, and I believe it is critical that we are able to provide such strong support for social safety nets, infrastructure, and the private sector, in order to protect the poor and lay the foundation for recovery and growth."

• **AFRICA: Help out small farmers, report urges**

Small-holder farmers, who make up almost Africa's entire agriculture sector, need more support to reduce over-dependence on increasingly costly food imports, states a new report.

Policymakers should "strengthen the competitiveness of small-holder farmers, thus avoiding a rural exodus that would put pressure on the cities and lead to more food imports", according to the 2010 technology and innovation report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development.

Developing countries' net cereal imports rose from 39 million tonnes in the mid-1970s to 103 million in 1997-1999 and are expected to rise to 265 million tonnes by 2030, states the report. Countries also have to pay more for food: the price of Thai export rice almost tripled from US\$362 per tonne in December 2007 to \$1,000 in April 2008. Meanwhile, per capita food production in least developed countries (among which African countries are over-represented) has declined such that in 2003-2005 it was one-fifth lower than in 1970-1972.

Cost barriers

"When farmers are paying almost all their money in transaction costs there is no incentive to produce. There is a need to lower the barriers of cost for smallholder farmers," Banji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, director of the monitoring and research division at UN-HABITAT, the UN Human Settlements Programme, said during the report's launch on 1 July.

Lack of organization is also a problem. "A small producer does not suffer due to size but due to isolation. If a hundred of you put your produce together you are much more likely to get a bigger market and better prices," said Oyelaran-Oyeyinka. Ethiopia recently launched a crop commodity exchange market to help farmers negotiate prices.

"One of the reasons [African] agriculture has not moved is we don't have the surplus for value addition. We eat all [that] we produce," he said. "We simply just produce the raw material and ship it out to somebody. What remains is about 20 percent of the value.

"The bulk of the profit is at the end of the chain; the farmers who produce get the least [returns]," he said, adding that farmers require a supportive physical infrastructure, a regulated environment, training and improved farming and soil conditions. "Unless you have all these in place, the farmer will just work for nothing."

He called for pro-poor public policy, including price stabilization, modern input availability, a ready credit and market supply and land policies guaranteeing property rights. "Volatility in prices creates uncertainty in the minds of producers. If you are expecting 20,000 shillings [\$250] for your harvest [and] suddenly mid-year the harvesting price drops to 5,000 [\$62.50] the farmer is crippled," he said.

Challenges

Land under irrigation remains low yet irrigation increases cropping intensity. "The 885 million hectares of currently available arable land in developing countries is as good as 1,770 million hectares, for instance, if it is used twice a year," notes the report, adding that only one-fifth of such land was under irrigation in 1997-1999, of which 2 percent was in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 40 percent in South Asia.

"It is a very dangerous thing to [just] depend on nature for your livelihood," Oyelaran-Oyeyinka warned of rainfall dependence.

Guaranteed land tenure could be vital to helping farmers access credit and invest in the medium- and long-term productivity of the land, said the report.

Among other challenges is the growing switch to biofuels and its effects on food security, diversion of cereals from humans to feeding livestock - conversion of grain to meat - and rural-urban migration.

Oyelaran-Oyeyinka said: "There is no silver bullet - no quick fixes. There is a need to create an enabling environment for technology and innovation to decrease imports - through farmer support."

Knowledge transfer and sharing is also important, he said. "We need to bring research out of the pilot stages and make it a business adapting it to Africa's conditions."

"A country that does not feed its people is in very big danger of losing its sovereignty."

• SAHEL: Short of cash rather than food

The ongoing food crisis in the Sahel is actually a purchasing power crisis: there is food in the markets, but the poorest households cannot afford it. "Cash transfers need to be immediately organized to allow families to buy food," said Bakari Seidou, food security advisor to Save the Children UK.

Limited agricultural productivity has forced the poorest, a third of rural households in Niger, Mauritania and Mali, to rely increasingly on markets rather than on their own production, even in normal years. "They can only cover one-third of their food needs through their production, except in more fertile areas in the south," said Seidou.

"The market is their main source of food, but they need money. Their main source of cash is their labour: they earn an average of 20 cents a day per person; even if there is food available on the markets, they can not afford it."

Qualitative household economic surveys by NGOs and national early warning systems from September 2007 to May 2010 in rural areas in Niger, Mali and Mauritania looked at where and how households found their food, their source and level of income, and the proportion used to pay for food and basic services, including health and education.

Key findings include

- **Substantial wealth gap:** in agricultural areas, the richest earn from nine to 15 times more than the poorest; even though they only represent 15 percent of households, the richest own more than half the cultivated land and cattle.
- **Chronic food shortages:** the poorest families are unable to meet their food needs, especially during the lean season from May to August, even in years when good rain brought healthy production; moreover, in agricultural areas the protein-deficient cereal diet is poor in nutrition.
- **Insufficient agricultural production:** the poorest families have insufficient earning power; more than 50 percent of household income comes from paid labour, but significant numbers are unable to secure work locally and are forced to migrate or sell their land to buy food and pay debts.
- **More than half the income of the poorest goes to food:** even in agricultural areas, food purchases eat up more than half of family income; any food price increase means a family may eat less, consume food of poor nutritional value, or cut education and health expenses.
- **Cattle cash:** sales of cattle are the main source of income for richer families; milk from the cattle provides a more balanced diet. A recent study in Niger by Save the Children UK showed that cattle owners could have a proper diet at half the cost of what those who did not have animals would have to spend.

Nigeria:

1. Political News:

- **Agony as N7.5 billion road caves in**

WHILE many Lagosians had put the problems caused by Sunday's rain behind them, motorists and residents in the Igando -Ikotun -Iyana-Iba axis still have more tales of woe to tell.

By the time the downpour finally stopped, a portion of the recently completed Igando-Iyana Iba-LASU Road project, which is said to have cost the government about N7.5billion, had collapsed, almost severing the road into two.

The road, which links Alimosho area with Iyana Oba- Iba and further down with Okokomaiko and Badagry, collapsed along a stretch between Agboroko and Nigerian Army Officers' Village Bus Stop.

The situation has since Sunday evening, caused serious traffic hold-up along the axis, forcing commuters to spend several hours trying to extricate themselves from the logjam.

Throughout Monday and yesterday, thousands of commuters going to and from Iyana-Ipaja, Egbeda, Ikotun to Iyana Iba and LASU, were left stranded at various bus stops.

Motorists from either direction could not find easy access through due to the collapsed portion.

Motorists and residents expressed surprise that the road in question was constructed only a few years ago, by EECC, a Chinese Construction Company, currently handling several projects in the state.

Many of the stranded commuters stood, worried and some annoyed as they watched torrents of floodwater rush from one side of the road to the other into a nearby river.

One of the onlookers, Bunmi Ayobola, who told The Guardian he was frequent along the route said: "This is a near disaster. What would have happened if the road had caved in at night and an unsuspecting motorist had driven into it? Surely, lives would have been lost."

Information gathered at the scene indicated that the road suddenly collapsed in the early hours of Monday but no casualty was recorded.

According to one of the eyewitnesses, Tunde Sulaimon, who lives in Iba Estate: “It happened not long before I got to the place. Luckily, there was neither a car, bus nor a commercial motorcycle at the spot.”

He added that there had not been any indication that the road would collapse “except that the area where the road failed was usually flooded anytime it rained.”

Pointing to the deep gulf, another onlooker said, “ The collapse failed portion happened gradually. It was not sudden.

According to him: “The heaps of refuse and empty plastic bottles inside the gulf indicated that the portion of the road had been wearing out for long and when it could no longer withstand the pressure of the torrent, it finally caved in.

“The fear now is that we do not know whether there are several other places like that on the road that would fail in future as the rains intensify.”

One of the stranded motorists, James Anumudu, blamed the failure of the road on “a bad job done by the construction company.

Blame should also go to whoever certified the job. He also passed a swipe on the government for awarding a contract of that magnitude without making provision for drainage.

According to him: “One of the problems along the Igando- Iba Road, particularly in the Agboroko area, is lack of drainage. Almost all the structures beside the road are submerged and there is no channel created for the run-off and flood to escape through”.

Obviously upset by the collapse of the road, Lagosians are calling on “Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola (SAN) to ensure that some of the road projects that were said to have been completed, many of which were awarded before he assumed office, be reviewed to ensure that tax-payers got value for their money.”

The unprecedented traffic jam, which followed the collapse of the road, left many people trekking long distances before they could get vehicles to their destinations.

Commercial bus operators took advantage of the situation to hike fares. Some of them, who had been heading to Iyana Iba, either from Ikotun, Iyana Ipaja or Egbeda, stopped at Iba Junction, a distance of about three kilometres to Iyana Iba Bus Stop, and their passengers forced to disembark.

The normal fare of N100.00 and N120.00 from Ikotun and Iyana Ipaja to Iyana Iba rose to N150.00 and N200.00.

Commercial motorcycle operators popularly called Okada also jerked their fares upwards. Hundreds of people who could not afford the new fares trekked to Iyana Iba.

However, officials of Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) and armed police officers brought the traffic situation under control.

One of the LASTMA officials told The Guardian that immediately they got “the information about the collapsed road and the difficult traffic situation, our men were drafted to the road.

It was obvious that since motorists would be diverted to one lane, there would be chaos unless we were here to keep things under control.”

Explaining the presence of the armed police officers, the leader of the Mobile Police team, who also did not want his name mentioned, said: “ We realize that some people may likely want to be unruly and there is the need to maintain law and order.”

He also explained that hoodlums might also want to use the opportunity to steal from vehicles in the traffic.

• **2011: Nigerians in Diaspora Back Jonathan for President**

Nascent political group, Nigerians in the Diaspora for Jonathan 2011, has said President Goodluck Jonathan is the candidate to beat in next year's presidential election.

Its leader, Mr. Ani Almona Oluku, told newsmen in Abuja yesterday that most arguments against Jonathan’s candidacy in next year's presidential election are hollow and parochial, since none of them has so far raised issues of incompetence or non-suitability on grounds of corruption.

The group said what the anti-Jonathan elements had all along been latching on to is the unwritten zoning arrangement in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which they said had excluded him from contesting in 2011 since he is from the Southern part of the country.

Oluku urged the president not to base his decision to run on the wishes of the political elite but rather on the wishes and the demonstrated support of the grassroots citizenry.

He said the zeal to demonstrate this grassroots support that Jonathan enjoys partially informed the formation of Nigerian in the Diaspora for Jonathan 2011.

He flayed the arguments of those against Jonathan contesting in next year’s election based on what he called the unwritten zoning agreement in the PDP, saying practical considerations of the nation’s political matrix and the need for continuity in governmental policy making do not support those arguments.

He said: In a true democracy, which Nigeria is striving to achieve, there are no guarantees as to the result of an election, thus it will be presumptuous to assume that PDP nominee for the position of president of Nigeria will win the presidential election, adding, that being the case, if the presidency is zoned to a particular section of the country for eight years, what happens if any other political party other than PDP wins the presidential election? Will PDP then allow that section of the country to be the only one to field candidates for all subsequent elections until they complete their eight years no matter how long it takes them to win.

Oluku explained that the correct thing to do is that if an elective position is zoned to a section of the country and PDP does not win the election, its principle of rotation demands that that position must then be rotated to the next section of the country, adding that this same argument holds true when a position is zoned to a section of the country and the holder of the position dies while in office.

He said under PDP's principle of equity, justice and fairness no section of the country should be allowed to succeed itself in the choice of candidates for elective offices, pointing out that upon the untimely death of President Umaru Yar'Adua, PDP constitution if followed strictly mandates that the office of the president must be rotated to the South, which means that President Jonathan, and anyone else from the South, is qualified to contest for the nomination as president in the 2011 election.

Oluku, however, said the group had begun the collection of 1,000,000 signatures of Nigerians who want Jonathan to run in the 2011 election to demonstrate the grassroots support enjoyed by the president.

He said for this reason, the organization had opened a website – www.goodlucknigeria.com --- where all Nigerians could sign a very simple questionnaire.

He added that Nigerians will also receive SMS messages to which they can reply if they want President Jonathan to run in 2011.

• **Let Amnesty Include Apology by Military'**

The federal government has been urged to extend the Niger Delta Amnesty programme to include apology by the Nigerian military to victims of its high-handedness over the years.

The advice was one of the suggestions made at town hall meeting held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State Tuesday to promote cordial relations between civilians and military personnel in the country.

The Civil- Military Forum was organised by the Office of the Chief of Defence Staff, Air Marshall Paul Dike, to identify causes of friction between civilians and military personnel and fashion out strategies to promote cordial relations between the two.

Many speakers at the forum blamed civilians for the friction while many others blamed military personnel.

One of the suggestions applauded at the forum was that the federal government should extend the Amnesty Programme for the Niger Delta to include apology by military authorities to all victims of military high-handedness in the country.

The suggestion held that it would be difficult to promote cordial relations between civilians and military personnel unless soldiers apologised for many instances of high-handedness against civilians.

It was submitted that unless this is done, victims of such high-handedness and their relatives will not be comfortable to relate with military personnel and that this will impact negatively on efforts to promote cordial relations between the two parties in the society.

Another suggestion at the forum was that the government should devote more attention to the welfare of military personnel in terms of salaries, accommodation and welfare on retirement from the service.

“If military men are treated like animals in the way they are accommodated and treated by the society, it will be difficult for the same soldiers to be humane in their interaction with civilians in the society”, the speaker said.

Other suggestions at the forum include the training of military personnel to appreciate the worldview of civilians, introduction of civil-military relations in military training institutions, introduction of military studies in the curriculum of educational institutions at all levels and the enforcement of laws on anybody who causes infraction between civilians and military personnel.

Chief Executive of Newswatch Communications Limited,

Mr Ray Ekpu, the who was the guest speaker at the event, traced conflicts between civilians and military personnel to the different cultures between the two components of society. He identified military intervention in government, the Civil War, the drafting of soldiers to maintain internal security at crisis points across the country as reasons for the visibility of the military in Nigeria.

He suggested regular interaction between the soldiers and civilians, investigation and enforcement of the law in cases of conflict between civilians and soldiers, re-training of soldiers on issues of human rights and more openness by the military institution as ways of promoting cordial relations between civilians and soldiers. He also called on civilians to show appreciation to military personnel for the sacrifice they make for the country.

Barrister Magnus Ngei Abe, Secretary to the Rivers State Government, who represented the State Governor, Chibuike Rotimi Amechi, called for the promotion of mutual respect

among the citizens as panacea to peaceful co-existence among civilians and between civilians and military personnel.

- **House Summons Defence Ministers, as 79 Military Officers Retire**

The House of Representatives Committee on Defence has summoned the Minister of Defence, Chief Adetokunbo Kayode and his Minister of State (Defence), Alhaji Murtala Yar'Adua, over the alleged premature retirement of about 79 officers from the Nigeria Armed Forces.

The two ministers are to appear tomorrow before the House Committee on Defence alongside the Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Air Staff as well as the Chief of Naval Staff. They are to explain the circumstances surrounding the said mass retirement of some top military personnel.

Chairman, House Committee on Defence, Honourable Oluwole Oke, who confirmed the summon, disclosed that the meeting became necessary following the series of petitions, the Committee has received on the issue.

The aggrieved retirees, Oke said, have written petitions not only to the Defence Committees in the House and the Senate but also to the Presidency seeking a review of their sudden exit from the service of the Armed Forces.

Oke said the House Committee on Defence has chosen to convene the meeting to enable all the parties review the exercise and explore avenues to address the complaints promptly. This, he said, was to prevent the ripples created by the retirement from affecting the morale of serving military personnel. According to him, the country's democracy was still young and cannot afford to have disenchanted armed forces.

“We are aware of the petitions and they will be looked into and resolved. Yes, we're meeting with the Defence Ministers tomorrow. We are representatives of the Nigerian people and whenever we receive complaints like this, we try to look into them because that is one of the reasons we are here,” Oke said.

THISDAY learnt that most of the retirees were between the ranks of Captain to Brigadier-General, with most of them alleging that their retirement were unjustified.

It was also gathered that some of the petitioners claimed that they had neither reached the retirement age nor served the mandatory number of years before they were given the boot. Others said they were retired at the verge of their promotion to another rank, which they claimed they stood a good chance of being promoted to, describing their exit as an act of victimisation.

The Director, Defence Information, Col. Mohammed Yarima, could not be reached last night to react to the alleged retirement.

But defence sources told THISDAY that retirement is a routine service matter, stating that when officers retirement dates are due, they will definitely be given notice of retirement.

“Those due for disengagement will naturally be given notices to commence their terminal leave,” the source said.

• **Iranian President Ahmadinejad Visits Nigeria**

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will visit Nigeria this weekend in a move considered by analysts as an attempt to build alliances against stronger United Nations sanctions over its nuclear programme.

Khosrow Rezazadeh, Iran's ambassador to Nigeria has but declined to offer further confirmed Ahmadinejad 's planned visit details. The spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ozo Nwobu could not speak about Ahmadinejad 's visit he was said to be in a meeting.

The Iranian president’s arrival comes as Nigeria is scheduled to host a conference for a group of developing countries known as the D-8. The UN put new sanctions in place against Iran in June over its nuclear program. Among the new restrictions, the sanctions freeze assets of new organizations linked to Iran's government, bans the nation from pursuing "any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons" and bars it from investing in uranium mining.

Ahmadinejad responded by vowing retaliation if Iran's ships are searched over suspicions that the cargo may violate the new sanctions. Responded by vowing Iranian retaliation if its ships are searched over suspicions that the cargo may violate the new sanctions.

• **US: Nigeria Faces Political Uncertainty Ahead of 2011 Polls, Says corruption undermines efforts to develop economically**

United States has said despite the progress made by the recommendations of the Electoral Reform Committee report before the National Assembly, Nigeria still faces significant political challenges and uncertainty ahead of next year's general elections.

It also said corruption undermines the country's ability to develop economically, impacts US citizens and companies directly, and provides an environment conducive to international criminal activity.

These were contained in a comprehensive report on countries in various regions of the world titled: 'Advancing Freedom and Democracy Reports, May 2010,' released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

The report, released yesterday, said US "prioritises just and democratic governance as key to strengthening Nigeria's institutions and moving its democratic process forward, but noted that, "Although progress has been made with the recommendations of the Electoral Reform Committee report to the National Assembly, the country still faces significant political challenges and uncertainty in the period prior to the presidential and National Assembly elections within the next year."

It however said it would continue "to work with the Nigerian government toward achieving just and democratic governance through strong and transparent institutions based on credible, free, and fair elections, which will lead to a government that is more accountable to its people."

The report also said US is engaged in efforts to help build the capacity of the National Assembly, train political parties on internal democracy, particularly advocating for the inclusion of women and other marginalised groups.

It said: "To promote the objective of just and democratic governance, the US Government will advocate for electoral reform in advance of the 2011 national elections.

Election assistance will help develop a transparent and accurate national voter registration list and train civil society organizations in election monitoring. Technical assistance will promote growth of grassroots democracy through public outreach, speakers, exchange programs, and scholarships, and encourage federal and state levels to implement fiscal responsibility and public procurement legislation through the Pilot Engagement with States (PES) program."

It also said complementary US government objective seeks to strengthen the rule of law to address endemic corruption, violent and financial crime on a massive scale, and bring perpetrators to justice, but noted that the nation's institutions lack the human capacity and financial resources necessary to fight these crimes effectively.

The report said the country's prominent role in transnational crimes ranging from drug and human trafficking to piracy, money laundering, and financial fraud highlights the negative impact of weak legal and law enforcement institutions on the country's progress.

Also highlighted in the report are US' efforts to help Nigeria strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights. These efforts include programmes to train Nigeria Police Force on community policing techniques, leadership, management, accountability, human rights, and ethics, and training of civil society groups in conflict mitigation, non-violent advocacy, and religious and ethnic tolerance.

• **PDP Chieftain Asks Bankole to Quit**

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Dimeji Bankole, has been told to toe the path of honour by quitting office to allow for proper investigation into the allegations of impropriety and official misconduct made against him by the Progressives Group in the House.

A chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) from Anambra State, Hon Emmanuel Ezeume, who spoke to newsmen in Lagos, called on the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to prevail on the Speaker to step aside while the on-going investigation into allegation of budget misappropriation being conducted against him by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), is pursued to a logical conclusion.

Ezeume, who belong to the inner caucus of the PDP in Anambra State, condemned the "show of shame put up in the hallowed chamber of the House by those who call themselves leaders and honourable people, throwing caution into the winds over an issue that should have been procedurally and constitutionally resolved by following due process."

He described as unconstitutional, the suspension of the 11 lawmakers belonging to the Progressives Group who had called on the Speaker to resign from office following allegation of not being able to account for a N9million capital vote of the House for 2009, adding that the manner of their ouster from the chambers was barbaric and malicious.

The PDP stalwart wondered what our supposed leaders who are referred to as honourable lawmakers are teaching the younger generation of our citizenry, when a simple issue bordering on rule of law could lead to violent fracas, rather than being resolved constitutionally, saying if lawmakers can break law at will, who then will respect the law.

He described the attitude of the lawmakers as highly disappointing, and a national embarrassment, which according to him, was already leading the party into deep crisis and called on the NEC of the party to find quick solution to the crisis before it degenerates further.

He reasoned that following the crisis, the House of representatives is already being polarized, putting members into different agitating camps, and so the earlier a lasting solution was sought to resolve the matter the better for the PDP as election year was fast approaching.

• Bankole Accused of Diverting N1bn Erosion Fund to Ogun

The people of Okigwe South Federal Constituency of Imo State have condemned the suspension of their member in the House of Representatives, Chief Austin

Nwachukwu and accused the Speaker, Hon. Dimeji Bankole, of diverting N1billion ecological fund meant for the area to Ogun State.

Consequently, they have given Bankole a seven-day ultimatum to reverse the suspension and restore in the 2010 budget the N1billion fund meant for checking erosion in Umuariam, Obowo Council area of Imo State.

At an emergency meeting held at Mbanjo, the people described as unconstitutional and high-handed the suspension of Nwachukwu whom they described as their effective and worthy representative.

Attended by more than 45 traditional and religious leaders, presidents general of town unions and other stakeholders, the meeting also accused Bankole of doctoring the 2010 budget to favour Ogun State at the expense of the second Niger Bridge.

“It is on record that N7billion out of the N12billion budgeted for the second Niger bridge was transferred to Ogun State by Bankole. We view this action as anti Igbo”, they observed.

Addressing the meeting, the former Security Adviser to Imo State government, Dr Zeek-Martins Nnadozie, exonerated Nwachukwu from any blame in the fracas that recently rocked the House of Representatives.

According to Nnadozie who is the President General of Nsu Clan, “It is unfortunate that representatives fighting for their right are suspended without due process”.

He called on President Goodluck Jonathan to wade into the issue and restore the dignity of those who are fighting for the Nigerian masses.

In his own contribution, a traditional ruler from the area, Eze Anyanwu O. Anyanwu, described the suspension of Nwachukwu as the height of tyranny.

“Let this message be taken to Speaker Bankole that our representative has committed no crime. We give him seven days to recall Hon Sir Austin Nwachukwu before we lose our temper”, he warned.

- **Nigeria Assumes Presidency**

Nigeria will today assume the presidency of the United Nations (UN) Security Council. Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the UN Professor Joy Ogwu who will occupy the presidency for the month of July, is taking over from Mexico, which presided over the Council in June.

The Presidency rotates monthly according to the English alphabetical listing of its member states.

The Council is made up of five permanent members and 10 non-permanent members. China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States are permanent members, while Nigeria, Austria, Bosnia Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Turkey, Japan, Lebanon, Uganda and Mexico are non-permanent members, who were elected for a term of two years.

Nigeria was elected to a non-permanent seat on the Council last October, along with Gabon, Brazil, Croatia and Lebanon. They replaced Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, Libya and Vietnam on the council on January 1, 2010.

The presiding country has the responsibility to speak for the council, and may have responsibility to decide, but not necessarily determine the agenda of the council for that month, as the position gives the occupant the leverage to convince other members on issues that may or may not come on its agenda for that month.

Ogwu, who said preventive diplomacy will be a defining issue for Nigeria in the council, will spend today on bilaterals with other council members, while a press conference had been scheduled for Friday afternoon. She will also receive the Queen of England, Elizabeth II, on Tuesday in a symbolic session that will cast their minds down memory lane - Ogwu was one of the members of the junior girls' guild that received the Queen during her visit to Nigeria 54 years ago. Then, Ogwu was a 10-year old student, and now the president of the most influential organ of the UN.

On July 16, the Council will have an open debate to which council and non-council members would be invited to participate, while a concept paper would be shared next week. It could however not be confirmed whether President Goodluck Jonathan would be in New York to preside over any of the sessions of the council as President Barack Obama did when the US occupied the presidency.

The new president, who is a former minister of foreign affairs, is the nation's first female Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN. She also served as Director General, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), the nation's foremost Foreign policy Think Tank, and made immense contributions to the development of Nigeria's foreign policy.

She is a member of the Board of Regents, Covenant University, Otta, and also serves on the Board of the Transformation, Integration and Globalization Economic Research (TIGER) Institute, Warsaw, Poland. She also served as a member of UN Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters during Secretary-General Kofi Annan's tenure and later chaired the Advisory Board.

Ogwu, a Professor of Political Science and International Relations, had served as presidential delegate and special adviser on numerous Nigerian delegations to the UN General Assembly since 1988; and on the Multinational United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) that supervised the country's transition to majority

rule in 1994. Her works include *Nigeria Foreign Policy: Alternative Futures*, which became a classic text for the study of Nigeria's foreign policy.

• **House Passes Electoral Act, Cages 'Mushroom Parties'**

The House of Representatives yesterday passed the Electoral Act 2010 and empowered the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to deregister political parties, which fail to meet a set of criteria embedded in the new law.

The new legislation if adopted by the Senate will effectively checkmate the proliferation of political parties and discourage the existence of 'mushroom parties' most of whom have existed only in the portfolios of their founders.

However, the fears that the existence of over 50 political parties and the introduction of the independent candidacy may make the political turf over crowded in the 2011 elections may have been laid to rest as the Conference of Speakers of State Houses of Assembly has rejected the independent candidacy provision in the amendments to the 1999 Constitution.

Speaker of the House, Honourable Dimeji Bankole who broke the news of the rejection of independent candidacy by the states said he got wind of it while perusing the report of the Conference of Speakers of State Houses of Assembly.

The passage of the Electoral Act followed the adoption of the report of an Ad-hoc Committee set up by the House to synthesize the views of members on the powers of the Independent National Electoral Commission to register political parties.

The Committee set up on June 1, 2010 made some far reaching recommendations which the House adopted yesterday sitting in the Committee of the Whole.

Under the new legislation any association seeking to be registered as a political party must have and maintain functional and verifiable offices in at least two third (2/3) of the 774 Local Government Areas of the federation. The association must equally have at least 10,000 registered and verified members in at least two third (2/3) of the States of the federation.

In order to guard against the pitfalls of the past, the House further adopted a recommendation empowering the Independent National electoral Commission (INEC) to verify all the claims of the associations seeking registration as political parties and publish same in at least three national newspapers before registration.

Similarly, the Independent National Electoral Commission shall have powers to deregister political parties on the grounds the political party so registered falls in breach

of the requirements for registration or for failure to win at least a seat in the National or State Assembly elections.

The House had on June 1, 2010 set up a six-man Special Ad hoc committee to harmonize the position of the House on two controversial issues on the Electoral Act namely, empowering the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to de-register political parties and adopting a legislative approach to curb the excesses of state governors and state houses of assembly in tampering with the tenure of local government council chairmen using caretaker committees.

The Ad-hoc Committee which is headed by the House Minority Leader, Hon. Ali Ndume (ANPP Borno) has Hon. Ita Enang (PDP Akwa Ibom); Hon. CID Maduabum (PDP Anambra) and Hon. Lanre Adeniran (PDP Oyo) as members. Others include Hon. Abdulhai Shuaibu Hashiru, Hon. Ibrahim Mustapha and Hon. SY Ahmed.

Ndume who presented the report yesterday said, the Committee consulted extensively with members of the House and considered various options. He said the recommendations would go a long way in creating broad based national political parties instead of the current scenario where most political parties have remained unknown to the electorate years after they were registered.

The report was however not signed by any member of the Ad-hoc Committee and was silent on the proposal to reduce the influence of state governors on local government administration through the alleged recycling of local government caretaker committees.

• **2011: NDP Yet to Endorse IBB as Candidate**

The National Democratic Party (NDP) clarified yesterday that it had not taken a decision to endorse former Military President, General Ibrahim Babangida as a candidate for the 2011 presidential election.

In a statement issued in Abuja by the party's National Secretary, Alhaji Abubakar Kantoma, entitled: "The Position of the Party," he said the position expressed by the party's National Chairman, Prince Chudi Chukwuani, was out of sync with the philosophy of the party.

According to him, "As far as the party and its National Executive Committee (NEC) are concerned, there was no such decision to endorse anybody at the moment as its Presidential candidate.

"The position of the Party is that it will only support and endorse anybody or any candidate who declares and joins the party as its card carrying member. This was the decision the party took at its last national convention held on the 2nd November, 2009.

"Therefore, the statement is a personal opinion of Prince Chudi Chukwuani and not that of the Party. In view of the above, we advise all our members nationwide to remain

steadfast and ignore the statement as published in the 30th June, 2010 edition of Leadership Newspaper on page 12 accordingly.”

The NDP said the report had credited Chukwuani with a statement in which he claimed that the party had pledged its support for the presidential ambition of Babangida in the 2011 presidential election.

He was quoted to have said that “the party deems it fit to endorse Babangida as its presidential candidate because he was the kind of leader that would bring developmental change to the country.”

He had also said “We have made up our minds because of the leadership experience of Babangida.”

• **2011: ‘S’South Ready to Back Jonathan’**

The shape and texture of the 2011 presidential contest may have begun to crystallize following a meeting yesterday between President Goodluck Jonathan and governors of the South-south geo-political zone.

There were indications from the meeting that the governors may have in principle declared to support Jonathan in the event that he eventually decides to throw his hat into the ring for next year’s presidential poll.

In fact, the governors said yesterday at the end of the meeting that they were waiting for the President’s declaration of interest.

Speaking with State House correspondents after the meeting which held at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, Bayelsa State Governor Timipre Sylva said the governors along with a majority of chief executives from other zones, were eagerly awaiting Jonathan’s declaration of intention.

Jonathan had earlier said he would wait until the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) releases the time-table for the election before declaring his stand.

Sylva said the President’s declaration of intention would presage their support for him, stressing that once Jonathan declared for the race, the governors and a majority of Nigerians would support him in his quest for the presidency in the 2011 election.

Responding to the question as to whether the South-south governors would support Jonathan for 2011, Sylva said: “I have said so many times that I will be supporting the President if he comes out to contest in 2011 and I can assure you that a lot of governors, not just South-south, and a lot of people in Nigeria are ready to support him.

“But you know you can’t jump the gun. He must also come out and let the country know if he will run or not before you will hear more from everyone; but, I can assure you that the country, to me, looks very ready for a Jonathan presidency in 2011.”

But giving an insight into the real agenda of the meeting, Akwa Ibom State Governor Godswill Akpabio said it centred on the harmonisation of the Public Procurement Act with the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Act in order to ensure that due process is strictly followed in the area of project execution.

Meanwhile, former military president, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, has, however, said the 2011 presidential election is not a do-or-die contest between him and President Jonathan.

Babangida was apparently reacting to a statement by a pro-Goodluck Jonathan Support Group, which had asked him to emphasise less on zoning in the forthcoming presidential election, “as what is needed at the moment in Nigeria is not a zonal president but a president with national appeal.”

Babangida’s Media Spokesman, Prince Kassim Afegbua, in a statement, quoted the former head of state to have said: “The Goodluck Support Group should be reminded that this is not a do-or-die contest between General Ibrahim Babangida and President Goodluck Jonathan. No, it is far from that. General IBB is too decent to play dirty politics. His involvement is about the country and its political stability in order to foster unity and provoke development across the land.”

Afegbua said the former president had no regrets attending such a meeting which was aimed at ensuring that there is political stability in the country, and the fact that the Northern zones of the country are essential components of the union, makes the urge more compelling.

On the reference to late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, he said they were recorded in history as regional leaders who helped to foster unity in the country.

Babangida said democracy is all about making choices in a plural society like Nigeria, adding, “Zoning of political positions is a dominant feature of any plural society and given Nigeria’s plural status, the concept of zoning has its own stabilizing factor amongst a plethora of other contending issues in the polity.”

Accordingly, Babangida said: “Against this background therefore, it will be wrong for anyone to misinterpret a well-intended idea which was meant to fashion a way out of the political quagmire, as a ‘gang-up’ against President Goodluck Jonathan.

“For the umpteenth time, it should be understood that the concepts of power sharing, power distribution and power negotiation are essential ingredients that cannot be jettisoned in any plural society.

“In fact, scholars and political scientists are agreed that deeply divided societies and ethnic pluralities pose a threat to democracy if power sharing principles are not applied in the mediation process. Those who see zoning as a factor of socio-political stability in a deeply divided society such as ours are only conversant with this age-long feasible solution process.”

According to the statement, “Former President General Ibrahim Babangida enjoys very robust and healthy relationship with President Goodluck Jonathan but those political jobbers and opportunists for want of job to do may be saying the opposite just to make a political meaning out of every situation.”

The former military president said Nigeria and Nigerians should be more concerned about the political manifestoes of the aspirants instead of name-calling on account of one's support for zoning or lack of it.

It said amongst Babangida’s critics, no one had questioned the utility value of his campaign issues; true federalism, creation of state police, resource control by states, security, devolution of political power, decentralization of power generation and several others.

“We should dwell more on these issues and see how effective they are to address a number of the challenges facing us than this recourse to discussing politics as a personality contest between two great citizens of this country,” he said.

2. Economy:

3. Energy:

• Decline in Nigeria’s Production Lowers OPEC June Output

Nigeria’s crude oil production tumbled 75,000 barrels to 2.01 million barrels, the first decrease since February and the largest reduction of any member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a Bloomberg survey of oil companies, producers and analysts has revealed.

The survey published yesterday showed that crude oil production from OPEC dropped from a 17-month high in June, led by the decline in Nigeria’s production. The country however exceeded its OPEC quota of 1,673,000 barrels by 337,000 barrels.

The 2010 first quarter production report released recently by the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) put Nigeria’s average production at 2,346,556 bpd (2.3mbpd). In January, the average daily production rate was 2,280,859 bpd, while those of February and March were 2,345,897 bpd and 2,412,911 bpd respectively.

The survey showed that production from the 11 members bound by quotas slipped 157,000 barrels or 0.5 per cent, to an average 29.23 million barrels a day. Output by members with quotas, except Iraq, dropped 122,000 barrels to 26.865 million, leaving the OPEC-11 still overproducing their output target by 2.02 million.

OPEC cut its production quotas by 4.2 million barrels to 24.845 million barrels a day effective from January 2009 as fuel demand fell during the worst recession. Compliance among the 11 members with targets rose to 52 per cent from 49 per cent in May.

Meanwhile, crude oil for August delivery fell \$2.31 or 3 per cent, to \$75.94 a barrel on Tuesday on the New York Mercantile Exchange, the biggest single-session decline since June 4. Oil slipped 9.3 per cent between the end of March and yesterday, the first quarterly drop since 2008.

OPEC had in June said it would likely keep its production quota unchanged when it next meets on October 14 in Vienna. The body said it could not take any action in view of the fluctuating oil prices.

The Bloomberg survey noted that Iraqi output dropped 35,000 barrels to 2.365 million in June, the second-biggest decrease in OPEC. The Persian Gulf nation was the group's third-largest producer this month.

However, Saudi Arabia, OPEC's biggest producer, pumped 8.29 million barrels a day in June, unchanged from the previous month. The kingdom also exceeded its quota by 239,000 barrels.

• **Main One Launches Commercial Service**

Main One yesterday launched the commercial service of its 1,920 Gbps, 7000 kilometres long, submarine fibre optic cable system linking West Africa to Europe, two weeks ahead of schedule.

The company's Managing Director, Mrs. Funke Opeke, had three weeks ago informed THISDAY that the cable will be commercially launched mid July.

Main One however, in a statement, disclosed that the cable has been completed and inaugurated. It has landing stations in Nigeria and Ghana and branching units in Morocco, Senegal, Canary Islands and Ivory Coast.

The cable, according to the statement, will deliver unprecedented broadband capacity to West Africa, more than 10 times what is currently available.

The statement said that with the cable system now turned on, "Main One is poised to champion a communications revolution in Africa impacting businesses, governments and individuals by providing higher bandwidth and exceptional speeds at a lower cost.

The ramifications of Main One's cable will be felt in all sectors: from education, to health, to entertainment, etc helping driving economic growth and creating job opportunities all over Africa.

Chairman, Main One Cable Company, Fola Adeola, according to the statement, described the feat as historic.

He stated: "Today is a historic day for West Africa. The arrival of the Main One cable proves that much good can be done by Africans for Africans. We are pleased to realise the fruit of our dedication and commitment in the past 30 months.

"More importantly, we are happy to be a channel for driving growth in Africa and changing the status quo for the average African as reliable internet connectivity becomes easily accessible and affordable for all"

4. Environment:

• Coalition Seeks New Body to Address Oil Spills

The Civil Society Coalition has canvassed a new compensation body to address the recurring issues of oil spills in the Niger Delta region.

The Coalition comprises 47 groups including Nigeria Liberty Forum, UK, and Center for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD), Nigeria, Stepping Stones Nigeria, Stakeholder Democracy Network, UK/Nigeria, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, Netherlands, PLATFORM / remember Saro-Wiwa, UK, Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility, UK, Justice in Nigeria Now, USA.

It said in a statement that the BP's Gulf of Mexico disaster has heightened international concerns about the environmental dangers of offshore drilling around the world and led to President Barrack Obama declaring it America's "environmental 9/11.

"This oil spill has been correctly identified as a massive emergency and it is time to recognize that the ongoing oil spills, conflict and human rights abuses in the Niger Delta should also be acknowledged as an emergency demanding a concerted international response," it said.

According to the groups, "whilst the American government has secured a \$20 billion package from BP to compensate the communities affected by the Gulf of Mexico spill, communities in the Niger Delta are offered little or no justice."

• Oil Spill: OPEC Asks US to Revisit Offshore Drilling Ban

•Nigerian Content Law violators to face tough sanctions

Nigeria and other members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) have called on the United States to reconsider a recent ban on new deepwater drilling in response to the disaster caused by a ruptured BP oil well in the Gulf of Mexico.

This development comes as Nigeria warned yesterday that it will henceforth impose heavy sanctions on Nigerian and other International Oil Companies that fail to implement the Nigerian Content Law to the letter.

Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) Mr. Emeka Nwapa issued the warning yesterday in Port Harcourt, Rivers

State at a workshop organized by Brass LNG Limited to sensitize local contractors on what they need to benefit from the over \$10 billion jobs that will be up for grabs as the projects come to life.

The 12-member OPEC posited that offshore drilling is an important source of oil and any ban would be too hasty when the cause of the spill is still unclear.

Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA), which advises 28 industrialized countries, had warned last week that the six –month drilling moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico imposed by the US could cut potential world offshore output by 800,000 barrels to 900,000 barrels per day by 2015. The agency estimates that 100,000 bpd to 300,000 bpd could be lost if new projects in the Gulf of Mexico were delayed by one or two years until 2015.

Nigeria holds the eight largest oil reserves in the world having 37 billion barrels. According to current estimates, more than three-quarters of the world's proven oil reserves are located in OPEC member countries and Nigeria amounting to 3.6percent of the OPEC total. Nigeria is also the fifth-largest exporter of oil to the U.S.

OPEC Secretary-General, Abdullah El Badri who spoke to reporters after meeting European Union officials in Brussels was not convinced that immediate step taken by the US was necessary.

He however said oil producers will examine their rules and drilling practices and "if there is any adjustment that has to be made to the present operation we should take that but we should really be very careful."

President Barack Obama last month imposed a six-month ban on Gulf of Mexico drilling after an April 20 explosion at a BP oil rig killed 11 workers and blew out a well 5,000 feet (1,525 meters) underwater — spewing out hundreds of millions of gallons (liters) of oil.

A federal judge last week overturned the ban as rash and heavy-handed. The White House has appealed; saying continued drilling exposes workers and the environment "to a danger that the president does not believe we can afford."

Meanwhile, the NCDMB has warned that there was no way Nigeria can develop capacity without giving chances for local input, adding that the era where local contractors connived with foreign businesses to vend projects was over as anyone caught in the act would be punished according to the provisions of the law.

According to him, the benefits of empowering Nigerian companies and building capacity would discourage capital flight and spoke of the need for Nigeria to insist on doing all the things in the sector except those they do not have the capacity of handling.

Oil production in the country, he stated has never posed any serious challenge since the technology to do it has always been there and imported into Nigeria, pointing out that the problem has always been that the quantity of goods and services imported left the country without capacity and opportunities to industrialize thereby impoverishing the populace.

• **Oil Spill: We've Failed, Says Shell**

For the first time, oil giant Shell yesterday admitted that oil companies are not doing enough to deal with oil spills in their areas of operation. The company also said it was not ignorant of its obligation under the Nigerian law to clean up oil spills, but that it would not jeopardise the safety of its staff because of the law.

Speaking at the Fortune Global Forum in Cape Town, South Africa, Chief Executive Officer of Shell, Peter Voser, said oil industries must come together to be better prepared in the future to deal with spills.

The Shell boss who was responding to criticisms raised at the Global Forum that Shell and other oil majors were not doing enough to clean up oil spills in Nigeria, said the complex situation in the country makes it difficult for the company to properly deal with it.

"We can contribute in the best way actually by doing our job properly (and) generate revenues for the government, but that has been quite problematic over the last few years because of sabotage and violence (targeting oil companies)," Reuters quoted Voser as saying.

According to him, "Shell was obliged under Nigerian law to clean up oil spills but would not jeopardise staff safety to accomplish this. I will not send people in if they are under threat."

Voser said that last year alone, 98 percent of Shell's oil spills in the Niger Delta region, were caused by sabotage and or theft.

Oil spills have been left for decades in the Niger Delta, polluting the air, soil and water of impoverished communities.

This was the case even before the problems of sabotage and kidnapping in the region. In fact, years of neglect led to these vices, because communities felt that was the way to protest injustice.

No one knows for sure how much oil has seeped into the rivers and creeks of the Niger Delta, but the report said environmentalists opined that the impact over time in one of the world's largest wetlands is much worse than in the United States.

He however said Shell will continue its deep-water drilling to meet rising global oil demand despite safety concerns following rival BP's Gulf of Mexico blowout.

"Given the rise in the population and rise in developing world of energy needs, we will have to develop those resources in deep waters as well, so my expectation is that we will go forward with it, but it will need some changes," Voser said.

"We would not have drilled the well in the same way. We have got other safety procedures across the globe. But I think for some companies there will be some learning from this as well," he said.

"If I look at what (US Interior Secretary Kenneth) Salazar is now proposing to change in terms of regulations in the United States, I can say this is pretty much in line with our global (safety) standards," said Voser.

• **Oil Spill: Environment Practitioners Want Compensation from Shell**

The leadership of Environmental Health Service Providers Association of Nigeria has asked the Anglo-Dutch oil exploration giant, Shell Petroleum Development Company to commence the process of remediation of all areas affected by its operations and to also ensure that the affected communities are adequately compensated.

Their demand is coming as Mobil Producing Nigeria (MPN) Unlimited, an affiliate of American oil giant, Exxonmobil is battling to contain the effect of oil spill recorded June 20, 2010. The company has also just recorded another spill from its facility. The latest spill was reportedly discharged into the Atlantic Ocean from the Yoho production platform within the Qua Iboe oil fields.

The Association's National President, Chief Herbert Anyadike, who spoke to journalists in Abuja said based on the experience of the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico where the company was compelled by the United States to pay compensation totalling

about \$20 billion, Shell should also be made to make similar commitment to the people of the Niger Delta.

"You know what use to be in the revering areas where oil will spill and remain there for many years without anyone taking care of it. Those people who have been here living with this problem over the years and have been clamoring for compensation has been justified.

The United States of America has just opened their eyes to tell Shell that what they did in their country was wrong".

"The Shell Company has been short-changing this country and nobody has called them to order, to compensate this country and her people who are victims of victims of oil spillage", he said.

He said with the evolving issues in relation to the threat of oil spill to the safety of the environment and its attendant damage to human health, federal government should prevail on Shell as well any other oil company that spills oil in the Niger Delta to remediate it and pay compensation to the people.

Speaking on measures to improve the state of environmental sanitation in the country, Anyadike said the association is pursuing a mandatory registration of all companies engaged in environmental and sanitation business in Nigeria.

He said only those companies that registers, with the body would be allowed to practice and carry-on their roles as service providers in the environmental sanitation sub-sector.

Anyadike called on government agencies and private organisations to stop patronizing quacks in the award of contracts on sanitation and refuse disposal, adding that it is mandatory for them to demand as an evidence certificate of registration by the Environmental Health Officers Registration Council of Nigeria (EHORECON).

Meanwhile, in a one-paragraph statement announcing the latest oil spill, "Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPN), operator of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC)/MPN Joint Venture, confirms that a discharge occurred at Yoho production platform. According to the official statement, the regulatory authorities were notified and the discharge was dispersed and evaporated".st oil spillage, nothing has been done", he lamented.

5. Immigration/Refugee/Idps:

6. Health:

- **Health Ministry to Take over National Hospital**

The National Hospital, Abuja will be handed over to the Federal Ministry of Health as soon as a bill before the National Assembly, and already passed by the Senate, scales through the House of Representatives, Minister of Health, Professor Onyebuchi Chukwu, has said.

The minister dropped the hint yesterday at a meeting with the Senate Committee on Health at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja.

Corroborating the minister's position, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello, said the move was necessitated by the desire to see that the hospital was elevated to a befitting standard that would make for a higher quality and accessible health care delivery service for Nigerians.

Also, the Minister of State for Health, Alhaji Suleiman Bello, said the ministry welcomed the move to bring the National Hospital, Abuja under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Health stating that it would be elevated to a centre of excellence.

On the current strike action by a faction of the National Association of Resident Doctors, NARD, Senator Obasanjo-Bello said the strike was unnecessary as the issues canvassed by the doctors were already being attended to.

She drew attention to the fact that the Consolidated Medical Salary Structure (CONMESS) and Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS) that supposedly precipitated the strike action were already being paid.

She said the arrears would most likely be paid earlier than the October date promised by the Minister of Health, stating that the supplementary budget in which the arrears was captured had already been passed by the Senate.

Professor Chukwu, while presenting his action plan to members of the committee stressed that the Ministry of Health would be guided by best practices in taking swift action in some areas that his team had identified for quick wins.

He said this was predicated on the fact that his team was conscious of its limited time needed to impact positively on the lives of Nigerians.

He said the upgrading of tertiary hospitals under the VAMED project was proceeding as scheduled and two of them were ready for commissioning by President Jonathan. The hospitals include Usman Dan Fodio University Teaching Hospital, Sokoto and the Aminu Kano University Teaching Hospital, Kano.

The upgrade, he said, would reduce the number of Nigerians who seek medical treatment in hospitals abroad. He said it was the desire of government to end the exodus of Nigerian –trained doctors, and the upgrade of hospitals should stem the tide. In total, eight hospitals had been selected for upgrade in the first phase of the VAMED project.

The minister said plans were underway to distribute a total of 63 million Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Nets (LLITNs) to Nigerians by the end of the year. This, he said, would reduce malaria morbidity and mortality ratio by 50%.

• **Regular Hand Washing, Effective Way of Controlling Infections’**

Lagos state Commissioner for Health , Dr. Jide Idris, has proffered solution to the constant spread of infectious diseases responsible for loss of lives , saying proper washing of hands always is the effective way of preventing the transfer of infections.

The Commissioner, who was represented by the Head of Tuberculosis Centre, Dr Abdulrahman Alabi, spoke as the special guest of honour at the one-day sensitisation workshop on Infection Control organised by the Nigerian Infection Control Association (NICA) at the Sickle Cell Centre, Idi-Araba, Lagos yesterday.

According to him, “proper hand washing is the most effective way to prevent infection in hospitals and the society. If you are a patient, don’t be afraid to remind friends, family and health providers to wash their hands before getting close to you. “Infection control measures can be as simple as hand washing or as sophisticated as high level disinfection of surgical instruments which could prevent transmission of diseases in health care settings and the community.”

In her remarks, Secretary of the Association, Professor Tolulope Ogunsola, said that infectious diseases such as methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, respiratory, diarrhoeal and blood borne infection have claimed many lives due to ignorance of their presence.

She called on government to implement the institutional policies on infection control in the local and national level , saying this will go a long way in promoting awareness in communities to prevent the surge. “I think government can help reduce the damage caused by infection by implementing policies from the national level to the grassroot so that the message can be carried across to hospitals and communities,” she stated.

• **FG to Set New Strategy for TB, Leprosy Control**

In a move to maintain global standard in the treatment of tuberculosis and leprosy , the Federal Government through the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control Programme under the Ministry of Health is to set new strategy for the control of tuberculosis and leprosy in the country.

Speaking yesterday in Abuja at the opening session of the workshop to work out modalities for the plan, National Coordinator of the Programme, Dr Mansur Kabir, said, “government is targeting a level at which tuberculosis and leprosy will no longer constitute public threat and problem in the country, the imperative of a new strategy to the treatment of these diseases remains very key in meeting set standard.”

According to Kabir, “the treatment of TB is free, the diagnosis is free, it is therefore important that we create awareness on how to go about it, we should also start making preparations of treatment of TB in a month which we can achieve by endorsing global standard for TB control, ” he said.

Coordinator of the workshop, Dr Rupert Eneogu, observed that the best way to curb the spread of the disease is to ensure effective collaboration by all tiers of government, as well as “embrace public Private Mix DOTS (PPM-DOTS) as one of the strategies to increase TB case detection and to improve outcomes of patients on treatment in the country.”

It is reported that Nigeria has about 420,000 cases of tuberculosis and is expected that the country dictates 70 percent of the disease by 2005 which has been extended to 2015. For now, Nigeria has been able to dictate only 30 percent of the cases. It is said that by 2050, the incidence of TB in the world will be less than or equal to one case per million population per year.

7. Human rights/Gender/social issues:

- **Nigeria, EU Flag Off Initiative Against Human Trafficking**

The Federal Government, the European Union, EU and the International Labour Organisation, ILO yesterday commenced a multilateral project to curb the forced trafficking of Nigerians to Europe.

The tripartite initiative aims to among others, improve the protection and reintegration of victims of trafficking.

The project, which is being implemented by the Ministry of Labour on behalf of the Federal Government, is expected to run for 24 months and would aim to boost the capacity of Nigerian agencies involved in the prosecution of traffickers.

According to the Minister of Labour and Productivity, Chief Emeka Wogu, the project which is to cost €1.2 million (N220 million) is being funded by the European Union.

While launching the programme at the United Nations building, Wogu described the initiative as another evidence of the global endorsement of President Goodluck Jonathan’s sincere efforts in putting Nigeria on a higher footing.

“This project would impact directly on the life of the ordinary Nigerian who is naturally hard working but inadvertently might have fallen victim of traffickers and smugglers in persons. We welcome this collaboration with the ILO and it is a testimony to the respect and dignity that the Nigerian government under the able leadership of President Goodluck Jonathan is now held by the international community,” Wogu added.

He said the resolve of the Ministry of Labour is not to leave any stone unturned in seeking an end to this inhumane, dangerous and exploitative trade,

The minister charged Nigerians not to succumb to the entreaties of the traffickers. “We are not unaware of the need for collective and collaborative efforts with the private sector and other nations in overcoming challenges posed by the economic crisis and its impact on jobs,” he said.

Earlier, the Resident Coordinator of the UN System in Nigeria, Mr. Toure in his remark had noted that trafficking in persons is a crime and an abuse on an individual’s human rights.

”Being trafficked results in the sustained physical and psychological abuse of the victim solely for financial gain and it starts the moment the individual is deceived, persuaded or forced into the hands of the traffickers,” Toure said.

8. Geo-Strategic issues:

- **Obama Appoints McCulley as US Ambassador-designate to Nigeria**

United States President Barack Obama on Monday nominated Mr. Terence P. McCulley as Ambassador-designate to Nigeria. He will replace Ambassador Ms. Robin Renee Sanders when he is eventually confirmed by the US Senate.

The Information Officer at the US Embassy, Mr. David Renz, confirmed the nomination on telephone yesterday. "President Barack Obama yesterday (Monday) nominated Mr. Terence McCulley as Ambassador-designate to Nigeria . At this point he is a nominee and would have to be confirmed by the US Senate," he said.

THISDAY gathered that Sanders' duty tour may wind up in September this year. But Renz said there is yet no indication as to when she will depart the country.

McCulley is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, with the rank of Minister-Counsellor at the State Department.

The Ambassador-designate’s most recent posting was as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Copenhagen, Denmark. Prior to this, McCulley served as the US Ambassador to Mali and was at different times Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassies in Tunisia, Senegal and Togo.

Also, the US envoy has worked in other overseas postings including Niger, South Africa, India and Chad.

In Washington, McCulley was the senior desk officer for Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo), and Deputy Coordinator for Iraq Assistance.

McCulley, who hails from Oregon, is a graduate in History and French of the University of Oregon in Eugene.

Also nominated as Ambassador-designate are Norman L. Eisen, (Czech Republic), Scot Marciel, (Republic of Indonesia), Larry Palmer, (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela).

Sanders, the outgoing ambassador, took over as the US Ambassador to Nigeria in December, 2007. Until her appointment as ambassador to Nigeria, Sanders served as International Advisor and Deputy Commandant at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in Washington, D.C. Prior to this position, she served as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Congo (2002-2005) and as Director for Public Diplomacy for Africa for the State Department (2000-2002).

She served twice as the Director for Africa at the National Security Council at the White House and was the Special Assistant for Latin America, Africa, and International Crime for the Undersecretary for Political Affairs at the State Department (1996-1997).

Ambassador Sanders is the recipient of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Civilian Honour Award; three State Department Superior Honour Awards; four State Department Meritorious Honour Awards; the “President Merit of Honour Award” from the Republic of Congo, and several citations in ‘Who’s Who of America.’

She is a national board member of Operation Hope - a non-profit organization focused on empowerment of at-risk communities.

• **US Keeps \$917m Nigeria Bribe Settlement**

Even though the bribery crime originated from Nigeria and the country lost millions of dollars over the contract, the United States justice department is to keep at least \$917 million settlement comprising \$338 million from French Engineering major Technip and \$579 million from Kellogg Brown and Root LLC (KBR) over the \$6 billion Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) contract.

Eni, Snamprogetti's parent company at the time, has also put aside \$307 million for a potential future settlement, bringing the total to over \$1.2 billion, which Nigeria may have lost to bribes. Unlike the late General Sani Abacha loot, where Switzerland repatriated \$505 million stolen by the late ruler, the US would keep all the settlement money in respect of the NLNG contract scandal.

The repatriated \$505 million stolen by the late head of state were returned in tranches of \$461.3 million and \$44.1 million.

The Halliburton bribery scandal had dated back to 1994 when bids were submitted to build the NLNG plant at a cost of \$6 billion.

A joint venture company (TSKJ) between Technip, an Italian engineering company, Snamprogetti; a US engineering company, KBR, of the Halliburton group; and the Japanese engineering and construction company (JGC) was formed to bid for the contract.

After TSKJ was formed, it set up three companies registered in Madeira, Portugal to recruit two “consulting companies,” Tri-Star Investment Ltd, and Marubeni Incorporated, with the alleged mandate to bribe Nigerian “officials of the executive branch of government, NNPC and NLNG officials, and political party leaders,” according to indictment filed at the US District Court in Houston.

Technip had agreed to pay the sum of \$338 to the US government for scheming to bribe Nigerian government officials in order to secure the NLNG contract.

Similarly, KBR had last year agreed to pay \$579 million when it was discovered that it also bribed Nigerian officials to get contracts.

The discovery by the US government followed years of investigation into the activities of companies with subsidiaries abroad. Usually, firms that violated US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act were made to pay heavy fines as a deterrent.

Technip's settlement would be paid as criminal penalty. The US Justice Department has also filed a deferred prosecution agreement and criminal information resolving charges of conspiracy and violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

Technip will also pay \$98 million to settle a related civil complaint by the Securities and Exchange Commission. During the case, the court heard how the company hired two agents to pay bribes to Nigerian government officials.

Up till now, the real identities of all the Nigerian government officials that received the bribes in respect of the contract have not been officially released.

Nigerians indicted by the probe committee set up by the Federal Government and headed by the former Inspector-General of Police Mike Okiro are yet to be named and prosecuted. But US had also jailed some top officials of the firm involved in the scandal.

- **Halliburton: Technip to Pay \$338m to Settle US Bribery Charges**

Global Engineering firm Technip S.A. has agreed to pay \$338 million for scheming to bribe government officials in Nigeria, the United States Justice Department said yesterday.

It said the Paris-based company conducted the alleged bribery scheme to obtain more than \$6 billion in contracts to build the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) in Bonny Island of Rivers State.

Technip was part of a four-company joint venture that included US firm Kellogg Brown & Root Incorporated.

The Federal Government awarded four contracts to the joint venture from 1995 to 2004. Under the settlement, Technip has agreed to pay a \$240 million criminal penalty and the Justice Department has filed a deferred prosecution agreement and a criminal information resolving charges of conspiracy and of violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

The company will pay \$98 million to settle a related civil complaint by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Technip authorised the hiring of two agents to pay bribes to Nigerian government officials, according to court papers in the case.

The court papers stated that a senior executive of Technip, KBR's former CEO, Albert "Jack" Stanley, and others asked public servants at critical junctures in the project to designate a representative with whom the joint venture could negotiate the payment of bribes.

The engineering subsidiary of Halliburton Co., Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR) Incorporated had earlier pleaded guilty to five federal charges that it paid \$180 million as bribes to some high profile officials of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and NLNG in respect of a contract worth \$6 billion.

The administration of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua had said \$150 million of the bribe money had been traced to an unnamed account in Zurich, Switzerland.

The Federal Government had also said it formally requested the US government to assist Nigeria by de-classifying the information of the court proceedings in the US in respect of the scandal but that government had failed to do so.

However, contrary to the repeated claims of the former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Michael Aondoakaa, that the US had refused to release necessary information to enable the Federal Government prosecute Nigerians involved in the scam, US had insisted that it had released information needed to prosecute those indicted.

US Ambassador to Nigeria, Robin Sanders, disclosed at an event organized by the Petroleum Club in Lagos that her country had not hidden any information from Nigeria on the matter.

Sanders also promised that US would be ready to assist Nigeria with more information in prosecuting those indicted in Nigeria.

US had jailed some top officials of the firm involved in the scandal, while Nigerians indicted by the probe committee set up by the Federal Government and headed by the former Inspector-General of Police Mike Okiro are yet to be prosecuted.

In fact, the real identities of all the Nigerian government officials that received the bribes have not been officially released.

The origin of the bribery scandal can be traced back to 1994 when bids were submitted to build the NLNG plant at a cost of \$6 billion.

A joint venture company (TSKJ), between a French engineering company, Technip; an Italian engineering company, Snamprogetti; a US engineering company, KBR, of the Halliburton group; and the Japanese engineering and construction company (JGC) was formed to bid for the contract.

After TSKJ was formed, it set up three companies registered in Madeira , Portugal to recruit two “consulting companies,” Tri-Star Investment Ltd, and Marubeni Incorporated, with the alleged mandate to bribe Nigerian “officials of the executive branch of government, NNPC and NLNG officials, and political party leaders,” according to indictment filed at the US District Court in Houston.

Other West African States

Cape Verde:

Cape Verde hosts new regional renewable energy centre...H3

A new regional centre to help develop the renewable energy potential for West Africa opened today in Cape Verde's capital Praia. The region is said to have "a vast potential."

The new Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), a specialised agency of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is to remain based in Praia. It is supported by the UN's Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and the governments of Cape Verde, Austria and Spain.

The centre aims at helping to develop renewable energy and energy efficiency markets in West Africa, formulate policy, build capacity and quality assurance mechanisms, as well design financing plans. The centre also plans to implement demonstration projects with potential for regional scaling up.

According to UNIDO deputy leader Yoshiteru Uramoto, the centre could have an important impact. "The current energy systems in the ECOWAS region are failing to

support the growth prospects of the over 262 million inhabitants, especially the needs of the poor," he noted.

"The creation of ECREEE is a central milestone in efforts to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy and energy efficient technologies and services in the region," Mr Uramoto says.

"Investing in renewable energy systems and introducing energy efficient technologies will contribute to the region's economic and social development without harming the environment," he added.

It is estimated that a total of 23,000 megawatts of large and small hydroelectric potential is concentrated in five ECOWAS member states, of which only 16 percent has been exploited.

Traditional biomass is already the main source of energy for the poor majority and accounts for 80 percent of total energy consumed for domestic purposes.

But there are also "considerable wind, tidal, ocean thermal and wave energy resources available," according to UNIDO. "The region has vast solar energy potential," the agency adds.

UNIDO has a number of projects in Africa where renewable energy sources like small hydro, biomass gasification, wind energy, solar thermal and photovoltaic energy are used to promote the development of small industries, particularly in rural areas, that contribute to growth and poverty reduction.

The agency has also developed an energy programme for 18 countries in West Africa, including all ECOWAS member states. ECREEE is set to become the main implementing agency of the US\$ 150 million programme that is to focus on the energy access agenda and energy efficiency in key sectors of the economy.

Chad:

Gambia:

Guinea- Bissau:

Mali:

Mauritania :

Niger:

NIGER: Mixed blessing of first rain....H7

The beginning of the rainy season in the arid Sahel region of West Africa is bringing hopes of renewed grazing land and harvests, but also apprehension in Niger as weakened animals are succumbing to the first rains, according to the government,

aid workers and herders.

The head of the Niger Association for the Revival of Breeding (AREN), Dodo Boureima, told IRIN the circumstances are "absolutely dramatic".

"Our generation has never experienced such a situation and it is well beyond anything we anticipated. Thousands of animals [in Dakoro, southern Niger] have already died because of the first rains and we are expecting more losses," said Boureima. The first heavy rains fell in the southern region on 16 June.

Sudden temperature change, the physiological demands on the digestive system of changing from a fodder to a grass diet, and water-borne diseases are always taxing for the cattle. "Since the animals are already extremely weak, many are expected to die with the first rains," said NGO Action against Hunger's (ACF) West Africa regional representative Patricia Hoorelbeke.

Cattle were hit by last year's drought, which left the country with limited grazing land and caused the price of animal feed to soar, making it unaffordable for subsistence farmers.]

Hoorelbeke said the most at-risk animals - cows and sheep - were also the Sahel's most common. Camels and goats are generally more resilient and more likely to survive the first rains.

The Ministry of Livestock and Animal Husbandry is currently assessing post-rain fatalities to identify suitable responses.

"The current response is inadequate," said ACF's Hoorelbeke. "In the next month or so, there will be grazing land again. It is time to identify those [animals that] have lost too much [weight] to recover and to focus on the future."

Hoorelbeke noted that recovery can be a lengthy process. During livestock surveys in 2000, she met breeders who said they had still not managed to build their herds back to the size they were before the 1984 drought.

Sénégal:

SENEGAL: Out of school, into marriage...H7

Twelve-year-old Rama* in Senegal's Sédhiou region is still in school instead of wedded to a man in his 40s, after community members convinced her father to abandon the family's plan to give her away.

But in most cases family or social pressure to marry off young girls still wins out in many regions of the country, researchers and educators say.

"It is quite common to see parents remove their daughters from school to force them into marriage," Saliou Sarr, secondary school principal in Mpal, 33km from the city of Saint-Louis, told IRIN.

National statistics on the number of girls leaving school to get married are not available, an Education Ministry official said.

In Sarr's school 10 percent of girls aged 12-15 leave school annually because of family-arranged marriages. In a high school in the town of Guiré Yoro Boccar in the Kolda region, of the 43 girls admitted to secondary school this academic year 40 have got married and will not continue school, according to an Education Ministry representative in the region.

"Many parents say they push marriage for fear their daughters will start to have sex for money or because keeping them in the household becomes too expensive," Sarr told IRIN.

He explained that in Senegal young women who do not marry and whose families have few means often turn to commercial sex work to be able to buy what they want, especially in cities.

While some families worry about what they see as the risks of not marrying off their girls, the risks of forced early marriage are many - particularly for health, said reproductive health expert Fatim Thiam.

Law versus custom

Senegalese law holds that if a girl is under 18 the man must wait to consummate the marriage but "in practice this is never respected", said Abdoulaye Seck, vice-president of Amnesty International in Senegal.

Marriage is legal from age 18; for girls aged 16-18 parents must give authorization; for those aged 13-16, a judge must decide. Marriage to girls under 13 is unlawful.

But as in 12-year-old Rama's case, for many, custom outweighs the law.

"The father argued that he had to marry off his daughter because pressure from elders in the family was so great," said Lamine Sané, history and geography teacher in Sédhiou and coordinator of a human rights and awareness club Amnesty launched in high schools in 2008. He and his colleagues met Rama's father after she broke down crying one day in class and told of the marriage plan.

"We referred the matter to a prosecutor who then called for legal mediation. Eventually the father abandoned the plan."

Sané said since awareness of the issue has expanded, communities have often been turning to the media or the justice system to put pressure on families who would give away their young girls.

But most forced marriages go uncontested. A recent study by UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the University of Ziguinchor said early pregnancy and forced and early marriage were types of sexual violence faced by young girls. "But these acts of violence generally do not go through a legal process. Rarely will a victim of early marriage take their case to a judge. They tend to resign themselves."

REPORT - B

Business and Politics in the Muslim World

West African News Monitoring

Weekly Report 126

27 June – 3 July, 2010

By John-Paul

Presentation on 7 July, 2010.

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Detail of the news

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8. Geo-Strategic issues

POLITICS

GHANA

Government will deepen decentralization- Vice President

Vice President John Dramani Mahama on Tuesday gave the assurance that government would provide logistics and resources that would enhance and deepen decentralization. "We however plead with all the stakeholders in the process to play their roles responsibly to ensure that decentralization and democracy become realities at the grassroots level."

Vice President Mahama said this when he inaugurated the Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee for decentralization implementation in Accra. The Committee, which the Vice President chairs, has the ministers of Local government and Rural Development, Health, Education, National Development Planning Commission, Finance and Economic Planning and Food and Agriculture as members. The rest are the Chief of Staff, Head of the Civil Service, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Public Sector Reform and Head of Public Service.

They would among other responsibilities ensure the effective implementation of decentralization throughout the country and create harmony among Ministries, Departments and Agencies. The Vice President expressed regret that Ghana's decentralization programme that chartered a new path for democracy and development in Africa had to suffer some setbacks somewhere along the line and promised to collaborate with all stakeholders to make all the organs efficient and effective. He called for political commitment from all implementers and Chief Executives to exhibit a high level of transparency in order to make Ghana a role model for the African continent. "As an inter-sectoral body that will ensure the implementation and supervise ministerial re-alignment, I will like to call on all stakeholders to be committed to the task ahead of us to achieve

the 'Better Ghana' agenda." Mr. Joseph Yieleh Chireh, the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, said deepening decentralization depended on all the Ministries and not only his outfit. "We only help draw up the framework for the programme but it takes a collective decision to ensure its implementation, functioning and sustenance in the country," he said.

Massive Rigging in NPP Presidential Nomination

Investigations has uncovered serious anomalies in the master delegates list of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which if not well addressed, could lead to massive rigging in the party's presidential nomination scheduled for August 7th, 2010.

Although the paper discovered that such irregularities have been noticed marginally throughout the country, the most affected parts are in some specific polling stations in the Greater Accra and the Ashanti Regions.

With every aspirant aware of his stronghold and that of his opponents, the Adenta and Asokwa constituencies where the irregularities have been recorded in massive quantity in specific polling stations, campaign chiefs of some of the aspirants are raising serious misgivings about the impartiality of the NPP national executive towards the process.

In their estimation, the obvious fraud in the specific polling stations at the two constituencies could shore up the chances of a particular candidate.

The paper could however not establish which of the five aspiring presidential candidates could benefit from the apparent fraud. But checks conducted by the paper offer strong indignation raised by some of the presidential aspirants on the obviously flawed process.

Portions of the master list, the paper discovered either contained same pictures with different names; same pictures with different gender; while in some instances too there were blank pictures that shockingly contained names.

A source at the national executive of the NPP explained to Today that the problem came as a result of contaminated software which made it difficult for some of the pictures to be captured aside from their names, hence the blank spaces. The explanation, Today found out, was strongly objected to by some of the aspirants, saying if that was the case why some of the pictures would appear twice; with one of the same pictures being used to replace another picture of a delegate.

An election expert told Today that such anomalies had often been tricks adopted by either party officials to boost the chances of their preferred candidates or done by executives at the regional and constituency levels to enhance the chances of the candidates that they support.

According to the expert, in such circumstance, ordinary party supporters are provided with ID cards that commensurate with the names on the master delegates list that do not

have pictures.

“In the case of the repetition of pictures, that is quite dangerous because often those impersonators are asked to go early to the polling station and cast early ballot. And so by the time the original picture holder comes, he/she would be recorded to have voted. That is one of the reasons why people resort to all manner disturbances during elections”, the expert narrated.

Today discovered from search that at the Adenta constituency in the Greater Accra Region, names of some prospective delegates appeared with different pictures with the University of Ghana Farm Canteen polling station as a typical example. The paper found out on the master list C094202 that one Ebenezer Gyasi Agyei, with identity card number GR1341001 and also the University Farm Canteen polling station executive chairperson had his picture repeated but with the name – Anthony Otibo, the substantive polling station executive – secretary.

The real picture of Mr. Otibo with membership card number GR1341002ADE was conspicuously omitted. One shocking revelation discovered by the paper was at the Adentan Community School Complex where the picture of the polling station executive chairperson – Lawrence Asare, was missing and replaced with that of the polling station executive secretary, Patience Barnie. Lawrence Barnie Asare’s picture was not on the master delegates list.

Similar omission also occurred at the Adentan Community School Complex B where Seth Nkegbey, the polling station executive chairperson with membership number GR1111001 appeared at the picture space of Augustine Kwakye, the Adentan Community School Complex polling station secretary.

At the Adentan Apostolic polling station, most of the picture spaces were blank. There were no pictures of Cecilia Taylor, the polling station executive chairperson; Koranteng David Yaw; the polling station executive organizer; Cynthia Oduro, the polling station executive Women Organizer and Godfred Mensah K, the polling station Youth Organizer.

And at the Islamic University, Otanor also in the same constituency, the picture spaces for Prince Donkor, the polling station chairperson; Noah Kenneth Dapaah, secretary; Peter Aboagye, organizer; Georgina Amoako, the Women Organizer and that of the youth organizer were all missing.

The only executive of the polling station whose picture appeared on the master list was Samson Kojo Eduful, secretary of the station.

The Adentan Apostolic Church B polling station also recorded similar anomaly where John Koranteng, the polling station executive chairperson’s picture appearing twice. His picture was also given as that of Nana Yaw Bonney, the secretary of the station, with the Church of Christ Sraha also in the Adentan constituency, recording similar discrepancies.

Daniel Adwedaa, the polling station executive chairperson, had his picture filling the space provided for that of David Opoku Larbi, the polling station executive secretary.

Such similar discrepancies occurred at the Edbek Academy Housing Down; Happy Home Academy; ICODEH Islamic School and the New Adentan polling stations.

The spaces provided for pictures of polling station executives in the Asokwa Girls School and the Asokwa M.A. Girls JSS were all blank.

LIBERIA

Joint Forces

George Weah's Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP), Mr. Alhaji Kromah's disqualified All Liberians Coalition Party (ALCOP), along with Winston Tubman's Liberia National Union (LINU) and the New Deal Movement, last week announced a merger in their bid to defeat the ruling Unity Party.

The National Elections Commission (NEC) has however barred ALCP because, it says, it has failed to meet the requirements for a functioning political party, amongst them having national offices.

At a ceremony held at the NPP's newly built Congo Town headquarters, leading members of the groups, many former executives of the NPP who crossed carpet to the CDC after their party disintegrated with the arrest and current trial of its founder and looming leader, Charles Taylor, they said their primary objective is to defeat President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in a "united front".

LINU was established by late Vice President in the Samuel Doe regime, Dr. Harry Moniba, while the New Deal Movement was founded largely by disaffected political University of Liberia activists, amongst them Dr. George Clay Kieh, who lives in the US. Cllr. TC Gould, NPP chair, speaking for the new "united front" parties, said they stand no chance of defeating the UP without mustering their forces together.

This is the second major merger of like-minded political parties in preparation for the 2011 elections. The first was when the UP merged with the Liberia Action Party and the Liberia Unification Party for a common stand in 2011. The third likely group is the planned Democratic Alliance, in which several members of the above two parties are present and in leadership positions.

Mr. Gould, a long-time NPP executive, said there are plans to link-up with other opposition parties for a grand alliance.

But Mr. Weah has made it emphatically clear that he is no position to concede the presidency to anyone because, he has said, he has the numbers. He said the people have chosen him as their leader and that he cannot disappoint them, although he did not say which people. His comments drew sharp rebuke from LINU's Tunman, who challenged the former football star's claims to numbers. "We all have our supporters", the former Liberia UN ambassador and Justice Minister declared.

Gould: "...We will be calling upon the Liberty Party (LP), New Deal. We will be also be calling upon the leadership of the Democratic Alliance (DA) itself to ensure that we get together and prepare ourselves a for a better future, for we believe if the opposition is fragmented, there is no possibility of winning any state power very soon.

COTE D'IVOIRE

Guinea poll only adds to Ivorian despair at limbo.

A peaceful poll in Guinea has added to widespread scepticism among residents of neighbouring Ivory Coast about whether their leaders are really committed to holding an election already delayed for five years.

Just like Guinea, Ivory Coast badly needs a poll to produce a government with the mandate to get the country and its economy back on its feet.

But unlike its vastly poorer neighbour, the world's top cocoa-grower seems incapable of doing so, with half a dozen election dates missed since 2005 while politicians wrangle over voter identification or procedures for disarming rebels.

"The difference between Ivory Coast and Guinea is very simple: Guinean politicians wanted to have an election," said unemployed geography lecturer Della Omer, taking shade under a palm tree on a muddy pavement.

"No one is fooled anymore. If the politicians here wanted an election tomorrow, they could do it."

In a chaotic 18 months, Guinea has seen a coup usher in a military regime whose forces went on to massacre pro-democracy marchers in the capital Conakry, and a gun attack on the junta leader whose successor stunned the world by pledging elections.

Years of slow-burn political crisis in Ivory Coast, once West Africa's show piece and economic hub, have wrecked the economy, scared off investment and sent unemployment skyward.

A short 2002-3 war left the country divided in two, with rebels controlling the north and west. Credible elections are seen as the only way of reuniting it and regenerating a cocoa sector badly in need of investment and reform.

In many ways that task should be logistically easier in Ivory Coast, a relatively rich country with infrastructure such as a road network that is the envy of the region and which prospered while others fell into war or dictatorship.

Failure to hold elections has led many Ivorians and analysts to suspect that President Laurent Gbagbo is stalling because he fears he might lose -- a charge he denies.

"There's always some small technical problem they bring up as a pretext to delay the vote. But it's just a game," said Koffi Kwame, a 24-year-old technology student.

"Nobody believes anything they say anymore."

The front page of the opposition daily La Patriote listed post-war countries from Liberia to Iraq with the headline: "All these countries have voted, but not us."

Gbagbo's supporters have urged patience and argue it is better to do the election properly than rush into it.

"But if Guinea can do elections so quickly, why can't we?" asked Makoya Bamba, 25, selling her home-made fruit juice on the roadside.

SIERRA LEONE

PPRC Braces Up for 2012

The Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) charged with the responsibility to serve as a guide and providing checks and balances for political parties in the country, has started putting its house in order to face the challenges pose by the crucial 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections.

Yesterday, the PPRC commenced a five-day international training course on Building Resources in Democracy Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) for its entire 18 core and newly employed staff, at the Taia Resort, Aberdeen.

PPRC registrar, Abraham John conceded that as the 2012 elections draw closer, the commission was having a lot of work to do, noting that this was the time for them to start strategic planning so that their new staff will be in the capacity to handle work in a more professional manner. The registrar went on to state that the BRIDGE training was aiming to adapt a brief approach towards their duty in the electoral management system of political parties in the country.

Another important aspect of the course, the registrar mentioned, was the electoral management bodies (EMB) which he said have to deal with principles of best practices in a free and fair elections, outreach designs and feedbacks and its implications, and the financial aspect involved in running a political party according to the PPRC Act 19 v 1. John further pointed out that the PPRC was having a lot of work to do in all the forthcoming elections as they were focused on ensuring the commission becomes more effective.

A facilitator, Mohamed N'fah Conteh, northern region chairman of the National Electoral Commission (NEC), said the work of the PPRC and NEC was interrelated. He described

the BRIDGE training as very effective because "there is no university in the world that is offering such an international training".

According to the commissioner, the training will keep PPRC staff abreast with the challenges ahead and put them in a vantage position to carry out their work effectively and professionally.

One of the participants of the training, Lucien Momoh, said they were happy to benefit from such a course, noting that the session will have to take a new turn in the administrative work of the PPRC.

GUINEA

US says Guinea vote went "extraordinarily well"

The United States hailed on Sunday the holding of presidential election in Guinea seen as the first free vote in the junta-ruled West African state's post-colonial history.

"Based on the assessment of local and international observers and our own election monitoring mission, the U.S. Embassy believes voting to have gone extraordinarily well," the embassy in the capital Conakry said in a statement.

Results are not expected before Wednesday and a second-round run-off between leading candidates is likely in July.

Guinea poll went well despite hitches – observers

Guinea's first free election since independence in 1958 was hit by some technical problems but appeared to have gone off smoothly, international observers said on Monday.

Traffic started to roll and shops re-opened in the capital Conakry after a shut-down during the voting on Sunday, which saw Guineans flock to polling booths from before dawn to produce a turnout of up to 80 percent.

"People are almost pinching themselves that it's gone so well so far," said a Western diplomat in Conakry of a poll that could help trigger more investment in the West African mining giant and unlock aid needed to rebuild an economy shattered by decades of graft and strong-arm misrule.

Residents complied with a ban on large gatherings on polling day, and no trouble was reported overnight.

The 24 candidates and their supporters are waiting for preliminary results from the election commission, expected by Wednesday. With such a large number of candidates, the first round of voting is unlikely to produce a winner and a run-off, penciled in for July 18, will probably be necessary.

Observers from the European Union, African Union, regional group ECOWAS and the U.S.-based Carter Center said they would publish their initial reports in the next few days.

But immediate impressions of the poll have been generally positive, despite some technical hitches.

The United States on Sunday hailed the poll's conduct and the Carter Center estimated a turnout of 75-80 percent.

MISSING NAMES

"There were of course some serious technical problems in polling stations, especially in the north," said Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, head of the EU observer mission.

"(But) the Guinean people have taken this opportunity to chose the future of the country by choosing their leader in a free and fair manner and we will see what happens in the coming days," he told French radio RFI.

Lambsdorff said some people went to vote in northern areas only to discover their names were not on voter lists, but stressed it was too early to say whether the problems would have an impact on the credibility of the poll.

"I will not speculate. For now, it has been an excellent day for Guinea," he said.

Sunday's poll was the first free race for the presidency since independence from France in 1958.

The country is the world's No.1 exporter of the aluminium ore bauxite, and international mining firms are keen to tap into its iron ore reserves.

But it has been gripped by political instability before and after the death of veteran ruler Lansana Conte in late 2008.

Only last September an army crackdown on pro-democracy marchers resulted in more than 150 deaths and took Guinea close to civil war. Weeks later, junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara was wounded in an assassination attempt and his Western-backed successor pledged to hand back rule to civilians.

A successful poll would be a bonus for West Africa, where a series of coups, and questionable or delayed elections, have dented the region's efforts to establish peace and democracy.

Party of Guinean contender voices poll complaints.

The party of a top contender in Guinea's presidential election complained of delays in announcing results and some faults in the voting process on Tuesday in an early sign of possible disputes ahead.

Observers have so far said they are happy with the conduct of Sunday's poll, billed as Guinea's first free election since independence from France in 1958 and a chance for the world's top exporter of the aluminium ore bauxite to break with years of unrest.

But an official in the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) of candidate Cellou Dalein Diallo complained of delays in publishing results in the UFDG stronghold district of Ratoma in the Guinean capital Conakry, which accounts for a fifth of the total of 4.2 million voters.

"Yesterday, of 471 polling stations (there), we only have the results for 45. This is not normal," said Abdoulaye Diouma Diallo, adding that in the Conakry commune of Matam there had also been "faults that question the credibility of the vote".

Diallo did not elaborate and did not indicate what the trend was from the small number of polling stations -- some with only a few hundred voters -- that had put up their scores so far. Preliminary results are due by Wednesday.

Cellou Dalein Diallo is one of the favourites in a race widely seen going to a second round of voting on July 18.

A spokesman for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon late on Monday urged Guineans to maintain their calm.

"We are working to ensure that the results that come out cannot be questioned in the slightest," Pathe Dieng, a spokesman for the election commission, told journalists late on Monday.

It is hoped that a successful poll will help bring more aid and investors to a nation that, along with its bauxite deposits, also has iron ore reserves that are attracting international mining firms.

The country has been in the grip of authoritarian rulers since independence, first with Ahmed Sekou Toure and then the seizure of power by Lansana Conte after Toure's death in 1984. Conte's own death in December 2008 led to a coup that brought in the current junta.

Only last September an army crackdown on pro-democracy marchers resulted in more than 150 deaths and took Guinea close to civil war. Weeks later, junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara was wounded in an assassination attempt and his Western-backed successor pledged to hand back rule to civilians.

EU declares Guinea vote "generally satisfactory"

European Union observers declared themselves broadly satisfied on Wednesday with the conduct of Guinea's presidential election, playing down concerns that fraud had marred efforts to stage a landmark free vote.

The West African country has still not released official results from Sunday's poll and some candidates and observers have complained of irregularities in an election aimed at passing rule back to civilians from the current junta.

A smooth election is seen as vital to boosting investment in the world's top exporter of the aluminium ore bauxite, unlocking aid to combat widespread poverty and easing the threat of ethnic confrontation that could destabilise a volatile region.

"Despite the logistical difficulties which marked election day, the (election commission) was able to conduct voting operations in generally satisfactory conditions," EU observation mission chief Alexander von Lamsdorff told reporters.

The election commission could announce preliminary results as early as 1500 GMT Wednesday. If successful, the vote would be the first free poll since independence from France in 1958.

Guinea's National Council of Civil Society Organisations (CNOSC) said on Tuesday observers saw "attempts at fraud", citing an attempt at multiple voting in one polling booth and a bid by one party supporter to spread propaganda in another. "We did not see any direct attempts at fraud," von Lamsdorff said. "We are aware of the accusations, and we are investigating."

RAPID TIMETABLE

Guinea's election, which pitted 24 candidates against each other, has been hailed by diplomats and analysts for the speed with which it was organised and the calm atmosphere in which it was held after a drama-filled year for Guinea.

It comes just seven months after the then-junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara was wounded in a gun attack, allowing his deputy Sekouba Konate to assumed control and guide Guinea to elections, with the assistance of foreign donors. "I know very few countries in which you could go in six months from decision to election," von Lamsdorff said. "It was an election that was very difficult from a point of view of the timetable, and infrastructure."

Most analysts expect the first round to be inconclusive, leaving two candidates to contest a run-off on July 18. Veteran opposition figure Alpha Conde, and former Prime ministers Cellou Dalein Diallo and Sidya Toure are seen as the front runners.

Improvements to the process which should be made before the second round to include better training of electoral officials and completing the distribution of voting cards, the EU said.

Ex-PM Diallo leads Guinea vote, no clear majority

Former Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo won the first round of Guinea's presidential election to restore civilian rule but failed to secure a majority, according to preliminary results released on Friday.

The national election commission said in a statement that Diallo won 39.72 percent of the vote in Sunday's election.

If confirmed, such a score would mean Diallo and Alpha Conde, who was second on 20.67 percent, will face a run-off scheduled for July 18.

Guinea's No. 2 party says will challenge some results.

The second-placed party in Guinea's presidential vote, has said it will challenge some poll results after provisional figures put veteran opposition leader Alpha Conde behind former Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo.

The two are due to go head to head in a July 18 run-off for the presidency of the world's biggest bauxite exporter after the election commission said Diallo won with 39.72 percent, ahead of Conde on 20.67 percent, but short of an overall majority.

"We have already lodged some appeals, and we are preparing others for Monday," Moustapha Naite, deputy communications director of Conde's Assembly of Guinean People (RPG), said on Saturday.

The RPG said it would be challenging some, but not all, of the results after complaining that the lack of results from about 150 polling stations in the province of Haute Guinea and fraud in two districts in the capital had favoured its rivals.

Candidates have eight days from the publication of results to contest them in the Supreme Court, which then has three days to make its ruling.

Even if they are overturned, these results are unlikely to substantively affect the result from the first round of voting, which took place in over 8,000 polling stations.

The poll has been billed as the best chance for the West African state, the world's No. 1 exporter of aluminium ore bauxite, to emerge from over half a century of authoritarian and military rule since winning independence from France in 1958.

Country Earns UN Plaudits after Peaceful Staging of Presidential Election

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today commended Guinea for the successful staging of presidential elections, widely regarded as the first democratic polls in the West African country since independence more than 50 years ago.

Twenty-four candidates took part in yesterday's election, with a run-off round scheduled for next month if no single candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the overall votes. "As Guinea awaits the results of the vote, the Secretary-General calls on all concerned to continue to respect their commitments to a peaceful process based on respect of the rule of law, and to accept the outcome," according to a statement issued by Mr. Ban's spokesperson.

The Secretary-General commended Guinea's Government, independent electoral commission, political parties and civil society groups, as well as the people as a whole, for the peaceful atmosphere prevalent during voting yesterday.

Guinea has been dominated by autocratic and military regimes since it gained independence in 1958, and the country remains mired in poverty and under-development. In September last year, members of the military forces shot more than 150 unarmed demonstrators who had been participating in a peaceful pro-democracy protest on the streets of the capital, Conakry. Countless others were sexually assaulted or otherwise physically attacked.

International condemnation, including from senior United Nations officials, followed and a Government of national unity was established in January as part of a transition to a more democratic order.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa, Said Djinnit, has been in Guinea as part of joint UN efforts with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other members of the International Contact Group on Guinea to support the electoral process

ECONOMY

GHANA

Ghana, US trade hits \$361m in first quarter 2010

Two-way trade between Ghana and the United States amounted to a total of \$361 million in the first four months of 2010, a 98% increase from the same period last year, a press release from the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy in Ghana copied to ghanabusinessnews.com has said.

According to the release, US exports to Ghana grew 72% in the first four months of 2010, rising to \$256 million. US imports from Ghana increased 217% to \$105 million. Imports

from Ghana under the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) and the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) were valued at \$5.1 million during the first four months of 2010, an increase of 23% from the first four months of 2009.

AGOA/GSP imports included cocoa paste, wood ornaments, apparel, vegetables, spices, and baskets. Leading US exports to Ghana were refined petroleum, machinery, and vehicles, the release added.

The United States has committed \$325 million in trade capacity building assistance to Ghana, including \$240 million in trade-related activities under Ghana's \$547 million, five-year Millennium Challenge Corporation compact since 2001, it said.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Trade, Hannah Tetteh and the Assistant United States Trade Representative Florie Liser have today July 2, 2010 co-chaired the sixth meeting of the US-Ghana Trade and Investment Council, under the US-Ghana Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). The meeting which was attended by senior officials from both the US and Ghanaian governments discussed a full range of trade issues, including the AGOA, investment challenges, transportation, telecommunications, intellectual property rights, trade capacity building, and technical assistance.

Ghana, United States hold trade talks

A U.S.A-Ghana Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meeting, opened on Friday in Accra to discuss primary impediments and strategies to remove barriers and expand bilateral trade between the two countries.

The meeting is being attended by a 26-member ministerial team from Ghana led by Ms. Hannah Tetteh, Trade and Industry Minister, and a 17-member delegation from the USA headed by Florie Liser, Assistant USA Trade Representative. TIFA was established in 1999 to deepen trade and investment relations between Ghana and USA.

The sixth Council meeting, which forms parts of annual meetings convened on rotational basis either in the USA or in Ghana, was also to review reforms and intellectual property protection to improve the business environment and attract investment. It would also discuss key transportation infrastructure challenges and possible bilateral and regional approaches as well as discuss Ghana's economic development needs and priorities and provide information on USA-Ghana trade capacity building programmes and other technical assistance. In a related development, a release issued by the Public Affairs Section, Embassy of the United States of America in Accra, said the meeting further discussed a full range of trade issues, including the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

It said the two-way trade between the USA and Ghana was valued at \$361 million for the first four months of 2010, representing a 98 percent increase from the same period last year. USA exports to Ghana grew 72 percent in the first four months of 2010, rising to

\$256 million while U.S. imports from Ghana increased 217 percent to \$105 million.

Imports from Ghana under AGOA and the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) were valued at \$5.1 million during the first four months of 2010, an increase of 23 percent from the first four months of 2009. The release said AGOA/GSP imports included cocoa paste, wood ornaments, apparel, vegetables, spices, and baskets while leading U.S. exports to Ghana were refined petroleum, machinery, and vehicles. Since 2001, the USA has committed \$325 million in trade capacity building assistance to Ghana, including \$240 million in trade-related activities under Ghana's \$547 million, five-year Millennium Challenge Corporation compact.

The assistance has helped Ghana to increase its competitiveness in world markets, upgraded and improved its road system, agricultural productivity, and strengthened the business environment. Some of the work had been carried out through the USAID-managed West

African Global Competitiveness Hub based in Accra. The Hub works with farmers and small businesses in Ghana and elsewhere in West Africa to help them make the most of international trade opportunities, including those available under AGOA. Ghana is also a focus country of the U.S. Government's "Feed the Future Food Security Initiative".

Tweneboa Field May Hold 1.4B BOE Reserves

Ghana's Tweneboa and Jubilee oil fields could contain up to 1.4 billion and 1.5 billion barrels of oil equivalent in oil and gas reserves respectively, said field operator Tullow Oil PLC Thursday.

This represents a slight decrease in the total resource upside estimate for Jubilee, from 1.8 billion boe previously, but no change in the figure for Tweneboa.

First oil will be produced from the Jubilee field in November or December this year and the project will be completed within 10% of its \$3.2 billion budget, Tullow said in a presentation to analysts posted on its website.

We'll Account for Every Pesewa of Oil Money

President John Evans Atta Mills has interacted with a delegation from Tullow Oil and assured Ghanaians that the government would account for every pesewa which would accrue from oil revenues in the country.

He underlined that the government held resources of the country, including the huge oil deposits in trust for the people and for which it was incumbent upon it to disclose fully to the public every transaction associated with the oil industry.

The delegation from Tullow, which was led by its Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Aidan Heavey, was at the Castle to brief the President on developments in the oil industry.

Receiving the delegation yesterday, President Mills said the government would judiciously use revenue from the sale of oil to improve the quality of life of the people.

He said on no account would he tolerate state officials who abused their offices to enrich themselves at the expense of the people who are living in deprivation.

President Mills further explained that those who had planned to engage themselves in scandalous activities in order to line their pockets with proceeds from the oil money would be severely dealt with.

He said the art of governance was to use available resources, including oil money, to provide infrastructure to open up the economy of the country in order to attract more foreign direct investment.

President Mills said the government was not in power to share spoils but to use the mandate entrusted to it by the people to provide more job opportunities which would enable them to lead decent and dignified lives.

He said the government had learnt veritable lessons from countries where the discovery of oil had brought about agitation and civil unrest leading to the emasculation of local economies.

President Mills said the government had instituted numerous interventions which would ensure that revenue from the sale of oil became a blessing to the people.

He thanked Tullow Oil for their strenuous work which culminated in the discovery of huge quantities of oil in Ghanaian waters.

President Mills assured the oil company of the government's support in the discharge of its activities and also urged other companies interested in the country's oil industry to plan to invest in its ancillary services.

For his part, the CEO of Tullow Oil, Mr. Heavey, said the discovery of oil in Ghana presented exciting times in the development of the country since the industry would open up a number of opportunities for the people and the country.

He said his company looked forward to a fruitful co-operation and collaboration with the people and government of Ghana.

Dollar strengthens against cedi due to World Cup

Two weeks into the 19th edition of the World Cup, the local currency has been under immense pressure from the major foreign currencies, forcing it to depreciate on the market.

Even before the World Cup began on June 11, the Ghana cedi had not fared better against the dollar and the pound Sterling, especially from the beginning of this month.

As at the close of trading on Friday, it had depreciated by 0.13 and 0.54 percent respectively against the dollar and the pound.

A Gold Coast Securities analysis maintained that the decline in the Ghana cedi for some time now against the dollar can be attributed to the activities of soccer fans.

According to the research, the insufficient supply of South African rand in Ghana to meet the demand of football enthusiasts travelling to watch the World Cup has caused demand for the dollar to rise, as fans opt for the greenback as a preferred replacement for the South Africa rand.

Ghana qualified into the 1/16 stage of the World Cup and even though some Ghanaian fans sponsored by the government returned home Friday, some other Ghanaians have travelled to South Africa to witness the Black Stars vs. the United States of America match.

It stated that an increase of 3.01 per cent in the value of the rand against the cedi and the appreciation of 0.16 per cent in the value of the dollar/cedi exchange rate since June 1, 2010 is evidence of that.

The pound also gained 1.23 percent against the cedi two weeks ago, reducing its annual depreciation against the local currency.

A better-than-expected U.K employment data, which saw the International Labour Organisation unemployment rate fall by 7.9 per cent, assured investor's of a growth in the recovery process and also boosting demand for the British pound.

However, the fundamentals of the Euro zone remain weak and therefore the outlook for the 16-nation currency still remains doubtful.

Last week's upward adjustment by the single currency saw its year-to-date performance against the cedi improve significantly from a depreciation of 15.92 percent in the previous week to 13.86 per cent in the period under review.

By the close of trading last Friday on the inter-bank market, the local currency was buying at GH¢1.414 and selling for GH¢1.433 against the dollar. It was trading between GH¢2.110 and GH¢2.140p to the pound and was going for GH¢1.744 and GH¢1.767 against the Euro. One Ghana cedi was quoted between 371 and 376 CFA.

Accra bourse falls to reverse gains

The Accra bourse slipped in trading on Tuesday with the GSE All-Share Index, the main measure, lower by 3.95 points to close at 6,591.16 points from 6,595.11 points at the

previous close. Total volumes were twice higher at 510,833 Shares valued at GH¢172,255.53 compared with 289,406 shares valued at GH¢108,217.62 on Monday. On the broader market, there were five price changes - two positive and three negative. The gainers were Ayrton Drug Manufacturing Company up GH¢0.01 at GH¢0.17 and Unilever Ghana Limited rose GH¢0.05 at GH¢3.60. Laggards include State Insurance Company (SIC) down GH¢0.01 at GH¢0.33, SG-SSB Bank lower GH¢0.01 at GH¢0.63 and UT Bank fell GH¢0.01 at GH¢0.29. Market Capitalization closed the session down at GH¢18,239.73 from GH¢18,242.77 million.

Ghana wins arbitration dispute with German investor

The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) has, in a landmark ruling, granted an award in favour of Ghana over an arbitration dispute instituted against her on September 24, 2007 by a German investment company, Gustav F. W. Hamester. An official statement issued in Accra on Tuesday said the ruling in favour of Ghana was a strong pointer to current and future investors in Ghana that even though they were always welcome to accelerate the development agenda of the country, investor misconduct would not be tolerated.

It said though the arbitration tribunal concluded hearings in July, 2009 in London, it took a year to render the award and finally on June 18, 2010 declared that the acts of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) relating to the 2001 price agreement, were not attributable to Ghana and that the acts of Ghana relating to the police investigations did not amount to a violation of the Bilateral Investment Treaty.

The statement said Mr. Hamester, a partner of COCOBOD in the West African Mills Company Limited (WAMCO), a cocoa processing company in Ghana, had management control of WAMCO and exploited this advantage to dictate prices at which they were prepared to pay for cocoa beans supplied to the factory by the management of COCOBOD and dictated the price to pay for products of WAMCO they took over.

As a result of these bad business practices, management of WAMCO owed management of COCOBOD so much for cocoa beans supplied. It said Mr. Hamester's fraudulent business practices also included over invoicing of the cost of the equipment and machinery bought on behalf of WAMCO to increase the value of their shareholding in WAMCO. The statement said when management of COCOBOD realised the fraudulent activities of Mr. Hamester, it took measures to remedy the situation and called for a realistic pricing regime for cocoa sold to management of WAMCO and also to get management of WAMCO to pay for cocoa beans sold to it. Mr. Hamester resisted the processes but finally signed a price agreement by which from 2003 all categories of cocoa beans sold to the factory should be on Freight On Board (FOB).

The statement said some of the fraudulent business practices of Mr. Gustav Hamester, was complained to the Ghana Police Service to institute criminal investigations into the affairs of management of WAMCO during which one of its representatives became the

subject of criminal investigations. It said during the investigations, Mr. Hamester abandoned their management role and the Joint Venture Agreement and construed management of COCOBOD's efforts at ensuring a fair business relationship as governmental interference.

It lodged a complaint with ICSID and claimed damages for breaches of the joint venture agreement by Ghana. The statement said Mr. Hamester claimed that as a result of the alleged breaches it suffered losses in excess of 100 million Euros and claimed compensation for losses due to non-supply of cocoa beans in 2002 in the total sum of 3,304,503.29 Euros loss of profit from 2003 - 2008 in the sum of 27,984,000.00 Euros, and loss of its share of WAMCO'S profits from 2002 to 2008 estimated at 18.3 million Euros.

World Bank provides additional US\$44.7 million for eGhana project

The World Bank Board has approved financing in the amount of US\$44.7 million from the International Development Association (IDA) to the Government of Ghana as additional funding for the ongoing eGhana Project. The original eGhana Project of US\$40 million was approved in 2006 to support the Ghana Information Communication Technology (ICT) for Accelerated Development Program.

The overall objective of the eGhana Project is to assist the Government of Ghana to generate growth and employment by leveraging ICT for growth and development. The Project consists of three main components which seek to: (i) create the enabling environment necessary for the growth of the sector; (ii) support local ICT Businesses and IT enabled services (ITES); and (iii) promote e-Government applications and Government Communications.

The proposal for additional financing is in response to the Government of Ghana's request to bring revenue and expenditure management agencies under a uniform ICT platform, and create an enhanced project impact through inclusion of scaled-up activities for more effective, transparent and accountable government. Additional resources will also go towards the establishment of a Business Process Offshoring Center to position Ghana as a destination of choice for IT business.

The eGhana Project has, therefore, been expanded to include a fourth component that aims to support: (a) the establishment and use of GIFMIS-based Public Financial Management functionality at Government of Ghana treasuries; (b) improved macro-fiscal discipline and management; (c) improved MDA and sectoral management; (d) improved financial management, control and efficiency across government; (e) Development of BPO Center; and (f) Strategic Innovation Centers to scale up diffusion of ICT in underserved areas.

This additional financing brings in positive synergistic advantages in Ghana, arising from the introduction of an electronic platform for the Ghana Revenue Authority as part of the

overall public revenue and expenditure management system in Ghana, says Ishac Diwan, the World Bank Country Director for Ghana. It also ensures that access to electronic services can be decentralized at the District Levels, and that Ghana truly becomes a destination of choice for business.

This additional funding extends the original timeline by two years, and will end on June 30, 2014. It involves co-financing arrangements with DFID and the European Union in respect of the fourth component Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS).

LIBERIA

CEMESP Begins Tax Awareness, Sensitization

Liberian media Executives and officials of the Ministry of Finance Revenue Department on Friday held a one day roundtable aimed at soliciting the media support in the Ministry of Finance tax awareness and sensitization campaign.

The ceremony which took place at a local hotel in Monrovia brought together heads of print and electronic media institutions, former executives of the Press Union of Liberia, officials of the Tax payers division of the Ministry of Finance.

The organizers of the media roundtable, the Center for Media studies and Peace building (CEMESP) in a welcome stamen through it Executive Director Malcolm Joseph, said the significance of the campaign is to raise awareness on the payment of taxes and its benefits to the nation's recovery process.

Mr. called on the media heads to use the editorials and commentaries in their newspapers, radio and television station to highlight the significance and importance to pay taxes.

Mr. Joseph also disclosed that the media round table is part of a contract awarded CEMESP by the Ministry of Finance to carry out a tax awareness and sensitization campaign in Sinoe, Grand Bassa, Rivercess counties.

CEMESP as part of the campaign will facilitate palaver hut discussions on the relevance and significance of paying taxes at the various universities in Monrovia and at ten high schools in and around Monrovia .

Also speaking during the media roundtable, the director of the Tax payers' services at the Ministry of Finance Abel Nuwon, said the GOL of Liberia has contracted CEMESP and fourteen other organizations and institutions to assist the government in the campaign.

He said the campaign is three month pilot, which the ministr4y intends to continue after the expiration of the current one. He described the media as a strategic partner in the exercise and called on them to serve a bridge in disseminating messages aimed at enhancing the tax awareness campaign.

For his part, the Managing Editor of the Inquirer Newspaper Philip Wisseh, called on the MOF to serve as a clearing house for all the tax messages that will be communicated to the public by its partners.

COTE D'IVOIRE

Ivory Coast lawmakers want cocoa, diamond graft probe

Legislators in Ivory Coast have proposed a general inquiry into corruption in the world's top cocoa grower, focussing on rampant graft in the cocoa export sector and continued diamond smuggling.

Kobenen Adjoumani, president of parliament's commission for graft cases, said the inquiry would also investigate claims of theft of public funds by interior minister Desire Tagro, but this investigation was separate from a judicial inquiry ordered against him last week.

President Laurent Gbagbo ordered an inquiry on June 19 into allegations Tagro stole cash from public programmes, including compensation for victims of a toxic waste dumping and cash advanced by French security company SAGEM, owned by Safran (SAF.PA: Quote), for election registration logistics.

Tagro is also accused of stacking the National Police Academy with members of his own tribe.

Adjoumani said Gbagbo loyalists in parliament were proposing a parallel investigation with a wider reach that would probe the notoriously opaque cocoa industry, a supplier of roughly 40 percent of the world market, and official and rebel collusion in diamond smuggling.

Allegations of corruption and mismanagement culminated in the arrest of senior cocoa industry figures in mid-2008.

"On July 7 we will work on fraud at the police academy and on the 14th, we'll look at diamonds and cocoa," he said. "This is our right as overseers of the executive."

Parliament's mandate ran out in 2005 and it has no real legitimacy in the absence of fresh elections, but it can make recommendations to press charges based on its findings.

Despite a U.N. embargo on diamond exports, a lucrative trade in stones has flourished, especially in rebel-held areas. Analysts say profits from the business have made rebels more reluctant to comply with vows to disarm and restore government control.

Some critics see these inquiries as an attempt to sow chaos that could further delay elections which are needed to end the country's political crisis but are already years overdue.

Gbagbo's supporters say he has always made clean governance his priority and is determined to take action.

SIERRA LEONE

Salone May Lose Diamonds to America

As the Sierra Leone government continues to engage the United States government to see reason and return the 1,200 carats of diamonds allegedly smuggled out of the country by some US jewelers in 2009, it is unlikely the government will get back the precious stones as the U.S. state department says America does not have any law sanctioning the release or return of any items seized within the US borders to their state of origin.

It could be recalled that some 28 pieces of stones totaling 1,200 carats were smuggled out of Sierra Leone by two American citizens after acquiring them locally in flagrant violation of national mining policies, trade acts and laws, and the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme. The US authorities were said to have valued the stones at US\$800,000 but the ministry of mines says the diamonds may worth over US\$15 million. Minister of mines and mineral resources, Alhaji Alpha Kanu confirmed to Concord Times that the U.S. State department does not have any law that impels it to release to Sierra Leone the seized diamonds but however noted that the President Koroma government was still lobbying the U.S. government to ensure the gems were returned. "There is no legislation in the USA for the diamonds to be released to us, but we are lobbying," Kanu said. The public affairs unit of the United States embassy in Freetown told Concord Times that "a determination regarding the status of the diamonds will be made according to U.S. law". Earlier, the government, through the minister of mines, had written a letter to the U.S. government and copied the United States Ambassador to Sierra Leone at the time, June Carter Perry on the said issue.

Alhaji Alpha Kanu wrote on behalf of the government of Sierra Leone:

"The President and the Cabinet of the Government of Sierra Leone have asked me to request the return of these diamonds.... The aforementioned has to be the declared value only. Twenty-eight rough stones totaling 1,200 carats have to average 43 carats per stone; and a 43 carat stone, depending on the quality, has a market value of USD-1,200,000. It means that the value of the diamonds in the custody of US Customs and Border Protection agency average between USD11,200,000 and 33,600,000. The diamonds have been stolen from the people of Sierra Leone by the two jewelers in violation of all national mining policies, trade acts and laws, all international trade acts and above all Kimberly Process Certification Scheme."

The letter went on to state: "I therefore ask that you use your good office to contact the US Justice Department to help establish equitable failure right and retrieval of these diamonds stolen from the people of Sierra Leone. Use the President, the Congress, the White House and any other means to return our diamonds.

The people of Sierra Leone are the poorest in the world and the donor community, including the American taxpayers, helps with their welfare. Returning these diamonds will ease the burden on them."

Kanu said government will continue to positively engage the U.S. government to ensure the diamonds are returned to the state.

GUINEA

Guineans want fast economic fix from next leader.

The prize for the winner of Guinea's landmark presidential election, early results of which could be announced on Friday, is an economy shattered by decades of graft, mismanagement and political unrest.

Sitting on deposits of iron ore, bauxite and gold worth billions of dollars, Guinea is a lure for mining giants such as Rio Tinto (RIO.L: Quote), RUSAL (0486.HK: Quote) and Vale (VALE.N: Quote), and could be one West Africa's richest countries.

Yet the freefall of its local currency in recent months has added to the woes of a population struggling to meet their basic needs on annual income of \$350 per head, barely a third of the World Bank figure for sub-Saharan Africa overall.

"The cost of living has been high for a long time, but recent events have added to that situation, aggravated it," mother-of-five Mamasta Camara said of events since the army took power after the death in 2008 of authoritarian ruler Lansana Conte.

"The government that is to come in has to find a solution so the cost of living is reduced," Camara said as she peeled vegetables at the side of a dirt track in the Conakry district of Dixinn, its roads muddy after a night of heavy rain.

No fewer than 24 candidates lined up for Sunday's first round, billed as the first free vote since independence from France in 1958. A run-off will likely be needed later this month to separate the two frontrunners from the first round.

In Guinea, which imports hundreds of thousands of tonnes of rice, plus other everyday basics such as sugar and oil, changes in the value of its currency are keenly felt at the food market and around the dining table.

WALL STREET, CONAKRY

Having traded at 1,500-2,000 to the dollar in the late 1990s, the Guinean franc's exchange rate spiked to 4,500 at the time of a general strike in 2007, and, according to black market currency traders on 'Wall Street', as Conakry's money-changing area is known, hovered around 6,200 in early July this year.

Camara said a 50 kg bag of rice now cost 200,000 Guinean francs (\$32), up from around 125,000 francs over recent years, while onions were also 200,000 francs, up from 80,000. "If there's real (political) change, money would be stable, but when the government is not well managed, that creates problems," said currency dealer Mohamed Lamine Diallo. "When there's national stability, the currency is stable."

Yet even if stability returns, there are likely to be no quick fixes from an administration that could struggle to implement policy on the ground because of institutions weakened by authoritarian rule under independence leader Sekou Toure, then Conte, and finally a year under Moussa Dadis Camara's junta.

"Lots of issues in public finances have to be addressed," said Sekou Oumar Pendassa, an official at Guinea's central bank, working on development of payment systems.

"We need substantial reform in the accountability of public finances ... public receipts and spending should be subject to rules," he added.

The International Monetary Fund, which along with the World Bank suspended its Guinea programmes after the coup, said economic gains in 2007-08 had unravelled during army rule.

"The transition government in place since mid-February 2010 is taking corrective measures but the macroeconomic outlook remains very difficult," an IMF spokesman said of the caretaker rule in place since Camara went into exile following his wounding in a gun attack by an ex-aide.

"Fund staff is monitoring developments closely and stands ready to resume cooperation with Guinea ... as soon as a majority of the Fund's membership has recognised, or has started to deal with, the new government in Guinea," he noted.

Guineans, desperate for basic services such as water and electricity, would accept support from any quarter.

"We have been ruined by poverty. As for those in the West who can help us, any aid is useful," said Yarie Sylla, a widowed mother of five children who said she was struggling to buy enough food for her family. "We hold out our hands to them. Anyone who can help Guinea is welcome."

ENVIRONMENT

GHANA

Vice President calls for safety measures along the Gulf of Guinea

Vice President John Dramani Mahama, on Friday called on the 16 member-states engaged in the prevention of pollution at the Gulf of Guinea to adopt pragmatic Regional Strategic Plan of Action that would combat all threats to marine life.

"I want you to set standards of safeguarding sea and marine fishes so that it does not affect the livelihood of fishing communities along the Gulf of Guinea and to avoid all sorts of poaching." Vice President Mahama made this call when Ministers of Environment and Natural Resources from 16 countries called on him at the Osu Castle, Accra, to inform him of the steps they were taking to avoid the pollution of the gulf in the

West African sub-region.

The Ministers, who are mostly from ECOWAS member countries, are attending a two-day conference on pollution of the Gulf of Guinea, in Accra. They are expected to adopt measures that would permanently rid the area of perennial pollution, poaching and other hazardous activities. The Vice President urged them to be guided by the Gulf of Mexico pollution, which had spread to other regions and draw up perpetual strategies that would make marine life to flourish. "I will personally be happy if you as Ministers speak so much of plastic pollutions in the coastal areas as that has now become a canker in our coastal areas in the continent."

Mrs. Sherry Ayitey, Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, led her colleagues to the Vice President's office. She said that the committee, which started in 1993 with only six members, had been increased to 16 members because of the immense interest various states had over the years developed in the exercise. Mrs. Ayitey gave the assurance that the committee would soon be transformed into a commission to acquire more powers to perform its duties creditably.

She said that member countries would also strategize to ward-off all marine poachers along the Gulf of Guinea and beyond and called for cooperation among stakeholders in the industry.

Consultant to assess River Yaakye cyanide spillage

The government has asked an independent consultant to undertake vulnerability assessment of the impact of cyanide that spilled from the plant site of Ahafo Mine of Newmont Ghana Gold Limited at Kenyasi in Asutifi District, into to River Yaakye and its tributaries at Kwabuokrom, last year.

The consultant, who will begin work on Monday July 5, this year, is expected to complete the assessment in three weeks. Mrs. Sherry Ayittey, Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, disclosed this at Kenyasi number two, after she visited the affected areas and held a meeting with management of Newmont Ghana, on Tuesday. She was accompanied by the Deputy Minister of Environment, Science and Technology Dr. Omane Boama and Directors at the Ministry and the EPA. Mrs. Ayittey said that recommendations of the consultant would enable government to determine modalities for determining the needs of the people directly affected by the spillage.

She explained that the consultant would work especially on how the spillage had affected the people to enable the authorities address their needs and those of traditional rulers and the district assembly. Mrs. Ayittey said that recommendations of the consultant would be made available to the Kenyasi Number One, Kenyasi Number Two and Ntotroso Traditional Councils and the district assemblies for study and suggestions towards addressing their needs.

She appealed to the chiefs and people of the affected communities to channel their

grievances through the appropriate quarters for redress instead of resorting to unnecessary agitations. Mrs. Ayithey said that government would review the mining law and had set up a committee working on some aspects of the law especially in the areas of crop and land compensation, payment of royalties and resettlements. She asked the traditional councils to delegate people to attend the committee sittings to enable them to put across their concerns and suggestions for the review of the mining law. Mrs. Ayithey expressed concern about the activities of illegal miners (galamsey) and appealed to the traditional councils to help bring the situation under control.

Mrs. Ayithey advised mining companies to obtain valid and requisite permits or be prepared to face the full rigours of the law. Odeneho Dadeako Ababio, Omanhene of Kenyasi Number Two, expressed regret that the management of the company in the area was peddling falsehood that they had constructed palaces for the three traditional councils. "If we are undertaking our palace projects and you give us some financial support it does not mean you have constructed the project for us. It befits the company to even construct a modern palace for each of the chiefs considering our relationship with the mining company". Odeneho Ababio said that the traditional councils had prevented agitations by the youth in the affected areas against Newmont Nana Osei Kofi Abiri, Omanhene of Kenyasi Number One expressed worry that almost all the farmlands in the area had been destroyed due to activities of the company.

He said majority of farmers in the area had become poor due to mining activities and appealed to the Ministry to ensure that the company found alternative means of livelihood for the victims. Barima Wereko Ampem, Chief of Ntotroso, appealed to government to ensure that communities that were directly affected by the spillage benefited much from the compensation.

He expressed worry that the chunk of the amount was going into government chest to the detriment of the affected people. Dr. Boama told Ghana News Agency that government would not disburse physical cash to the people but intended to use the amount to undertake development projects and provide basic health needs.

"If we realize that the people need to be resettled or need boreholes and other amenities we would use the money for such purposes", he said. Cyanide from the plant site of the Ahafo Mine spilled into River Yaakye and its tributaries, the only source of drinking water for the people of Kwabuokrom and its environs On October 9, 2009.

Consequently, government formed a committee to negotiate with the company and the latter paid GHC 7 million as compensation based on a regulation in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Act. Since then there has been agitations from the people in the community directly affected by the spillage as well as the Kenyasi number one and Kenyasi number two and Ntotroso traditional councils asking government to ensure that they had their fair share of the compensation.

HEALTH

GHANA

Tema vaccinates 29,520 people against H1N1

The Tema Metropolitan Health Directorate (TMHD) has vaccinated about 29,520 residents in the Tema Metropolis against the H1N1 pandemic (Swine Flu) as of Wednesday, June 30, 2010. Mr. Aggudey Sika-Nartey, Tema Metropolitan Disease Control Officer, who told the Ghana News Agency in Tema on Friday, said even though, his outfit was still collating the figures, the Directorate was aware that all the 29,520 doses of the vaccine given out to the public health facilities were exhausted.

Mr. Sika-Nartey indicated that six teams were responsible for the free vaccination in the Metropolis and that two out of the six were stationed at the Tema Polyclinic, while the Tema General Hospital, Kpone Health and Tema Manhean Health Centres, also had one team each. The Disease Control Officer added that the remaining one team operated within Appollonia and Oyibi communities in the Kpone-Katamanso Constituency. He said the vaccination exercise, which started on June 14, and was expected to end on June 18, was initially meant for health officials, security personnel, pregnant women, travelers and people with chronic diseases.

Mr. Sika-Nartey stated, however, that it was expanded to cover the general public, especially those aged between 18 and 60 years when there was a surplus of the vaccine in the system after the exercise for the targeted group.

He said the Directorate recorded a total of 142 confirmed cases of H1N1 in the Tema Metropolis as at the end of May this year, adding that no confirmed case had been recorded in the Metropolis since May 9, 2010. He said the influenza is caused by a virus that affects the respiratory system, noting that it spreads through coughs and sneezes, as well as by touching contaminated surfaces. Its symptoms, he said, include headache, catarrh, body ache, common cold with cough, fever, general weakness, sore throat, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhoea, among others. He advised the public to regularly wash their hands with soap and water as a measure to prevent the spread of the disease.

HUMAN RIGHTS/ GENDER/ SOCIAL ISSUES

GHANA

Ghana needs \$96 million to achieve universal access to primary education

Ghana needs about 96 million dollars to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on universal access to primary education. Ms Marian Kpakpah, acting Executive Director of the National Population Council, stated this at an advocacy seminar on population and development for parliamentarians in Ho. She said the rapid growth of the country's population has made health, education, housing and other social services woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the teeming population. "It is generally accepted that the economy has to grow at least three times the growth rate of the population in order to improve the quality of life."

"The estimated population growth rate of 2.2 per cent in 2009, with the economic growth rate of 5.7 per cent, has implications for the country's vision in attaining a middle income status," Ms Kpakpah said. She said the rapid population growth rate and the unmet needs for family planning would have detrimental effects on development and quality of life in the country.

Ms Kpakpah therefore charged policy makers and stakeholders to rise up to the task and address population issues for accelerated growth and poverty reduction in the country.

She said though there had been key milestones signifying political commitment to population management, more needed to be done to ensure the quality of life of the Ghanaian. Ms Kpakpah advocated the integration of population policy into development planning and implementation processes to resolve issues of inadequate social amenities.

Civil Servants in red bands at work places.

The impending nation-wide peaceful demonstration declared by the National Executive Council (NEC) of the Civil and Local Government Staff Association of Ghana (CLOGSAG) is gathering momentum with the wearing of red bands by its members as a prelude the planned event. The 45,000-member strong CLOGSAG is supposed to undertake a nation-wide peaceful demonstration on Thursday, July 8, to press for their rights to negotiate for the 2010 salary increases on its own, a demand the Fair Wages Commission (FWC) is rejecting, and rather urging the Association to do so under the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

At a meeting organized by the Greater Accra Regional Branch of CLOGSAG, Mr. Tennesse Foli, Acting National President of CLOGSAG, explained that one of the reasons for the demonstration was that "the FWC is not allowing us to negotiate on our own."

He said, "We have the legal backing by the 1992 constitution to negotiate by ourselves not under the (TUC)."

Mr. Joseph L. A. Quarshie, Regional Secretary for CLOGSAG, called for greater involvement of members in the demonstration as an expression of support for the Association.

He said the climax of the event would be the presentation of a petition to government and

that if by 1800hrs on the scheduled day there was no favourable response the demonstration would continue. He alleged that for far too long the FWC had been misleading the government as well as the public on the presentation of facts, adding that the truth would emerge finally.

GEA reiterate call for review of recent tariff increase

Members of the Ghana Employers Association (GEA) on Tuesday suggested to the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) to mitigate the recent tariff increases by adopting a two step increase for 2010 and 2011.

They proposed a 49 per cent increase effective July 1, 2010 and 20 per cent increase in January 2011, instead of the 89 per cent average increase in electricity rates and 36 per cent for water the PURC earlier announced 'at a single swoop'.

Mr. Charles Coffie, President of GEA gave the suggestion at a Chief Executives Breakfast seminar held by GEA in Accra. It was under the topic, "Impact of Counterfeit Goods and Illicit Trade on Investment Promotion in Ghana."

"Our issue is the quantum of change and insensitive manner of implementation. This tariff adjustment culminates in increases of between 131 per cent for the lower power-consuming entities to as much as 200 per cent in the high power consuming class," he said. Mr. Coffie, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of Unilever, Ghana Limited, said the new tariff translated between 170 and 200 per cent average increases for the steel industry, textiles and garments, pharmaceutical and household manufacturing industries in a way that adversely affected the competitiveness of the small scale enterprises and the business entities that constituted more than 80 per cent of GEA membership.

Speaking on counterfeiting and illicit trade, he said "we would not enhance Ghana's reputation as the next frontier investment destination if our enforcement and regulatory bodies like Food and Drugs Board and Customs Excise and Preventive Service are ill-equipped to check country of origin certificates and enable unscrupulous importers to exploit the Economic Community of West African States duty rates and other anomalies". "We certainly would not enhance Ghana's reputation as the next frontier investment destination if we allow counterfeiting to become rampant, thus earning for Ghana a reputation as a haven for people who wish to engage in economic crimes, shattering any hard-won positive reputation we may have built over time for the country," he added.

Mr. Coffie appealed to Mrs. Betty Mould-Iddrisu, Minister of Justice and Attorney-General, to achieve two objectives that bordered on intellectual property rights and counterfeiting of products.

"GEA as convener of Coalition Against Illicit Trade and Counterfeit Goods would appeal to the Minister of Justice to help achieve two very specific objectives. They are. Intellectual Property Rights reform leading to speedy resolution of disputes on

intellectual property rights and heightened intellectual property protection. A strong legal framework and effective punishment to serve as a real deterrent is needed," he said. "Counterfeiting of any product that presents a health or safety hazard to consumers could be treated as a criminal offence with possible mandatory prison term," he added.

Mills give assurance of effective management of oil operations

President John Atta Mills on Tuesday reiterated that Government would ensure an effective management of the operations of the oil and gas industry for the benefit all Ghanaians.

He emphasized accountability and transparency in the operations of the industry, and gave an assurance that Government would work to plug the pitfalls to enhance the sector's operations.

President Mills gave the assurance when a delegation from the management of Tullow Ghana Limited, the lead company in the production of oil and in Ghana's Jubilee Fields, called on him at the Osu Castle, in Accra. The delegation, led by Dr Idan Heavey, Chief Executive Officer of Tullow Ghana, included Mr. Pat Pluukett, Board Chairman; Dai Jones, President and General Manager, and Kofi Esson, Chief of Staff. President Mills said Government would ensure that the collaboration with Tullow would work to the benefit of Ghanaians, adding that the oil find should become a blessing rather than a curse.

He commended the expertise of the Company and assured them of full Government cooperation.

Dr Heavey said that there was huge investment in the oil and gas industry, with potential for the development of ancillary industries. With the arrival of the Kwame Nkrumah Floating, Production, Storage and Offloading, (FPSO) facility at the Jubilee Fields in Takoradi in the Western Region last week, all is set for the production of oil by the last quarter of this year.

Child rights organisation slams child marriages in the North

The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), and other stakeholders have been called upon to initiate effective interventions towards the elimination of child marriage in Ghana.

The Ghana Media Advocacy Programme (G-MAP), a child rights organisation, which made the call, said the practice affects the development of girls and often results in premature pregnancy and social isolation. A statement signed by Mr. Abdul Malik Jeleel, Executive Director of G-MAP and copied to the Ghana News Agency, reminded Ghanaians that child marriage contravenes the universal declaration of human rights. It expressed worry that child marriages are on the ascendancy in the northern part of the country due to obsolete cultural practices. The statement said it is wrong for people to

hide behind religion and engage in child marriage, adding: "Our research revealed that certain ethnic groups practice this forced marriage under the banner of religion." It called on Ghanaians to uphold the international convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women. The statement said child marriage is not limited to Ghana and cited the 2009 State of the World Children's Report, which indicated that West and Central Africa experienced high prevalence of the practice. It appealed to all heads of religious bodies to sensitise their members on the need to stop child marriage and other obsolete cultural practices that impede the progress of women. The statement charged the security agencies, particularly the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service to enforce laws against the abuse of the rights of women. It asked the Media to sustain its watchdog role and expose negative practices that could retard the development of women.

LIBERIA

U.S. \$93.5 Million Needed to Address Water Shortfall - Report

Liberia has an immediate financing gap of \$93.5m to meet 2011 targets to improve disastrously poor levels of safe water, sanitation and hygiene, according to a report released by 12 international and Liberian NGOs.

The report "Life and Dignity at risk: Liberia's water, sanitation and hygiene sector" argues that to prevent the scandal of preventable deaths from unsafe water and sanitation in Liberia, the government and donors need to act together now to significantly increase financing and improve their coordination.

The report reveals that the overwhelming majority of Liberians do not have access to decent water and sanitation facilities: three out of four people have no access to safe water for drinking and household use, and six out of seven have no access to sanitation facilities such as toilets. Altogether, unsafe water and poor sanitation and hygiene account for 18 per cent of all deaths in Liberia.

Liberia's government has recognized the scale of the challenge, and set a target of extending safe water to half the population, and sanitation to one third of the population, by 2011.

Progress is in danger, however, because of a lack of funds and poor coordination amongst donors and government. The report reveals that of the \$143.5m required to meet these targets, barely a third, just \$50m, has been committed so far. Donors are not coordinating their activities properly, and the lead donor for the sector does not have a permanent presence in the country.

"The situation is urgent," said the report's author Muyatwa Sitali. "Only 18 months remain to meet the 2011 targets: this is a challenge but one that can be met with the right commitment, planning and financing. Liberia's donors need to contribute at least \$80m of the \$93.5m financing gap and stop wasting time and resources through poor coordination.

This is a tiny amount for donors, but would make all the difference to the millions of Liberians who put their lives at risk every day by using unsafe water," stated the report. Liberia's 2010-2011 budget is currently being discussed by the National Legislature. Given the importance of the water, sanitation and hygiene sector for the health of the population and for other development goals, the report is calling for a significant increase in funding for the sector to between 3 and 4 per cent of the total budget, or around \$14m. It also points out that the process of reviewing sector policy and institutional management has been slow, and warns against further delay.

"Liberians are dying because of lack of safe water and sanitation," said Prince Kreplah of the Liberia WASH working group. "We are calling on our government to increase financing and work closely with donors to improve support to the WASH sector, in order to ensure that our citizens' rights to life and dignity are respected."

The report has been published by the 5 international NGOs which make up the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Consortium in Liberia; WaterAid; and the six Liberian NGOs which make up the Liberia NGO WASH working group. The report was written by Muyatwa Sitali of Oxfam, who acts as the Advocacy Coordinator of the WASH Consortium.

The Liberia WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) Consortium is a group of five international non-governmental organisations (INGOs): Action Contre La Faim, Concern, Oxfam, Solidarités and Tearfund. It is funded by DFID, the European Commission Humanitarian Office and Irish Aid, in order to improve access to WASH in selected communities and improve institutional strength. The Consortium also advocates for policies and financing that particularly benefits vulnerable communities.

Supermodel Naomi Campbell Subpoenaed, Prosecutors to Reopen Case

British supermodel Naomi Campbell is to be served a subpoena and compelled to testify on July 29 in the trial of Charles Taylor about an alleged diamond gift she received from the former Liberian president in South Africa in 1997, Special Court for Sierra Leone judges ruled this week. The subpoena was issued after judges agreed that prosecutors could re-open their case with a select cast of high profile witnesses.

Ms. Campbell, along with her former agent, Carole White, and Hollywood actress Mia Farrow, are slated to be called as witnesses as prosecutors get another chance to try to show that Mr. Taylor can be held responsible for crimes committed by Sierra Leonean rebel forces during that country's bloody 11-year conflict.

Among prosecution allegations is the claim that Mr. Taylor gave the rebels weapons and ammunition — which they then used to commit crimes and fuel a brutal conflict in the West African nation — in exchange for diamonds. Prosecutors say that Mr. Taylor had a joint plan with the rebels because of which he could enrich himself with Sierra Leone's diamond wealth, while also being in a position of command over the rebels from his neighboring country — and thus in a position to prevent or punish their crimes as they wreaked havoc across the nation. Mr. Taylor has denied all allegations against him.

After prosecutors closed their case in February 2009, allegations surfaced that Mr. Taylor had sent men to deliver rough cut diamonds to Ms. Campbell in her hotel room after they both had attended a dinner hosted by former South African president Nelson Mandela in 1997. Ms. Farrow had recounted the story to prosecutors in November 2009. Ms. Campbell, however, had refused to speak to prosecutors about the allegations.

This week, Special Court judges agreed that the prosecutors could re-open their case to explore this incident. Prosecutors say that the allegations, if true, could piece important events together: they say that Sierra Leonean rebels had come to see Mr. Taylor in Liberia the month before he left for his South African trip with diamonds that they wanted him to exchange for weapons during his travels. A month after Mr. Taylor returned, a shipment of weapons arrived for the rebel forces. If the allegations about Ms. Taylor are true, it could place Mr. Taylor in possession of the diamonds at a key time. Mr. Taylor has denied the allegations, and also denied possessing any diamonds, beyond personal jewelry, during his presidency.

On Thursday, the judges issued the subpoena, addressed to the supermodel, stating that she must appear to testify on July 29, or “show good cause” why she could not comply with the subpoena.

The judges also requested the “Registrar of the Special Court to serve the subpoena on the legal representative of Ms. Naomi Campbell, Mr. Gideon Benaim...and to take any further necessary measures to have this subpoena served and executed, seeking the assistance of authorised representatives of the Government of the United Kingdom where appropriate, and to ensure that...Naomi Campbell, appear[s] at the time and place indicated above.”

The subpoena was issued a day after judges decided the prosecution could re-open its case for a day. Prosecutors in their application had stated that they want to bring in Ms. Campbell, Ms. White and Ms. Farrow to testify for one day about the incident relating to the alleged diamond gift in South Africa. In their motion to the judges, prosecutors argued that the evidence the three women can provide “was unknown to the prosecution when it formally closed its case on 27 February 2009” and relates to “a ‘central issue’ to the prosecution’s case: The Accused’s possession of rough diamonds.”

Mr. Taylor’s lawyers had opposed the request, telling judges that “no reasonable Court could find that the anticipated evidence is relevant to the charges against Mr. Taylor.” Defense lawyers also argued that the prosecutors should have made greater efforts to seek evidence before their case was over about Mr. Taylor’s trips outside Liberia and his alleged possession of rough diamonds. “Thus the prosecution Motion must be denied,” defense lawyers said.

On Wednesday, the judges ruled in favor of the prosecution, allowing them to re-open their case and bring new evidence against the former Liberian president. According to the judges, the requirements for a party to reopen its case in such a situation are twofold:

1. “The party must meet the threshold test of establishing that the evidence could not, with reasonable diligence, have been obtained and presented during its case in chief,” and if this test is met:
2. “The Trial Chamber must be of the view that the probative value of the evidence is not substantially outweighed by the need to ensure a fair trial.”

The judges held that prosecutors only received information about the alleged diamond gift in June 2009 — “well after [the prosecution] had closed its case” and had since been unable to contact Ms. Campbell.

“Accordingly, the Trial Chamber is satisfied not only that the Prosecution has shown that it could not, with reasonable diligence, have obtained and presented the fresh evidence during its case in chief, but that it subsequently acted with reasonable diligence to obtain such evidence,” the judges stated.

The judges also thought the three high profile witnesses may offer valuable information.

“The Trial Chamber, having perused the declaration of Mia Farrow and the interview notes of Carole White, is satisfied that the proposed fresh evidence is highly probative and material to the indictment,” according to Wednesday’s decision.

Judges were also not concerned that testimony of the three extra witnesses would be unfair to Mr. Taylor. His defense team had known about Ms. Farrow’s statement since December 2009 and about Ms. White’s evidence before prosecutors did. Since the prosecutors were asking for one day to complete their examination of the three witnesses, it would not cause any undue delay.

“The Trial Chamber is also satisfied that no injustice would be caused to the Defense by such re-opening in that it will be entitled to test the evidence of the proposed witnesses by cross-examination and may apply for time to make further investigations and call further evidence if necessary,” the judges said.

“Accordingly, the Trial Chamber finds that this is an appropriate case for the Trial Chamber to exercise its discretion to allow the Motion, in that the proposed fresh evidence is not substantially outweighed by the need to ensure a fair trial,” the judges concluded in their ruling.

Earlier on Monday, Mr. Taylor’s fifteenth witness, DCT-190 concluded his testimony, denying suggestions that he had received amounts of money from the Witness and Victims Services (WVS) section of the court as an incentive for his testimony, stating instead that monies provided to him were mainly to for his medical services, transportation and accommodation. He said that he did not physically see the money paid for these services on his behalf.

As prosecution counsel, Kathryn Howarth, pointed out that a total amount of 2,772,000 Leones (about \$706) was spent on the witness based on the document provided by WVS, the witness responded that “I’ve never received that amount of money. The money they are claiming, one of it was paid for medications, so I’ve not received that kind of money.”

The witness explained that if the money was spent on him, it could be justified because he would not be expected to leave his job, pay his way to Freetown and then pay his own accommodation bills without any support from the court. He, however, denied receiving physical cash from court officials.

On Monday, July 12, a defense witness, DCT-172, described by defense lawyers as a “major” defense witness will take the witness stand. The witness currently has protective measures and so his name has not been disclosed to the public.

COTE D’IVOIRE

Security Council Expands Mandate of UN Force

The Security Council today expanded the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and the French forces supporting it, in an effort to strengthen its capacity to consolidate stability in the West African country, and extended the term of the mission until the end of this year.

The Council unanimously adopted a resolution giving UNOCI and the French forces the mandate to monitor armed groups in Côte d'Ivoire, protect civilians, monitor the arms embargo, promote the peace process, protect human rights, particularly those of children and women, and support humanitarian assistance.

The mission was also mandated to help in the organization of free and fair elections - which have been repeatedly delayed - and contribute towards the process of providing identification to the population.

UNOCI was also tasked to continue contributing to the implementation of the peace process by supporting the disarmament, demobilization, storage of weapons and the reintegration of former combatants of the two parties, as well as supporting the integrated command centre in the disarmament effort.

The mission will also support the redeployment of the Ivorian state administration and justice throughout the country, and help reform of the security sector. UNOCI's other tasks include supporting the facilitator of the Côte d'Ivoire peace process and his representative and the protection of UN personnel, installations and equipment in the country.

The Council "authorizes UNOCI to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment" according to the resolution, which also called on all parties to fully cooperate with the mission and French forces that support it.

It decided that UNOCI will comprise a maximum of 7,392 authorized military personnel, maintaining the current combined strength of 8,650 personnel, including 7,200 troops and staff officers and a maximum of just over 1,250 police and customs officers.

The Council expressed its intention to consider raising, for a limited time, prior and after the elections, the levels of authorized military and police personnel up to a total of not more than 500. It also welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to reconfigure UNOCI to increase its presence in the identified high-risk areas and to strengthen the capabilities of its force reserve.

UNOCI was established in 2004 by the Council to facilitate the peace process in the West African nation, which became split by civil war in 2002 into a rebel-held north and Government-controlled south.

The mission has been providing logistical and technical assistance for the preparations for the country's presidential elections, which were supposed to have been held as far back as 2005, but have been repeatedly postponed, most recently from March.

While preparations for the polls were on track up until late last year, they were interrupted in January. Political tensions began to mount after voter registration was suspended due to violence and President Laurent Gbagbo dissolved the Government and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in February.

A new Government and Electoral Commission have since been established, but the electoral process remains stalled as differences persist on how to tackle the issue of fraud and resume the interrupted appeals process on the provisional voters list.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had in his latest report on UNOCI recommended an adjustment of the mission's mandate to allow it to focus on helping the parties to implement the remaining priority tasks in the peace process, including those related to elections, disarmament and all aspects of the reunification of the country.

SIERRA LEONE

'Govt. Determined to Foster Religious Tolerance' - Social Welfare and Gender Minister

Minister of social welfare, gender and children's affairs has voiced government's determination to foster religious tolerance in the country.

Sierra Leone is being counted among nations which are embedded with religious tolerance, but it is believed that the propensity still exists for such an achievement to be derailed. In view of this, the inter-religious council of Sierra Leone (IRC) in their biennial conference held at the CCSL conference room in Freetown, focused on "The Role of Religion in Fostering Peace and Security."

Addressing participants, Dr. Soccoh Kabia expressed his profound gratitude to IRC for the theme chosen, which he said was timely, stating that the existence of peace and security was one goal all Sierra Leoneans were fighting for. "Without peace, there will be no security and without security no peace," he noted.

The minister maintained that all religious matters were under his ministry and that he was working closely with all religious bodies to see that they preach tolerance to their congregations.

Dr. Kabia said the government was very much determined to foster religious tolerance as they have enacted a code of conduct, ready to be published, that would serve as a guiding principle for a peaceful co-existence of all religions in the country.

He encouraged people to shun religious intolerance, referring to Islam as meaning peace and love, while quoting Mathew 5:9 in the holy bible, which says, "Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called children of God."

According to the minister, the absence of peace and security led to the destruction of lives and properties during the country's 11 years rebel war. He said when peace was lacking in the country, the issue of maternal mortality; slow development and poverty were the order of the day.

"Government is putting all pieces together to forge ahead as a nation. The Agenda for Change is a great manifestation of government's commitment to foster peace and development in the country for the benefit of all," Dr. Kabia noted.

He commended the IRC for their direct involvement in ensuring sustainable peace and development in Sierra Leone, while appealing to all religious key players to work in harmony for the economic and social stability of the country.

Plan Empowers 140 Youths with Human Rights Skills

Plan Sierra Leone has concluded two-day training on Human and Child Rights Documents for 140 youths of the Girls Making Media Project (GMMP) at the Pastoral Centre Hall, Makeni City.

The training on Human and Child Rights Documents is one of a series of trainings to be organized on the project as part of the activities of Plan. The training attracted members of seven girls clubs from the different project locations within the five chiefdoms in Bombali District, namely, Bombali Shebora, Makarie Gbanti, Safroko Limba, Paki Massabong and Biriwa respectively.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Plan Sierra Leone Bombali District Program Unit Manager, Patrick Mahoi, thanked the entire membership of the girls groups for attending the training at the height of the school calendar. The District Manager conceded that the nearly one hundred percent turnout was an indication of the girls' commitment to implement the project in its entirety.

Patrick Mahoi admonished club members that the training must be treated with all seriousness, stressing that without building the capacity of these clubs, the cardinal objectives of the project would not be achieved. He encouraged the girls to commit themselves to project activities, urging them to make good use of the opportunity.

The manager on behalf of the Plan Sierra Leone's Country Director, Fadimata Alainchair, opened the training session and wished the girls' groups success in their endeavours.

In his contribution, Plan Sierra Leone Growing up Healthy Advisor as well as the Acting Program Support Manager, Ibrahim Kamara, said the training would put the trainees in better position to implement the project as long as the participants put into practice what they had learnt.

The two days training exposed the participants to all the international and national Human Rights Instruments that had been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and the Sierra Leone government, which guarantee the rights of every human being.

Making a presentation on behalf of the Mabanta Girls Group, Yamah Fatmata Koroma disclosed that the training has broadened her knowledge on human rights documents, especially the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Three Gender Acts documents. She noted that the government has taken the right step to promote children's rights, especially the girl child, pointing out to the Child Rights Acts of 2007 (CRA) and the Three Gender Acts that were enacted few years ago.

The facilitators explained the significance of these instruments, stressing that the CEDAW, the Three Gender Acts and the Child Rights Act of 2007 could be of immense use during implementation of the project.

The trainers informed the participants that since the project aims to discourage gender discrimination, including violence against children and low level media reporting on girls issues, the three human rights instruments could be of every importance to the girls groups.

Facilitators explained details of the following human rights instruments that featured prominently during the training - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), The Africa Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), The Africa Charter on the Welfare of the Child (ACWC), The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), The Child Rights Act of 2007 (CRA), and the Three Gender Acts.

In order to enhance full participation from the seven clubs members, the participants were divided into two sets which paved the way for a conducive atmosphere for effective learning and frank discussion. The two groups were further formed into groups to discuss pertinent issues including the roles and responsibilities of parents, communities and the state towards children and youths in the country.

The participants noted that although many structures are now in place to protect the wellbeing of the children, yet some of these institutions are not adequately equipped to execute their functions.

The participants disclosed that the structures had actually been set up within the community level but are manned by volunteers whose pre-occupation are mainly farming, noting that lack of motivation for the volunteers is hampering the effective functioning of these institutions.

The trainers conducted Pre and Post - Test sessions on the training as a way to start and end the two days program. Both exams were meant to assess and evaluate the knowledge of the trainees gained at the end of the training.

It could be recalled that Plan West Africa Regional Office (WARO) solicited funds from Plan Netherlands to implement this regional project in four Plan operational countries, including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana and Togo. The project titled: 'Girls Making Media Project (GMMP)', is a three year advocacy project that seeks to contribute to the elimination of gender discrimination and low quality media reporting on adolescent girls' issues in Sierra Leone.

One of the cardinal objectives of the project is to strengthen the capacity of a minimum of 140 adolescent girls engaged in children and youth organizations to advocate against gender discrimination by making efficient use of diverse forms of media.