

Mozambique News Agency

AIM Reports

Report no.555, 7th November 2017



President calls on legal system to fight corruption

President Filipe Nyusi on 6 November demanded of the bodies of the administration of justice that they carry out to the full their responsibility to detect and to punish, in exemplary fashion, corrupt officials.

The President was speaking at the annual commemorations of “Legality Day”, when representatives of the judicial system visited him at the presidential offices.

President Nyusi said that corruption brings discredit on the capacity and will of public servants to give the best of themselves for a better Mozambique. He added that the struggle against corruption is a struggle for legality and for compliance with the norms and procedures instituted by law for the management of public assets. This struggle was urgent, he insisted, because an act of corruption does not merely affect the institution where it occurs, but the entire state apparatus. Corruption deprives the state of the resources it needs to build the welfare and progress of the people.

President Nyusi said it is the responsibility of all Mozambicans to fight against corruption and to encourage good practices. More is demanded of the bodies of the administration of justice because these are the institutions with the tasks of ensuring compliance with the laws, and holding offenders responsible for their acts.

Officials in these institutions, the President warned, can only play their roles effectively if they refrain from acts of corruption. “Only a judiciary that is itself totally immune to the violation of the laws can be active in defending the laws”, he declared.

“Our goal is to eliminate the trend to temptation and the poisoned incentives for deviant behaviour and for disturbances of public order”, said the President. “But if there persists conduct that violates legality, then justice should be exemplary in ascertaining responsibilities and in applying sanctions”.

The legal system must not only prosecute and try criminals, but must itself be an example of integrity and honesty. If it honours its responsibilities, President Nyusi added, then the administration of justice will contribute decisively to re-establishing citizens’ trust in the State.

The President also urged a preventive approach rather than simply repressing corruption. For repression, while necessary, he said, bears witness to the system’s failure to prevent corruption.

“Repression is the public expression of our failure in implementing the laws which enshrine the anti-corruption policies and strategies we have designed”, stressed President Nyusi.

Huge corruption scheme uncovered by Tax Authority

The Tax Authority (AT) announced on 1 November that it has discovered schemes, driven by organised crime syndicates, that have, since 2013, syphoned off more than 180 million meticaís that should have been paid in taxes (US\$2.95 million at today’s exchange rates, but worth much more in 2013).

According to a report on Radio Mozambique, the assistant general director of taxes, Domingos Muonto, explained that the scheme involved accountants, some company officials, and banks.

Essentially, it consisted of diverting cheques which should have been paid to AT tax collection units into bank accounts opened in the names of fictitious bodies. The criminals got away with this by choosing names which sounded plausible.

Muonto said the AT had found accounts opened in the name of “Unidade de Grandes Consumidores” (“Unit of Large Consumers”), which bears a superficial resemblance to the name of the genuine AT department, the “Unidade de Grandes Contribuintes” (“Unit of Large Taxpayers”).

Significant sums intended for the Maputo Unit of Large Taxpayers have been diverted away from state coffers.

However, according to Muonto, “once the fraud has been detected, the AT has the prerogative to notify the taxpayer that he, regrettably, has a tax debt, which will have to be paid, with penalties for failing to meet payment deadlines”.

Dutch company awarded dredging contract

The port of Beira, in the central Mozambican province of Sofala, is to undergo emergency dredging to reinstate its port access channel.

Mozambique’s publicly owned ports and rail company, CFM, has awarded the contract to the Dutch company Van Oord. According to a press release from Van Oord, the work will be carried out by the trailing suction hopper dredger (TSHD) Volvox Atalanta. The ship will be assisted by the water-injection dredger the Sagar Manthan.

The port is constantly having to take action to stop its channels silting up so that it can receive ships up to Panamax size at any time of day. The port plays an important role in the Mozambican economy, serving the needs of the centre of the country and beyond. In particular, it is a major route for importing oil and exporting coal from the Moatize coal basin.

Pilot voter registration postponed

The National Elections Commission (CNE) has postponed the pilot voter registration which was due to have begun on 6 November. The plan had been to hold the pilot registration in nine districts in three provinces - Nampula, Sofala and Maputo – in order to test the equipment and software to be used by the registration brigades. The idea was to use 58 registration brigades, each consisting of three people, and to register 116,000 people.

According to CNE spokesperson Paulo Cuinica, the CNE decided to replace Nampula with Cabo Delgado province, because of the assassination of the mayor of Nampula city, Mahamudo Amurane, on 4 October, and the subsequent decision to hold a mayoral by-election in the city.

The pilot registration, the CNE argues, will make it possible to correct any faults detected so that when the real voter registration for the national municipal elections begins in March, it will proceed smoothly.

The pilot registration will incorporate some improvements – including better photographs of the voters, and printing the voter cards on more durable material. A barcode will be introduced allowing the voter cards to be read by the appropriate equipment, and giving the voter access to information such as the location of the polling station where he or she should vote.

Simango supports Nampula interim mayor

The leader of the opposition Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), Daviz Simango, has given his support to the illegal measures taken by the interim mayor of the northern city of Nampula, Manuel Tocova.

After mayor Mahamudo Amurane was assassinated on 4 October, Tocova, as chairperson of the Nampula Municipal Assembly, automatically took over as interim mayor. Although municipal legislation limits the powers of an interim mayor, allowing him only to undertake acts of routine, day-to-day management, Tocova set about reshaping the entire Municipal Council. He sacked all the councillors who had worked closely with Amurane, and appointed ten councillors and six heads of administrative posts whom he trusted. They included people whom Amurane had sacked on suspicion of corruption. Both Tocova and Amurane were members of the MDM, but over the past year a bitter conflict erupted between Amurane and the MDM leadership, and Amurane promised that he would run for a second term of office, but not as an MDM candidate.

The Nampula branch of the Public Prosecutor's Office warned Tocova that he had no power to sack or appoint councillors. But he went ahead, and the case was sent to the Nampula City Court where Tocova was tried for disobedience and sentenced to three months imprisonment, suspended for two years. A few days later the Nampula Administrative Tribunal ruled that the dismissals and new appointments were null and void.

Cited by the television channel STV, Simango said “if the measures taken by the interim mayor of Nampula are for the good of the municipal citizens, then Manuel Tocova has the unconditional support of the party”.

“For the MDM, all actions which contribute to good management, and to serve well the citizens in the cities governed by the MDM, have our support”, Simango added. “The MDM believes that the interim mayor analysed the situation and concluded that the best way of fully satisfying the citizens of Nampula was to appoint new councillors. So

he acted according to the circumstances”.

He said the MDM leadership had played no part in Tocova's decisions. “There is no interference by the party leadership”, he stated.

As for Tocova's trial on charges of disobedience, Simango claimed this was a “political” trial intended to intimidate Tocova and the MDM. “The speed with which the case was heard”, indicates this”, he claimed.

The normal criticism of Mozambican courts is that they are too slow, but Simango was accusing the Nampula court of acting too quickly. In reality, summary trials are perfectly normal in cases of minor offences where there is no dispute over the facts, no investigation to be held, and no witnesses to call.

Agreement signed with Zimbabwe railway company

Mozambique's publicly owned port and rail company, CFM, has signed a “Service Level Agreement” with the National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), and the Zimbabwean ferrochrome producer ZIMASCO.

According to a source in CFM, the agreement should guarantee the movement of large amounts of chrome and of iron ingots to the ports of Beira and Maputo along the Mozambican rail network (the Machipanda and Limpopo lines, respectively).

The agreement came into force on 1 November and is valid until December 2018. During that period, it envisages the rail transport of about a million tonnes of these minerals for export. With the signing of this agreement the amount of freight using the Limpopo line next year should rise to about a million tonnes, a figure never reached before.

To achieve these figures, CFM and NRZ are mobilizing the necessary locomotives and wagons.

The agreement was signed by the chairperson of the CFM board, Miguel Matabel, and by the company's executive director for operations, Agostinho Langa. The managing director of NRZ, L.A. Mukwada, signed for his company, as did the Chief Executive Office of ZIMASCO, John Musekiwa.

Reduction in sulphur content of diesel

As from 1 November, all filling stations have been replacing diesel with 500 ppm (parts per million) of sulphur, with diesel that is only 50 ppm of sulphur.

The change has been made for environmental reasons, according to a press release from the Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy. Sulphur is a pollutant, and thus diesel with a lower sulphur content is less damaging to the environment.

The benefits include reduced risks to human health, since the fuel burnt in diesel-powered vehicles and machines will be cleaner, and will emit less particulate matter.

The switch to 50 ppm diesel is among the recommendations made by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which is urging African countries to market more sustainable and less harmful fuels.

Lower sulphur content not only means that fewer particles are issued into the atmosphere from vehicle exhaust tubes, but also that vehicle engines themselves should last longer, and maintenance costs will be lower.

With this step, the diesel sold at Mozambican filling stations will be the same as the diesel sold in neighbouring countries such as South Africa.

Women urged to use family planning

The permanent secretary of the Tete provincial government, Lina Portugal, on 30 November urged women to adopt family planning methods to ensure spacing between births.

Portugal was speaking in Tete city at the ceremony to launch National Health Week in the province. During the week, the Tete authorities aimed to reach 435,000 children with preventive measures such as Vitamin A supplements, and doses of the deworming drug mebendazole.

During the week, health workers offered a variety of modern contraceptive methods to women of childbearing age, and Portugal urged the women of Tete to “take the opportunity to plan the births of their children”.

“A woman is not a factory which should make children every year, since that affects the health of the children”, she said. “Children should grow up healthy. And so we shall all, mothers and fathers, undertake family planning to avoid giving birth to children year after year, as has been happening”.

Chronic malnutrition is another problem that concerns the government, and the removal of intestinal parasites through doses of mebendazole would help improve children’s nutritional status.

Portugal declared that it made little sense for children to be malnourished in Tete, when the province has enormous potential for food production. “We have sufficient food”, she said. “What is missing is to combine foodstuffs correctly so that our children are not affected by malnutrition”.

Iron deficiency is a further problem that can easily be treated, and Portugal urged that children should be taken to health units to be given ferrous salt.

About 100 people arrested after Mocimboa da Praia attacks

According to the Public Prosecutor’s Office in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, about a hundred people have been detained in connection with the abortive Islamist uprising in Mocimboa da Praia district on 5 October.

Fifty of these detentions have been formalised, and the detainees will stand trial. The delays in the other cases, the Public Prosecutor said, is because everything is being done to ensure that the detainees enjoy the right of defence.

A prosecution source told the daily paper “O Pais” that the great majority of the detainees are Mozambican citizens, and they include some women. However, there are some foreigners – but the source did not reveal how many, or from which countries they came.

Furthermore, the attacks in Mocimboa da Praia, in which 16 people died (two policemen, a community leader and 13 Islamists), did not come as a complete surprise. The source said there had been earlier disturbances in the district of Chiure. Some of the people arrested in Chiure were brought to trial and sentenced. The source gave no further details. This is the first time there has been any mention of the Chiure Islamist disturbances in the Mozambican media.

Recently, the Cabo Delgado provincial government met with the local Moslem community to discuss the Mocimboa da Praia attacks. The provincial branch of the Islamic Council of Mozambique denounced the attacks and promised to collaborate with the authorities to ensure peace and stability.

According to information reaching “O Pais” about the meeting, the Islamic Council stressed that the events in Mocimboa da Praia “bring no dignity to the Moslem community, much less to the Islamic Council”.

The Council agreed to send opinions to the government about any Moslem organisation entering or working in Mozambique.

The meeting underscored the need to strengthen collaboration between the police and religious and community leaders, in order to prevent further illegal acts.

President inaugurates maize processing plant

President Filipe Nyusi on 28 October inaugurated a maize processing plant in the northern city of Nampula that can process 100 tonnes of maize a day.

The factory is an Indian investment of about US\$2 million, and it brings to 12 the number of maize processing plants in Nampula. The factory employs 155 workers, most of them Mozambicans recruited locally.

President Nyusi said that a factory of this size was both a response to high levels of agricultural production in Nampula and the neighbouring provinces, and also an incentive for greater production in coming agricultural campaigns.

President Nyusi urged farmers to increase the amount of maize they grow, so that they can supply the processing industries.

“We are urging the producers to improve the quality of the products they harvest which serve as raw materials for the processing units”, he told the inauguration ceremony, “in order to ensure the uniformity and size of grains to meet the norms demanded internationally”.

The President stressed that installing food processing plants is part of the government’s plans to raise agricultural production, and to meet the challenges of increasing productivity, and of agro-industrialisation.

Processing and transformation of primary products, he added, is one of the means to achieve prosperity and competitiveness, resting on a model of inclusive and sustainable growth.

Eight arrested for spreading vampire rumour

The police have arrested eight people for spreading rumours about vampires which led to violent scenes in Cuamba district, in the northern province of Niassa, reports the Maputo daily paper “Noticias”.

The belief in vampires led to rioting in which the Cuamba district secretary of the Mozambique Youth Organisation (OJM), the youth wing of the ruling Frelimo Party, and a community leader in Mepica locality were accused of protecting the vampires.

According to Bilardo Mbalango, public relations officer of the Cuamba police district command, only prompt police intervention prevented the mob from lynching their two intended victims.

The police restored order to the areas affected, and those accused of spreading the rumour are now in police cells awaiting trial.

Speaking in the Cuamba administrative post of Lurio, on the occasion of National Health Week, the Niassa provincial governor, Arlindo Chilundo denied that there are any such things as vampires. The vampires, he said, were no more than a fiction invented by people who want to use rumours to destabilise communities.

Chilundo compared the phenomenon to the environment during the war of destabilisation, when, hearing rumours of impending attacks, people abandoned their homes and slept in the bush. The people who spread the rumours were then able to loot the homes left temporarily empty.

Dutch support for Greater Maputo water supply

The Mozambican and Dutch governments signed an agreement in Maputo on 30 October under which Holland is to provide 146 million meticais (about US\$2.4 million) to strengthen water supply capacity in the Maputo region.

The agreement, signed by Public Works Minister Carlos Bonete and by Dutch ambassador Pascalle Grotenhuis, is an emergency measure to cope with critically low water supply in and around Maputo.

The government had requested assistance to mitigate the situation in Maputo and Matola cities and the neighbouring district of Boane.

The greater Maputo area takes most of its drinking water from the Umbeluzi River which in turn depends on discharges from the Pequenos Libombos dam. The dam reservoir has been at historically low levels this year and pumping restrictions have been in force since January.

The Dutch funding will be used to boost the capacity of the Intaka water distribution centre in Matola. The ambassador explained that equipment will be purchased for drilling six boreholes in Intaka and connecting them to the general Maputo water pumping system.

“We hope that with this intervention we will be able to reach 100,000 people who are currently facing daily water shortages or restrictions”, said Grotenhuis.

The intervention was possible, she added, because of a partnership agreement for institutional support to the government’s Water Supply Assets and Investment Fund (FIPAG). An agreement on Dutch support for FIPAG was signed in 2016. This support will last until 2021, and is budgeted at €12.5 million (about US\$14.5 million).

The current Dutch programme with FIPAG is focused on drought mitigation measures, reducing water losses, protecting water resources by making them more resilient to climate change, and better monitoring of water quality.

Bonete told the signing ceremony “Our expectations are that these activities will be implemented rapidly to minimise the water supply restrictions experienced by people in Maputo, Matola and Boane”.

China cancels part of debt

The Chinese government on 26 October announced the partial cancellation of Mozambique’s debt to China.

The announcement came during a ceremony in Maputo at which Deputy Foreign Minister Nyeleti Mondlane and the Chinese ambassador, Su Jian, signed various economic and technical cooperation agreements.

The debt pardoned is 239.26 million yuan (about US\$36 million, at current exchange rates), and its interest on Chinese loans that should have been paid by the end of this year. The full amount of Mozambique’s debt to China was not revealed.

Mondlane said that this debt cancellation was of great importance since it allowed Mozambique to re-programme its budget, and apply to other areas the resources that would otherwise have been used in debt servicing.

One of the new agreements signed is for a Chinese grant of US\$15 million for a new airport to serve Xai-Xai, capital of the southern province of Gaza. Xai-Xai is the only one of Mozambique’s provincial capitals that currently does not have an airport.

The new airport will be built in Chonguene district, 26 kilometres from Xai-Xai. It is planned to occupy an area of 4,000 hectares, and will have a 1,600 metre long runway.

Mondlane said that, because of Xai-Xai’s proximity to Maputo, the new airport could play an important role as an alternative to Maputo International Airport in emergency situations.

An airport, she believed, will also put Gaza on the regional and international circuit in terms of developing tourism, and would help attract investment to other areas where Gaza has great potential, including mining and agro-industry.

The Chinese grant alone is not enough to build an airport from scratch, and the government is hoping to mobilise a further US\$35 million to make the project a reality.

LAM warned it must reinvent itself

Mozambican air companies, particularly the national carrier, Mozambique Airlines (LAM), need to “reinvent themselves” in the face of new competition, warned Transport Minister Carlos Mesquita

He was speaking in Beira, on 3 November, after the inaugural Maputo-Beira flight of Fastjet, a London-based company which, in partnership with Solenta Aviation (the Mozambican subsidiary of a South African company), is now operating Mozambican domestic routes in direct competition with LAM.

This shock of competition, said Mesquita, “must be understood in a positive way, in order to better serve the clients”.

“If they have not yet done so, the managers of LAM will have to rethink very seriously and quickly the company’s restructuring, and redefine its operational, commercial and marketing models”, he added.

Fastjet is starting its operation with 20 return flights a week from Maputo to Beira, Tete and Nampula. The users of air transport services, said Mesquita, “now have another choice for their travel, whether for business or for pleasure. We hope to see an increase in the supply, regularity and quality of the services offered”.

“With more diversification, flexibility and greater frequency of flight, we want Mozambique to become more competitive in the transport logistics chain”, added the minister. “Mozambique must be a country that is preferred as a safe destination for business and leisure”.

All stakeholders involved in aviation should think “in an integrated way”, he urged. “They should provide consolidated travel packages with added value, which promote operations on a win-win model across the entire range of flights and services”.

“The government deposits great hope in air transport, as a catalyst and a strategic industry for valuing the vast resources spread across the national territory, and to guarantee the accelerated development of our economy”, said Mesquita.

Mozambique News Agency, c/o 26 Withead Crescent, Brighton BN1 6WH, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 7941890630 - mozambique-news@geo2.poptel.org.uk

Subscription Rates (20 issues)	Individuals	Institutions
UK	£15.00	£25.00
Europe	£25.00	£40.00
Rest of the World	£30.00	£50.00

Overseas subscribers are requested to pay in sterling. If payment is made in another currency, add the equivalent of £6.00 to cover bank charges.