

# Mozambique News Agency

## AIM Reports

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## President Nyusi extols positive trip to Commonwealth Summit

President Filipe Nyusi declared in Maputo on 21 April that the world believes in the transition of Mozambique to an economy that will increasingly benefit its people, particularly the neediest strata of the population. The President was speaking at Maputo International Airport on his return from London, where he attended the Commonwealth Summit, an event he regarded as positive. “We must not get distracted. Beating ourselves up does no good”, he said. “We are increasingly visible and awakening the interest of more countries. The world believes in the transition of Mozambique from a poor economy to one that benefits the neediest”.

He stated that while in London he had dissipated doubts about what has come to be known as the country’s “hidden debts”. This term refers to the loans of over US\$2 billion that three security-related companies, Ematum (Mozambique Tuna Company), Proindicus and MAM (Mozambique Asset Management) took from the banks Credit Suisse and VTB in 2013 and 2014, with guarantees from the government headed by President Nyusi’s predecessor, Armando Guebuza.

The companies are effectively bankrupt with no chance of repaying the debts, which, due to the disputed guarantees, now fall on the government’s shoulders. In London, for the first time, President Nyusi declared that the two banks bear some of the responsibility for the debt. There was “shared responsibility” between Mozambique and the banks.

The President said he had also explained the current stage of the dialogue between the government and the opposition party Renamo, and had spoken of freedom of expression. Concerns had been expressed because of the kidnap and beating of journalist Ericino de Salema on 27 March.

“Our discussions were centred on a more just, prosperous, sustainable and safer future”, he said. Other issues discussed, he added, included the fight against cyber-crime, and the sustainability of Commonwealth countries in the face of climate change.

### Cabo Delgado to become major industrial centre

President Filipe Nyusi declared on 14 April that the northern province of Cabo Delgado could become a major industrial centre, given the recent developments in the mining industry in the province.

Speaking to reporters in Palma district after a four-day visit to Cabo Delgado, President Nyusi said he was pleased with the pace of industrialisation in the province, shown most notably in the graphite processing plant he had inaugurated in Balama.

The Balama graphite mine and processing factory is the largest in the world. Owned by Twigg Exploration and Mining, a subsidiary of the Australian company Syrah Resources, total investment in the open cast mine and processing plant is about US\$250 million. It has the capacity to produce a quarter of a million tonnes of graphite a year, and the mine is on top of known reserves of 114 million tonnes.

“I was further encouraged to learn that further graphite potential has been confirmed in districts such as Montepuez and Ancuabe, where new factories may be built”, said President Nyusi. “This means that the province may become a

great industrial power”.

Also in Palma, the President met with representatives of the multinational companies preparing to exploit the natural gas reserves of the Rovuma Basin, off the coast of Cabo Delgado, namely the American companies Anadarko and ExxonMobil, and the Italian energy firm ENI. He urged greater speed in their projects, so that the production of liquefied natural gas (LNG) can begin as soon as possible.

### Super Mares pays fine and reopens

Only a few hours after it was closed for environmental abuses, the Super Mares shopping centre in the Maputo coastal suburb of Triunfo was allowed to reopen.

When the television station STV visited the complex on 20 April, it found it open for business. Its owner, Mario Gomes, said Super Mares has already paid the fine of 500,000 meticais (US\$8,200) which an inspection brigade from the National Environmental Quality Control Agency (AQUA) had imposed the previous day. Once the fine was paid, AQUA, at about 18.00, allowed the removal from the doors of the notice announcing the closure of the shopping centre.

The most serious concern of the AQUA inspectors was that Super Mares did not have a functioning wastewater treatment plant. Untreated wastewater was thus flowing through a mangrove swamp and into the Bay of Maputo.

Gomes insisted that this was not true and that the treatment plant, although it had been out of order for some months, was now fully operational.

As for the Super Mares manager Valdemar de Sousa, who physically assaulted an STV cameraman, Helder Mathwassa, knocking him to the ground and damaging his equipment, Gomes said the company has initiated disciplinary proceedings against him. Yet the STV crew could see Sousa walking around the shopping centre apparently quite unconcerned and unrepentant.

Tomas Vieira Mario, the chairperson of the Higher Mass Media Council (CSCS), the constitutionally enshrined watchdog on press freedom and the right to information, has called on the Attorney-General’s Office (PGR) to take measures against Sousa.

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This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service - for details contact pfauvet@live.com

## Rhino horn seized at Maputo Airport

The Mozambican authorities on 15 April seized 4.2 kilos of rhinoceros horn from a Chinese citizen who was about to board a flight at Maputo International Airport.

According to a press release from the Mozambique Tax Authority (AT), the Chinese traveller was stopped before he could board a plane of Qatar Airways heading to Doha. His final destination was Hong Kong.

Since the trade is illegal, it is hard to estimate how much 4.2 kilos of rhino horn would sell for. But in recent years the demand for rhino horn in Asia, particularly in Vietnam, has made it more expensive than gold or cocaine.

This arrest follows the largest ever seizure of ivory in Mozambique on 12 April, when the AT opened a container at Maputo port and found 867 elephant tusks, weighing over 3.5 tonnes.

The container was supposedly being exported to Cambodia, but it was owned by a Chinese company with premises in Beluluane, on the outskirts of Maputo. The driver of the container has been detained, as has the customs broker who had handled the container and five other containers from the same company, the Chinese-owned Newlite.

## Fall armyworm causes losses of over fifty per cent

The insect pest known as the fall armyworm (the larval form of the moth *Spodoptera frugiperda*) has caused crop losses of between 50 and 60 per cent in the areas it has infested, according to Antonia Vaz, head of the plant health department in the Mozambican Ministry of Agriculture.

The pest appeared for the first time in Mozambique last year, and Vaz admitted that the authorities faced enormous difficulties in combating it.

Speaking to a video conference in Maputo, she said that the armyworm had infested 42,000 hectares of maize, but the situation has now been brought under control on 33,000 hectares. "We are looking at losses of about 50 to 60 per cent of production", she said. "There is a great effort to control the pest, so that we can help communities avoid food insecurity".

A researcher at the Agronomy Faculty in the Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), Domingos Cugala, told the video conference that the difficulty in controlling the armyworm lies in its resistance to pesticides. "So chemicals are being tested that are acceptable to human health and to the environment, as well as botanical products", he said.

The authorities are drawing up a list of chemicals that can be used safely, but in rotation, so that the pest does not develop resistance to any one of them.

Jose Matsinhe, of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), said that the impact of the pest is not yet alarming. The maize planted in the first sowings, last year, escaped largely unscathed. But the crops planted in the second sowings, this year, are at greater risk, and could have a more serious social and economic impact.

The areas most affected are Niassa province, in the far north, with 65 per cent losses in the zones hit by the pest, Maputo province in the south (56 per cent losses), and Zambezia in the central region (46 per cent losses).

The fall armyworm is an invasive species native to the Americas. It has now spread to over 30 African countries, where it has caused damage estimated at over US\$13 billion.

## Chronic malnutrition costs a billion dollars a year

Mozambique is losing annually about 62 billion meticaís (one billion US dollars), or almost 11 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product, because of chronic malnutrition, according to the government's Food and Nutritional Security Technical Secretariat (SETSAN).

To deal with this problem, which affects around 43 per cent of children under the age of five, SETSAN and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) on 12 April launched in Maputo a study entitled "Fill the Nutrient Gap", aimed at making household diets more nutritional.

Speaking at the launch, the SETSAN director of policies and planning, Claudia Lopes, noted that the level of chronic malnutrition among children has remained stubbornly high. It was 45 per cent in 1997, and since then it has only fallen by two percentage points, to 43 per cent.

"The rates are lower in the south, higher in the centre, and higher still in the north, where the prevalence of chronic malnutrition is over 50 per cent in Nampula and Cabo Delgado provinces", Lopes said. "The prevalence is higher in the rural areas – 46 per cent – and is increasing in the urban areas, from 29 per cent in 2003 to 35 per cent in 2011".

"We need to mobilise resources for more cost-effective actions, prioritising the most vulnerable strata of the population", she stressed.

Lopes said that good health depends on a balanced diet. Malnutrition in Mozambique is often caused by a poor diet, whereby households consume foodstuffs of low nutritional value. "There are cases in which people produce highly nutritional foods – but not for their own consumption", Lopes said. "Because of cultural reasons and taboos, they prefer to sell them".

The government, she continued, has identified the dietary gaps, but the initiatives underway to mitigate chronic malnutrition are being implemented in an isolated manner, and SETSAN wants a more dynamic, integrated effort to tackle the problem.

### *EU supports measures to improve nutrition*

The European Union has agreed to provide Mozambique with €30 million (US\$37 million) to support the campaign for improved nutrition over the next four years.

The drive to combat chronic malnutrition is being undertaken by the Ministry of Health through the National Health Institute (INS).

Geert Anckaert, the head of operations in the Economic Development and Governance section of the EU delegation in Maputo, announced the financing on 19 April, during the launch of a project to assess nutrition programmes and policies.

This project seeks to compile and analyse data on maternal, infant and child health, to assess the effectiveness of health and nutrition programmes.

The scientific director of the INS, Eduardo Samo Gudo, described the launch as an opportunity for all those collaborating in the project to discuss the question of nutrition in Mozambique. Those collaborators include the John Hoskins University of the United States, the National Statistics Institute (INE), the Food and Nutritional Security Technical Secretariat (SETSAN), and the Finance and Education Ministries.

## Negligent Portuguese companies may be tried in absentia

The Portuguese companies responsible for a scaffolding collapse in Maputo in 2015, in which five workers lost their lives, have disappeared from Mozambique without paying any compensation, and the Maputo City Court is now threatening to try them in absentia.

The collapse occurred on 15 July 2015, at a building under construction owned by the JAT group, and intended to house the future offices of the National Social Security Institute (INSS). Five workers fell to their deaths and a further 10 were injured. The building is 17 storeys high, and most of those who fell to the ground were working at a height of over 30 metres.

Building workers who spoke to AIM after the accident complained that they were working under “inhuman conditions” without any safety gear.

The contractor hired by JAT was the Portuguese company Britalar, which sub-contracted the scaffolding work to Cope Limitada. Cope was formed by four Portuguese citizens. After the accident Cope closed its Maputo offices, and three of the four Portuguese left the country. Only one, Antonio Noronha e Cardoso, is still in Maputo. The current whereabouts of the company are unknown. Britalar has also simply abandoned the country.

The Court has now published notices giving Britalar and Cope 30 days to contest the claims of the victims of the scaffolding collapse and their families for compensation. The Court warns that, if the two companies remain silent, they will be tried in absentia.

Britalar’s head office is in Portugal, and three of the four Cope partners are also believed to be in Portugal. If the Maputo City Court does sentence the two companies to pay compensation to the victims of their negligence, cooperation from the Portuguese authorities will be required in enforcing that sentence.

## Nampula mayor takes office

The new mayor of the northern city of Nampula, Paulo Vahanle, took office on 18 April, and called on all residents of the city to cooperate in implementing his programme for governance.

Vahanle is a member of the main opposition party Renamo, and he was elected mayor in a by-election held over two rounds, in January and March. Two rounds were necessary because in the first round no candidate secured the necessary 50 per cent of the vote. In the second round, Vahanle won with 58.6 per cent of the vote, while his rival, Amisse Cololo of the ruling Frelimo Party, took 41.4 per cent.

Addressing the crowd at his investiture as mayor, Vahanle declared that his programme for municipal governance rests on Renamo policies that call for participatory democracy, respect for public assets and the fight against corruption.

“We want the city of Nampula clean, in the first place, but also tranquil, safe and transformed into a garden where children, youth and adults, and all municipal citizens, can be proud that they live in Nampula”, he said. “For that, we need a common denominator, which is collaboration. Our city needs all of us, without exception. We must all roll up our sleeves and work to make Nampula our home”.

The government representative at the ceremony, Labour Minister Vitoria Diogo, stressed that the Nampula by-election

had taken place in a climate of harmony and peace, principles which should govern peaceful coexistence under the rule of law.

Diogo called for “equality and impartiality” in the treatment of citizens. She pledged central government support for the social and economic development of the city.

Vahanle is the only Renamo mayor in the country, largely because Renamo boycotted the 2013 municipal elections. That boycott also means that Renamo has no members in the Nampula Municipal Assembly. Therefore, Vahanle must work with an assembly that is dominated by the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), which won an absolute majority in 2013.

Vahanle only has a few months to make a difference to the lives of Nampula citizens, since nationwide municipal elections are scheduled for 10 October.

## Three more Islamist attacks in Cabo Delgado

The Islamist group that has been active in parts of the northern province of Cabo Delgado since last October has launched three more raids against villages, according to a report in the newsheet “Mediafax”.

The epicentre of the jihadist insurgency is the district of Mocimboa da Praia where the first attacks against police premises occurred on 5 October. On 20 April the terrorist group returned to Mocimboa da Praia, attacking the village of Diaca Velha, near the boundary with Nangade district.

The attackers stole food and other goods, and killed a number of people. The “Mediafax” report could not put a figure on the number of casualties.

On 21 April, the Islamists attacked Mangwaza village in Palma district, where they killed one person, burnt down four houses and stole more food. And on 22 April, the group returned to Diaca Velha and the local population abandoned their homes, fleeing to the nearby village of Awassi. Three people are missing, believed to have been kidnapped by the raiders.

These attacks happened within a week of President Filipe Nyusi’s working visit to Cabo Delgado.

The Mozambican police have neither confirmed nor denied the attacks. Contacted by “Mediafax”, the spokesperson for the General Command of the police, Inacio Dina, asked for time to obtain information from Cabo Delgado.

However, the paper’s sources report that the Defence and Security Forces in Cabo Delgado launched pursuit operations and captured 30 people believed to be members of the jihadist group.

Previously, Cabo Delgado provincial attorney’s office remitted to the provincial court the case against 234 people arrested after the earlier attacks, 32 of whom are Tanzanian nationals. They are accused of crimes including first-degree murder, mercenaryism and the illegal possession and use of firearms. 155 of the accused are in preventive detention, while the other 79 have been released conditionally and are awaiting trial at home.

The prosecution says that none of the accused give clear motives for their actions, and will not say who ordered the attacks.

The group is known locally as “Al Shabaab”, although it does not seem to have any formal connection with the Somali terrorist organisation of that name. Among its demands are the imposition of sharia law, a ban on the sale of alcoholic drinks, and the removal of secular monuments and Christian crosses.

## National vaccination campaign launched

A national campaign of vaccination against measles and rubella (also known as German measles) began in Mozambique on 9 April. Launched by the country's First Lady, Isaura Nyusi, in the northern province of Niassa, the campaign is aimed at immunising about 12 million children aged between six months and 14 years.

The campaign will take place in two phases. The first covers the northern provinces of Niassa, Cabo Delgado and Nampula, and the central province of Zambezia. The rest of the country will be covered in the second phase from 21 to 25 May.

The health authorities say the campaign intends to reach those children missed by the routine vaccinations. The statistics from 2011, for instance, indicate that in that year only 66 per cent of children received the measles vaccination. This campaign hopes to break the cycle of transmission of the measles and rubella viruses.

According to the Ministry of Health, more than 90,000 cases of measles were notified over the past seven years, most of them in the last two years.

During the campaign health workers will also take the opportunity to administer vitamin A supplements, and the deworming drug Mebendazole.

## President inaugurates water system

President Filipe Nyusi on 4 April officially inaugurated a water supply system in the town of Massingir, in the southern province of Gaza, with the capacity to provide about 16,700 people with water.

The system has been in operation since last year, and was set up under the project to rehabilitate the bottom outlet on the Massingir dam, on the Elephants River, the main tributary of the Limpopo. Work on the dam and the water supply was financed jointly by the Mozambican government and the African Development Bank (ADB) at a total cost of over US\$3.1 million.

According to the Southern Regional Water Board (ARA-Sul) the distribution network runs for about 30 kilometres, covering seven neighbourhoods in Massingir town. ARA-Sul estimates that by 2036, the system will be supplying water to almost 27,000 Massingir residents.

A private company has been hired, by public tender, to manage the system. The ARA-Sul spokesperson said the major challenge will be to persuade the Massingir communities that the water is not free of charge, and they must pay the water bills that they will now receive regularly.

Addressing a rally in the town, President Nyusi recalled that the last time he had visited Massingir, in 2015, "you asked for water. Now you have water, but what is missing is to expand the distribution network".

"Electricity has not yet reached all neighbourhoods in the town", he added. "But some of the houses that didn't have electricity in 2015, are now connected".

In 2015, there had been requests for the rehabilitation of Massingir hospital. That has not yet happened, but President Nyusi announced that the tender has been launched to select a contractor for the work.

The President also launched a national livestock vaccination campaign in Massingir. He urged all livestock farmers to bring their animals for vaccination.

## President announced election date

President Filipe Nyusi has fixed 15 October 2019 as the date for the next presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections. According to President Nyusi's office, this is the date proposed by the National Elections Commission (CNE).

The Constitution gives the President the power to set the date for general elections, but the Electoral Law gives him very little room for manoeuvre. The law states that the elections, held every five years, must take place on a date in the first fortnight of October. The date must be announced at least 18 months in advance.

The three elections will be held simultaneously, on the same day, throughout the country, and in those nine countries abroad where Mozambican emigrants have the right to vote for the President and for parliamentary representatives.

The country is currently preparing for nationwide municipal elections, which will be held on 10 October this year.

Voter registration began on 19 March and will last until 17 May. The voter cards issued for the municipal elections will also be valid for the general elections. A further registration period will be held in 2019.

## World Bank supports irrigation programme

The World Bank, as from July, will disburse US\$80 million for the "Project for Irrigation and Market Access for Small Farmers" (IRRIGA) in central and northern Mozambique.

Speaking on 17 April, World Bank senior official Aniceto Bila told reporters that the project will support peasant farmers in the central provinces of Manica, Sofala and Zambezia and the northern province of Nampula. The money will be disbursed over six years, covering an area of 7,000 hectares and benefitting 14,000 farmers.

Bila was speaking in the town of Vanduzi, in Manica, during a visit by a World Bank team to assess activities undertaken by a predecessor project, the Sustainable Irrigation Development Project (PRIORI), which ends in December. He said the fundamental goal of IRRIGA is the expansion and development of irrigation to increase the production and income of the households covered by the project.

"With the development of irrigation, it is possible to produce all year round, and to increase production", said Bila. "There are great gains for producers because they cease to depend solely on the rainy season. With climate change, it is important to stimulate production during all seasons of the year".

Summarising PRIORI, Bila said the results are satisfactory. During the seven years of implementation, 2,500 hectares of irrigated land were worked (out of the 3,000 initially planned). He was optimistic that, by December, the project's targets will have been reached in Manica, Sofala and Zambezia.

Bila said that since 2011, PRIOR has absorbed US\$74.25 million, US\$60 million financed by the World Bank, while the remaining US\$14.25 million was a grant from the Japanese government. The programme benefitted 7,000 farmers.

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