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President Nyusi confirms arrival of Rwandan forces in Cabo Delgado

President Filipe Nyusi on 9 July confirmed the arrival of the first contingent of troops from Rwanda to assist Mozambique in fighting the islamist terrorists who have been operating in the northern province of Cabo Delgado since October 2017.

Speaking in the Cabo Delgado town of Mueda, which is the headquarters of the northern operational theatre of the Mozambican defence and security forces, President Nyusi revealed that “they began to arrive today. They’re already here”.

In a meeting with veterans of Mozambique’s national liberation struggle against Portuguese colonial rule, President Nyusi urged them to ensure a healthy co-existence with the foreign troops.

According to a statement from the Kigali authorities, Rwanda will send a thousand members of the Rwandan armed forces and police. That statement declared that “the Rwandan contingent will support efforts to restore Mozambican state authority by conducting combat and security operations, as well as stabilisation and security sector reform”.

President Nyusi stressed that “it was SADC [Southern African Development Community] which authorised Mozambique to seek support from other friends. We took a long time to think, to organise and to plan”. The President also announced that further military support, from SADC countries, will arrive shortly.

He stressed that the foreign contingents will be under Mozambican command, pointing out that “they are going to work with us, but they don’t give the orders. They are going to organise themselves and work with our commanders. The fight against rebel groups will be organised by Mozambican commanders. Our commanders will divide the theatre into areas so that they don’t all go to the same place”.

“The defence of the country depends on us”, stressed the President, adding that Mozambique has never refused to receive military support of any nature – but it was first necessary to set up the conditions in the country to receive that support.

Defending Mozambique is the exclusive responsibility of Mozambicans, he insisted. Friends can help, but sooner or later they would return to their own countries, and it would be up to Mozambicans to guarantee security.

The President denied that the Cabo Delgado conflict was caused by religious differences or poverty. “There have always been Moslems, and there have always been Christians and we never fought each other”, he said. As for the claim that there is more poverty in Cabo Delgado than anywhere else in Mozambique, “that’s a big lie”, President Nyusi declared. Even in Cabo Delgado, there was poverty in districts untouched by the conflict, such as Namuno, and elsewhere in the country there was also plenty of poverty.

President Nyusi cited Chicualacuala district, in the southern province of Gaza. “It was only last week that we managed to put water supply in Chicualacuala”, he said. “Since colonial times water was taken to Chicualacuala in tankers by train. There was no water, but there was no war”. So, blaming the Cabo Delgado war on poverty “is a lie”.

President Nyusi did, however, believe that the violence is linked to the mineral wealth discovered in Cabo Delgado, particularly in Palma district, where there are enormous offshore deposits of natural gas. Those behind the terrorism “are arranging the war in order to control the wealth. These are the terrorists and the bandits”. Furthermore, these people (whom he did not name) do not want Mozambicans to control their waters, so that they can continue to steal the country’s fish and use Mozambique as a corridor for drug trafficking. He suggested that the same groups are involved in the illegal trade in timber and wildlife products.

EU approves military training mission

Foreign Ministers from the European Union on 12 July agreed to set up a military training mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique).

According to a press release from the Council of the European Union, the aim of the mission is to “train and support the Mozambican armed forces in protecting the civilian population and restoring safety and security in Cabo Delgado province”. It added that the decision is in response to a request from the Mozambican government for assistance with maintaining peace and security.

The EUTM Mozambique mission will initially last for two years with the strategic objective of supporting capacity building in units of the Mozambican armed forces that will form a Quick Reaction Force. Among the areas that will be covered in the training are operational preparation, counter-terrorism, the protection of civilians, and compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The mission commander will be a French Vice Admiral, Hervé Bléjean. It will be led on the ground by a Portuguese Brigadier General, Nuno Lemos Pires. According to the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, between 200 and 300 personnel could be deployed by the end of the year, with Portugal providing half of the force.

The mission is part of an international effort to help Mozambique combat Islamist terrorists who have been operating in the northern province of Cabo Delgado since October 2017. On 9 July, President Filipe Nyusi confirmed that Rwandan troops had arrived in the country to assist in countering the terrorists. According to a statement from the Rwandan government, a thousand members of the Rwandan armed forces and police will be sent to “support efforts to restore Mozambican state authority by conducting combat and security operations, as well as stabilisation and security sector reform”.

Further military assistance is expected to arrive shortly from members of the Southern African Development Community, which has approved a budget of US\$12 million for its Standby Force. Few details are available of what the SADC Standby Force Mission will be comprised of, but an arrival date of 15 July has been set.

In April a SADC Technical Mission recommended the immediate dispatch of an intervention force of almost 3,000 troops to Cabo Delgado. The detailed proposal was for three light infantry battalions of 630 troops each, two special forces squadrons of 70 troops each; two attack helicopters; two armed helicopters; two surface patrol ships; one submarine; one maritime surveillance aircraft as well as other logistical support.

The destabilisation caused by terrorism has forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee from their homes. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the number of people displaced due to terrorist attacks in

Cabo Delgado increased from 172,000 in April 2020 to over 732,000 by the end of April 2021.

The OCHA warns that, as a result of the conflict, more than 900,000 people are severely food insecure and displaced people and host communities are also in urgent need of shelter, protection, and other services.

WFP warns Cabo Delgado is facing hunger

The United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) on 5 July warned that, without urgent funding, one of the world's fastest growing displacement of people, in northern Mozambique, risks becoming a hunger emergency.

Over 730,000 people in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado have fled terrorist attacks and the WFP's executive director, David Beasley, lamented that “the conflict has destroyed people's jobs, lives and hopes for the future. Insurgents have ripped families apart, burning their homes, traumatising children, and killing people”.

Beasley, who recently visited the province, added that “these innocent communities are now completely reliant on WFP and our partners to provide them with life-saving food and help them get back on their feet. We must not fail them”.

Food security is a growing problem in the province. In March, around 228,000 people were highly food insecure, but this number is projected to grow to 363,000 during the lean season beginning in October. The worst affected are children, with recent data showing that 75,000 children under the age of five are suffering from acute malnutrition.

The WFP points out that the influx of internally displaced people into neighbouring districts has caused problems for local communities. It warns that “the added pressure on already scarce resources is impacting host communities struggling with rising food prices and loss of income due to Covid-19”.

WFP is urgently appealing for US\$121 million to support 750,000 people until the end of the year. It warns of “the risk of having to reduce rations or even halt its food assistance to displaced people next month if no additional funds are received”.

In a report published earlier this month, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) pointed out that US\$254 million are needed to respond to the effects of the violent conflict, warning that “while further funding is under discussion, more is needed immediately to ensure that humanitarian organisations can save lives and alleviate suffering. Without additional funding, humanitarian partners will be forced to stop essential programmes, and hundreds of thousands of people will not receive the assistance they need to survive”.

Parts of Cabo Delgado have been under attack from Islamist terrorists since October 2017, forcing people from their homes and destroying livelihoods. It is estimated that 350,000 children have been displaced, leaving them hungry and without education.

EU humanitarian flights arrive in Cabo Delgado

The third and last flight of the Humanitarian Air Bridge between the European Union and Mozambique arrived on 9 July in Pemba, capital of the northern province of Cabo Delgado, with a cargo including medicines, medical equipment, and hygiene kits. The first two flights arrived in Pemba on 3 and 4 July. Between them, the three flights carried over 20 tonnes of aid.

The European Union's Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarcic, who was present at the departure of the first flight on 30 June, said the humanitarian air bridge "has guaranteed crucial aid offered by Italy and Portugal to save the lives of people in a situation of vulnerability in Cabo Delgado, where the humanitarian situation continues to worsen".

A statement from the EU explained that "almost two million people in Mozambique are facing serious food insecurity, due to the security situation, drought and the socio-economic impact of Covid-19. The escalation of violence in Cabo Delgado has already displaced around 800,000 people, and it is estimated that at least 1.3 million people need immediate humanitarian assistance and protection in Cabo Delgado and in Niassa and Nampula provinces".

The EU says that this year it has allocated over €17 million (about US\$20 million) to finance humanitarian aid to Mozambique, of which €15 million is earmarked for the crisis in Cabo Delgado. The EU assistance to Cabo Delgado, particularly to the internally displaced people and to the host communities, covers the provision of shelter, non-food emergency goods, water and sanitation, education, and health care.

"The European Union continues to defend greater access for humanitarian assistance and personnel and the elimination of obstacles that delay the provision of aid to the people who need it", said the statement.

From 2020 to now, the EU's humanitarian air bridge has facilitated 67 flights to 20 countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, carrying more than 1,150 tonnes of medical equipment and other humanitarian support, and about 1,700 medical and humanitarian teams.

Commission of inquiry confirms sexual abuse at women's prison

The Commission of Inquiry set up by the Mozambican Ministry of Justice to probe allegations that guards at the Maputo Special Penitentiary for Women (EPEMM), better known as the Ndlavela Women's Prison, force women inmates into prostitution, has found that there is indeed behaviour which may have led to sexual exploitation by some prison guards.

The findings were presented on 7 July in Maputo by the commission of inquiry, set up by Justice Minister Helena Kida, shortly after the anti-corruption NGO, the Centre for Public Integrity (CIP), had denounced acts of sexual exploitation against women prisoners.

The rapporteur of the commission, Elisa Samuel, said 53 of the 96 female inmates were interviewed, as well as members of the prison management and guards.

There was an in-depth examination of the evidence tabled by CIP, including documents, photographs, and videos,

From the interviews, female inmates, she said, reported systematic failures of the prison management which led to violence, sexual abuse, and harassment of inmates by some guards as well as by third parties (unrelated to Ndlavela) with the collusion of high ranking staff. Some of the abuse led to pregnancy, childbirth, miscarriage, or abortion.

Though the commission did not find sufficient evidence to prove some of the specific denunciations by CIP, it has recommended that the bodies of the administration of justice and civil society in general keep working to monitor and prevent sexual exploitation and other forms of violation of women's rights in the country's prisons.

The Commission could not find evidence for the prostitution racket alleged by CIP, whereby the inmates were taken outside the prison for sexual encounters arranged by guards, with clients who paid the guards large sums of money. What it did find was that sexual abuse took place inside the prison. Inmates were forced to have sexual relations with guards, and with men brought into the prison by guards. Those prisoners who refused to submit suffered reprisals and humiliation, and on occasion were even denied food.

Some of those interviewed by the Commission confirmed that high-ranking prison staff collude with the introduction into the prison of outsiders to have sexual relations with inmates. They also bring alcoholic drinks, cigarettes, and meat into the prison for parties held at the weekends.

"Sexual abuse by prison guards are acts of torture or cruel treatment," declared the Commission and disciplinary measures should be taken.

The commission urged the Justice Ministry to ensure that women prisoners are supervised only by women guards and that all forms of physical and sexual abuse of inmates must be explicitly prohibited.

The commission's report says the Ministry must ensure that inmates are aware of their rights against sexual abuse and of their right to complain in the event of abuse. Any complaint should be fully and independently investigated.

Norms should be established ensuring that the complaints filed by female inmates are made under the best conditions of safety, confidentiality, and protection. Appropriate care should be provided to victims of sexual abuse, through the creation of a technical group for psychological counselling of victims of all forms of violence in the prisons.

The commission also proposed that the government reform prison legislation to criminalise sexual intercourse between prison guards and female inmates.

It said the government must ensure that all the complaints in the report are probed and, should they be confirmed, all those involved should be prosecuted.

The commission also said the Public Prosecutor's Office will continue the investigation into the findings brought by CIP.

Third wave of Covid-19 hits Mozambique

Health authorities have announced that on 10 July the Covid-19 pandemic broke two sinister records – for the number of new cases diagnosed in a single 24 hour period, and for the number of people hospitalised with the disease at any one time. On that day, 1,686 people were found to be infected with the coronavirus that causes Covid-19, surpassing the earlier record set 6 July when 1,458 people were diagnosed with the coronavirus. The worst day before this month was 29 January, with 1,275 cases.

The Health Ministry announced that 15 Covid-19 deaths were reported on 10 July - eight men and seven women, all Mozambican citizens aged between 24 and 83. Nine of them died in Maputo city, four in Tete, one in Manica and one in Inhambane.

There were 84 deaths in the first ten days of July, considerably higher than the combined figure for all of May and June, which was 66 deaths. The total Covid-19 death toll in Mozambique now stands at 962, with the number of Covid-19 cases diagnosed in Mozambique being 87,935.

The number of people being treated for Covid-19 in hospital facilities has risen to 351 – the highest number since the start of the pandemic. 260 of these patients (74.1 per cent) were in the capital city, Maputo. There were also 28 in Tete, 25 in Sofala, 16 in Matola, 11 in Manica, five in Gaza, three in Inhambane, and one each in Niassa, Nampula and Zambezia. Cabo Delgado remains the only province where no Covid-19 patients are hospitalised.

Maputo hospitals are now running out of beds for Covid-19 patients. Both Maputo Central Hospital and the Polana-Canico General Hospital have warned that their capacity is almost exhausted. Beds are still available at the Mavalane General Hospital, the third hospital in the city with facilities for treating Covid-19.

Covid-19 vaccines received from France and Portugal

The French and Portuguese governments on 5 July delivered 158,000 doses of vaccine against the Covid-19 respiratory disease to Mozambique.

Speaking at Maputo International Airport, at the vaccine reception ceremony, French ambassador David Izzo said the French donation consists of 108,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine - enough to vaccinate 54,000 people. He said this donation is part of a joint effort by European countries to support the COVAX initiative, coordinated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), in distributing vaccines to developing countries.

For her part, the interim representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Katherine Johanson, reiterated UNICEF's commitment to supporting Mozambique's battle against the Covid-19 pandemic. She said that despite the high demand for vaccines internationally, the United Nations system will continue working with the Mozambican government to ensure the availability of the vaccines for the majority

of the population. UNICEF teams, she added, will support the Ministry of Health in providing vaccination services and in strengthening the cold chain.

Deputy Health Minister Lidia Cardoso called for strict compliance with the preventive measures against Covid-19 (such as regular washing of hands, wearing masks, and social distancing). The government's efforts alone would not be enough to eradicate the disease, she warned. It was also necessary for the public to comply with the recommendations made by the health authorities. Only thus would Mozambique be able to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

WHO representative Tomas Valdez stressed that the COVAX target is to vaccinate at least 10 per cent of the world's population by September, at least 40 per cent by the end of 2021, and 70 per cent by mid-2022.

To reach these goals, Valdez called for equitable distribution of the vaccines. "These targets are critical and must be reached", he said, "so that together we defeat this pandemic. They are ambitious targets, but they are possible if we comply with the principle of equitable access to vaccines globally".

The Portuguese donation consisted of 50,000 doses of vaccine and about 142,000 face masks. At the ceremony, the Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Francisco Andre, echoed the words of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that nobody will be safe if they are not vaccinated.

Cardoso told the Portuguese delegation that "the vaccines we are receiving today from the Portuguese government seek to prevent serious forms of the disease and deaths from Covid-19. They must be combined with other methods of protection, otherwise the efforts we are making will be in vain".

With these new donations, Mozambique has now received 1.402 million doses of vaccine. The earlier acquisitions were 500,000 doses purchased by private companies through the Univax initiative (United for Vaccination against Covid-19), 384,000 via COVAX, 260,000 from China and 100,000 from India.

Also on 5 July, the US government, through the United Nations Agency for International Development (USAID), donated medical equipment and material valued at more than US\$200,000 to Mozambique, intended to assist in the struggle against Covid-19. The donation was delivered to the Maputo City Council of State Representation Services (CSRECM).

The USAID interim representative, Martin McLaughlin, said the equipment "will help Mozambique respond to urgent needs for protective equipment, and oxygen, and to deal with the increase in the number of Covid-19 cases who require hospitalisation". He stressed that the equipment will ensure that doctors, nurses and other health professionals can have greater flexibility in treating seriously ill Covid-19 patients, who have specific needs such as supplementary oxygen.

The Secretary of State for Maputo city, Vicente Joaquim, thanked the US government "for this noble gesture, which will certainly make a great contribution to the fight against the pandemic in our city".

Vaccines purchased by private sector arrive in Maputo

Mozambique on 30 June received 500,000 doses of vaccine against the coronavirus that causes the Covid-19 respiratory disease, purchased by 318 private companies. The companies were mobilised under the initiative “United for Vaccination against Covid-19” (Univax). The companies intend to use most of the vaccines to immunise their workforce and their relatives and to donate 139,000 doses to the Ministry of Health for its general vaccination campaign. This consignment consists of the VeroCell vaccine, produced by the Chinese company Sinopharm.

Speaking at Maputo International Airport, at the official ceremony to receive the vaccines, Health Minister Armindo Tiago said the quantity is enough to vaccinate 250,000 people (each of whom would receive two doses).

“The acquisition by the private sector plays an important role in the National Vaccination Plan”, he said. “It will allow protection of productive units at risk from the spread of Covid-19, eventually contributing to lower rates of absenteeism and guaranteeing greater productivity”.

Tiago urged all the eligible workers to accept vaccination, pointing out that many Mozambicans want to be vaccinated, but few doses of vaccine are currently available.

“Initially, there were those who said there would be fraud”, declared the Minister, “but we argued that together we can build a dream. Today is the implementation of that dream. It is an example of how fruitful the partnership is between the government and the private sector”.

The representative of the Mozambican private sector, Osorio Lucas, of the Maputo Port Development Company (MPDC), said this initiative is a model which should be replicated across the country. “The success of the initiative sends a clear sign that public health is not the exclusive responsibility of the state”, he added. “The companies are extremely willing to take responsibility for becoming actively involved in solving the challenges facing the country”.

Tiago also announced that, due to the joint platform between the Health Ministry and the private companies, Mozambique expects to receive a further 1.5 million doses of vaccine in July.

“This is an acquisition which will speed up our plan to vaccinate some of the 17 million people we hope to reach”, the Minister said.

He added that the country may receive another nine million doses in August, acquired by the government through an African Union mechanism.

This would make it possible to reach 50 per cent of the government’s vaccination target.

Crackdown on dishonest exporters

Agriculture Minister Celso Correia warned on 8 July that the government intends to crack down on exporters who attempt to defraud the state by falsifying the real value of their goods, stated on the export declarations.

Speaking at Carapira, in Monapo district, in the northern province of Nampula, at a meeting with stakeholders in the government’s flagship agricultural development programme, Sustenta, Correia said his Ministry is working with the customs service and other authorities “so that we can bring order to exports”.

He called for honesty from all exporters, “since we are in a moment of many adversities, and the lives of thousands of Mozambicans are at stake”.

This was a time “in which nobody expects to see nations and investments grow, but we are managing to open factories and to see our warehouses full of food. It must not be the exporting class which puts at risk our path and our objectives”.

He urged producers to be vigilant about the prices at which they sell their crops, so that the business is fair, and household income continues to grow.

Exporters, he added, should accept their responsibility to make accurate declarations of the value of their exports “because it is important that foreign exchange enters Mozambique, and everybody in this value chain should pay attention because it is the income of Mozambican households that is at stake”.

“We are not going to be complacent with situations in which our production is undervalued”, he stressed. “We are not going to allow us to be considered a country of thieves because of a handful of people who are making millions. The efforts of thousands of producers must not be endangered because, in ports such as Nacala or Beira, we are not monitoring the value of the products that are leaving the country and the money that is coming in”.

Correia also announced that this year Mozambique has registered an increase of twenty per cent in the production of sesame, cotton, and soya, which he attributed to the government’s creation of the Mozambique Institute of Oilseeds.

“Twenty per cent is a significant value in exports”, he said. “But now we must be certain that this production, exported via the port of Nacala, leaves at a fair price. When someone who exports a product that is worth US\$1,000 a tonne on the international market but only registers US\$500 a tonne with the finance department, that means that only half the foreign exchange that should enter Mozambique does so. Where does the rest of the money go?”

He declared that, on the government’s calculation, this year’s production of sesame should bring in US\$150 million.

On the same day, in Nacala port Correia inaugurated a unit to pre-process Sesame, owned by the company “Agrico Marketing” which benefitted from financing under the Sustenta programme.

TMcel and Vodacom reach agreement

After lengthy negotiations, the Mozambican mobile phone companies Tmcel and Vodacom have reached agreement on how to deal with Tmcel's debt of over 600 million meticaïs (about US\$9.5 million) to Vodacom.

In mid-June, Vodacom had threatened to end its interconnection with TMcel, which would make it impossible for TMcel subscribers to ring Vodacom numbers. Vodacom claimed it was forced to take this drastic action because of Tmcel's large debt, arising from its alleged failure to comply with the interconnection contract between the two companies. This contract allows subscribers to each of the companies to make phone calls and send messages to subscribers of the other network.

The regulatory body, the Mozambique National Communications Institute (INCM) stepped in to mediate between the two companies.

According to an INCM press release, it was agreed that Tmcel should immediately pay a third of the debt (about 200 million meticaïs). It will then pay Vodacom 12 million meticaïs a month – this sum is supposed to cover the monthly interconnection invoices. If the invoice comes to less than 12 million meticaïs, the difference will go towards liquidating the remainder of the debt.

But if the invoice is more than 12 million meticaïs, Tmcel must pay it all, and seek alternative means of paying off the remaining 400 million meticaïs of debt. Tmcel has 90 days, counted from 5 July, to propose these alternatives.

In light of this agreement, Vodacom has withdrawn its threat to cut the interconnection. The INCM release stated that "the guiding factor for consensus between the two operators was the importance of continuity in the telecommunications services provided to the users of the two companies, and the public interest".

The INCM says it will continue to monitor the situation until the debt is completely liquidated.

Prices fall for third consecutive month

In June, Mozambique experienced its third consecutive month of falling prices, according to the latest figures published by the National Statistics Institute (INE), based on the consumer price indices for the three largest cities (Maputo, Nampula and Beira).

Over the month, the general level of prices fell by an average of 0.52 per cent. This follows price falls of 0.31 per cent in May and of 0.03 per cent in April.

Inflation over the first six months of the year was 2.53 per cent. Annual inflation (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) was 5.52 per cent.

The pattern of inflation/deflation this year is a familiar one. Prices rise in the first quarter of the year and then fall from April as the harvest comes in. Towards the end of the year, as the festive season approaches, prices can be expected to rise again.

Former mayor accused of corruption

The Nampula Provincial Office for the Fight against Corruption, in northern Mozambique, has accused Saide Amur Gimba, a former mayor of Mozambique Island municipality, of heading a scheme in 2017 to divert three million meticaïs (about US\$47,300 US dollars, at current exchange rates) intended to fight coastal erosion, reports "Carta de Mocambique" on 8 July.

According to Jose Sopa, the spokesperson for the anti-corruption office, Gimba and his team requested this money for a project to protect the island from erosion – but the project was never implemented.

Gimba was elected mayor on the ticket of the ruling Frelimo Party in the municipal elections of 2013. He lost his position in the 2018 local elections, when the country's main opposition party, Renamo, took control of Mozambique Island.

Health Minister calls for collective efforts to meet HIV goal

The Minister of Health, Armindo Tiago, on 8 July stressed the need for stakeholders at all levels to redouble their efforts and commitment to ensure attainment of the goals enshrined in the HIV/AIDS 5th National Strategic Plan (PEN V), for the 2021/25 period, through improved approaches and implementation.

Addressing the opening session in Maputo of the Consultative Council of Mozambique's National AIDS Council (CNCS), Tiago said that, although the results of the country's main indicators of the national response to HIV/AIDS are encouraging, there must be collective and inclusive efforts against the disease.

"As a contribution to solving the problems faced by the HIV/AIDS response, I urge everyone to give the best of their knowledge and experience to ensure an improvement of our actions and thus attain the commitments undertaken in the framework of PEN V," he said.

In Mozambique, Tiago added, HIV remains a heavy burden on communities, and the country is among the top five in the world with the highest number of new infections. It is estimated that about 98,000 new HIV infections were recorded in 2020, and 38,000 deaths related to the disease. By then, about 2.1 million people were living with HIV.

As part of multi-sector efforts, the government has been adopting national strategies which are implemented by the public and private sectors as well as by civil society. The government, he said, approved in May PEN V, which had been drawn up through an inclusive district, provincial, and national consultative process involving a wide variety of stakeholders.

Under PEN V, the health authorities are committed to reducing new infections, reducing AIDS-related deaths, and improving the well-being of people living with HIV. The plan will reduce the social and structural barriers to the prevention, treatment, and mitigation of HIV.

Transport officials sacked after road tragedy

Following the horrific road accident at Maluana, in Maputo province, on 3 July in which 32 people lost their lives, the Transport Ministry on 7 July sacked Ana Simoes, the General Director of the National Road Transport Institute (INATRO), and Claudio Zunguze, the National Director of Transport and Safety in the Ministry.

INATRO and the National Directorate are the two bodies responsible for guaranteeing road safety. Ana Simoes had been running INATRO and its predecessor, INATTER (National Institute of Terrestrial Transport) since 2015. That same year Claudio Zunguze was appointed to head the National Directorate of Transport and Safety.

Looking after road safety is one of INATRO's key tasks, including inspecting bus companies and other road transport operators.

The Maluana tragedy happened when a bus travelling from Beira to Maputo attempted to overtake a lorry carrying construction sand and collided with an articulated truck heading in the opposite direction. Desperately attempting to return to the correct lane, the bus driver also ran into the lorry he had been overtaking, which overturned. 32 of the bus passengers died, 31 on the spot and one in Maputo Central Hospital.

At its weekly meeting, the Council of Ministers (Cabinet) announced two days of national mourning for the victims of the Maluana disaster, during which flags will be flown at half-mast. Government spokesperson and Deputy Justice Minister Filimao Suaze also announced that an independent commission of inquiry will investigate the causes of the accident and propose measures to improve road safety.

Arnaldo Abel, a representative of Nhancale Transport, the company that owned the bus, has admitted that the driver (who is now in police custody) may have been to blame. Cited by the Portuguese news agency Lusa, Abel said "we accept that human error will have had a negative influence". Abel said the company will assist the survivors and the families of the victims, including transporting the bodies of the victims to Beira.

The commission of inquiry will look at how fast the bus was travelling and whether the driver should have been at the wheel at all. For road transport regulations already state that a driver may not be at the wheel for more than eight hours a day and must take a break of at least half an hour after four hours of driving.

According to published information, there was only one driver on the Nhancale Transport bus. The distance by road between Beira and Maputo is about 1,200 kilometres which is impossible to cover in eight hours, particularly as parts of the road are in poor condition.

INATRO is facing a further scandal, since the Central Office for the Fight against Corruption (GCCC) on 5 July ordered the arrest of 16 of its staff for their involvement in a scheme to falsify biometric driving licences and to sell driving licences to people who had never attended driving schools or taken driving tests.

People who wanted a driving licence could, according to the GCCC, simply pay 30,000 meticaís (US\$473) to the network of corrupt staff.

The accused had all worked at INATTER and made a smooth transition to INATRO when the institution changed its name. Most of them were from the Maputo city INATTER delegation. They included people who were supposed to draw up theoretical and practical driving tests, examiners, computer technicians, and secretarial staff.

144 luxury vehicles seized

Between 2 and 5 July, the Mozambican Tax Authority (AT) seized 144 luxury vehicles that were circulating illegally in the country. The vehicles are valued at over 52 million meticaís (about US\$820,000) according to AT spokesperson, Fernando Tinga, cited by Radio Mozambique. Their owners had not paid the customs duty owing and took them onto Mozambican road using foreign number plates, or forged number plates.

"In clear violation of customs legislation, these vehicles were introduced into the country by various mechanisms. They haven't paid anything to the Mozambican state coffers, and they don't have Mozambican number plates", said Tinga. "The condition for acquiring national number plates is to pay the taxes".

From these cars, he added, the Mozambican State should collect over 27 million meticaís in customs duties and other taxes, plus whatever fines are now demanded from the owners.

"The numbers show the seriousness of the situation", said Tinga, "particularly when we consider that the operation lasted for less than a week". 97 of the vehicles were seized in the southern provinces, 32 in the north and 15 in central Mozambique.

Some of these vehicles displayed a State protocol number plate, but Tinga said such plates are falsified on the black market in number plates.

Tinga added the foreigners driving vehicles with foreign number plates in Mozambique should apply for a temporary import licence. But this facility is only available for foreigners. Any Mozambican with a temporary import licence had obtained it for purposes of tax evasion.

New opening times for Ressano Garcia border

The opening times of the main border post between Mozambique and South Africa at Ressano Garcia have been altered to conform with new working hours at the South African border facility.

According to a dispatch from the National Immigration Service (SENAMI) from 28 June, the post will be open between 06.00 in the morning and 20.00 in the evening.

However, SENAMI has confirmed that the border will continue to be open until 23.00 each night for goods transport.

Military Junta on defensive

Interior Minister Amade Miquidade on 3 June stated that the gunmen who call themselves the “Renamo Military Junta” are now confined and on the defensive.

Speaking to reporters in the central city of Beira, Miquidade said that many members of the Junta have surrendered in order to join the current demobilisation of the Renamo militia. Nonetheless, he promised that the defence and security forces remain on the alert to block any attempted actions by the Junta.

“Recently I have travelled along the main north-south highway (EN1) in Sofala province and visited the zones that were attacked in the past several times by the Military Junta”, said the Minister. “I had the opportunity to speak with special units that are stationed there, and I was pleased to note that life has returned to normal”.

He regarded the free movement of people and goods in the region as proof that the actions of the defence forces “have restricted the movements of members of the Junta so that today they are on the defensive”.

The Military Junta arose in 2019 from a split within the main opposition party, Renamo. A group headed by Mariano Nhongo, who promoted himself to the rank of general, rejected the peace agreement signed by President Filipe Nyusi and Renamo leader Ossufo Momade in August 2019. Nhongo accused Momade of “betrayal”, claimed that he was the true leader of Renamo, and demanded fresh negotiations.

The Junta launched sporadic attacks in Sofala and the neighbouring province of Manica in late 2019 and throughout 2020, particularly against vehicles using the main roads, in which about 30 people died. But Nhongo has been faced with a wave of desertions, as his followers, including some of his senior lieutenants, abandon the Junta, and take advantage of the government’s offer of demobilisation and reintegration into Mozambican society. The Junta’s war seems to be stuttering to a close, for there have been no attacks attributed to the Junta since January.

“We’re having good results”, declared Miquidade. “We want to bring all Mozambicans to live together without guns in our hands”. He appealed once again to Nhongo to surrender and join the demobilisation.

Demobilisation reaches Tete

The demobilisation and disarming of the Renamo militia advanced into the western province of Tete on 30 June.

According to a report on Radio Mozambique, there are 368 former Renamo fighters to be demobilised at the Monjo base in the Tete district of Moatize. The demobilisation here will continue until 14 July.

Demobilisation began in October 2019, and so far nine Renamo military bases have been dismantled – five in Sofala province (Savane, Muxungue, Maringue, Inhaminga and Chemba), one in Inhambane (Mabote), and three in Manica (Barue, Tambara and Mossurize).

By the end of June, a total of 2,307 former Renamo fighters had been demobilised. According to the Renamo leadership, what are euphemistically referred to

as its “residual forces” are 5,221 strong. But this number is considered by some to be a considerable exaggeration.

After they hand over their weapons, the Renamo demobilised return to their home areas (or anywhere else they wish to go). They are registered so that they can enjoy the rights envisaged for the former fighters under the peace agreement signed by President Filipe Nyusi and Renamo leader Ossufo Momade in August 2016.

At the accommodation centres, they are provided with various services, such as the issuing of identity documents, birth certificates, and tax numbers. They are also assisted in opening bank accounts and are provided with pre-paid SIM cards for mobile phones.

Secretary of State for Tete province, Elisa Zacarias, urged citizens to facilitate the integration into society of the Renamo demobilised, and give them opportunities to participate in productive and training projects.

Renamo Secretary-General Andre Majibire, who is also the Renamo representative on the Commission on Military Affairs, set up under the dialogue between the government and Renamo, expressed satisfaction at witnessing another stage in implementing the peace agreement. He foresaw difficulties in the social integration of the former fighters in their zones of origin, but challenged them to overcome them, and declared that they could count on the support of the local authorities.

Former Renamo fighters to train as police officers

A group of 36 former Renamo fighters will, within a matter of days, begin their training for membership of the Mozambican defence and security forces, according to a report on the television station, STV.

They arrived in Maputo on 2 July, and they expect to be recruited into the police force, particularly into the police unit in charge of protecting senior political figures – which means they will continue operating as bodyguards for the Renamo leadership.

“This group will protect the Renamo leaders and Renamo assets”, the party’s general secretary Andre Majibire told reporters in Beira on 5 July.

They join another group, consisting of ten former fighters, who joined the police in mid-2020. They are all part of a list of 300 names, submitted by Renamo for recruitment into the police under the peace agreement signed in August 2019 by President Filipe Nyusi and Renamo leader Ossufo Momade.

Majibire said he does not know when the next phase, involving the incorporation into the police of a larger number of former fighters, will take off. “It’s very difficult to make predictions in cases like this”, he said. “Our desire, as Renamo, is that the process should end tomorrow. But, unfortunately, it is a delicate matter, and the objective is not to end it urgently but to ensure that everything goes well. So, we have to accept ups and downs in order to guarantee a lasting peace”.

In the past Majibire has been highly critical of the government over the slow pace of including the former fighters in the police

Gorongosa court jails illegal miners

The Gorongosa district court, in the central province of Sofala, struck a blow in defence of the country's biodiversity when it sentenced 42 illegal miners, who had been extracting minerals from the buffer zone of the Gorongosa National Park (PNG) to prison terms of between eight and 14 months.

According to a PNG press release, on the morning of 24 June, a joint force of PNG rangers and police from the Sofala Provincial Police Command caught the illegal miners red-handed extracting minerals in Nhandzeia, in the National Park's buffer zone. These were the same miners who, earlier in the year received a warning from the district judge and the local branch of the Public Prosecutor's Office. They promised to leave the area, but instead, they stepped up their illegal activity and even acquired new machinery.

The police and the rangers found in the miners' possession electrical generators, pumps, rock crushers, grinders, and pickaxes, among other equipment. They also possessed highly toxic chemicals, damaging to the environment, that are used in artisanal mining.

These chemicals poison the rivers that flow into the National Park and pose a serious threat to wildlife. "The damage caused by illegal mining is notorious inside the park", said the PNG release. The Park, it added, "has fought against all illicit activities which endanger the restoration and preservation of the environment and biological diversity, which occur inside or directly affect protected and conservation areas".

The trial of the 42 miners took place in Gorongosa town on 29 June. In addition to the prison terms, the miners were sentenced to fines varying between 3,000 and 6,000 meticaís (between US\$48 and US\$96). All the material used by the miners has been confiscated and reverts to the state.

New fishing licences for Cahora Bassa limited

The Ministry of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries has decided to limit new fishing licenses, in an attempt to curb biodiversity devastation by illegal fishermen at the Cahora Bassa reservoir, in the central province of Tete, according to a report in "Noticias" on 3 July.

The Ministry's Director of Operations, Leonid Chimarizene, said that despite the efforts to combat fishing by illegal operators, the situation has worsened over the last few years and authorities want to halt the threat and ensure a sound and healthy growth of the fish.

The move, however, has unleashed an increase of illegal fishermen who also resort to harmful fishing gear, including mosquito nets that sweep away the larvae and juveniles, thus jeopardising the continuity of the species.

A joint operation carried out by the Ministry, the Tete Provincial Economic Activities Services, the Maritime Administration, and the coastal and inland water guards also seized three semi-industrial fishing vessels and 216 mosquito nets.

"Such practices represent a great risk for the communities who may not have fish in the future for their sustenance, and also pose an environmental and economic threat," Chimarizene cautioned, adding that unspecified quantities of juvenile fish have been returned to the water, and fines of over two million meticaís (about US\$31,000) have been imposed.

In order to keep full control of the situation, authorities have declared "closed fishing", which consists of allowing only a limited number of vessels onto the lake. The authorities will conduct further joint operations and cooperate with other entities at places such as markets and transit points.

Illegal fishing is a well-known problem at Cahora Bassa reservoir and in 2016/17 the authorities seized 70 vessels that are now for sale at public auction.

Water supply expanded in Manica

Over 9,000 residents of the administrative post of Dacata, in the central province of Manica, will enjoy access to clean drinking water following the inauguration of a new water supply system on 1 July by President Filipe Nyusi.

The project, budgeted at 31.8 million meticaís (US\$ 501,000), is part of the Presidential initiative known as "Water for Life" (PRAVIDA). "This is an important landmark towards attaining the goals enshrined in the Government Five Year Programme for 2020/24, to boost the water supply coverage in the rural areas from the current 62 per cent of the population to 80 per cent," President Nyusi said.

The efforts underway to ensure access to drinking water, he added, have borne encouraging results. In 1975, the year of Mozambican independence, national coverage stood at six per cent, but hard and persistent work pushed the coverage rate up to 74 per cent by 2020.

"To fast track our response to water shortage, we drew up the Water for Life programme, under which we built water reservoirs and other sources", said the President. Under PRAVIDA, he added, 60 water supply systems and 80 water sources and reservoirs were installed. In Manica, systems were built in five districts, 54 boreholes were drilled, and 1,677 new home connections were made.

The encouraging success of the programme to date, President Nyusi said, has pushed the government to extend PRAVIDA to a second phase to be implemented up to 2024. "Our vision is to attain universal water supply and sanitation coverage in line with the United Nations' Agenda 20/30 that we have signed", he said. "Here in Manica, through PRAVIDA-II, we shall build and ensure maintenance of a further eight systems and 56 new boreholes that will secure water supply to an additional 245,000 people".

The inspector of the Dacata system, Virgílio Munguambe, said in the initial phase it will cover about 3,000 consumers. In the coming years, this number will increase to reach 9,000 consumers. The system depends on electricity from the national grid and solar panels.

France supports fight against money laundering

The Bank of Mozambique and the French Embassy on 1 July signed a memorandum of understanding, under which France will donate €500,000 (about US\$592,000) to support the fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

At the signing ceremony, the governor of the Bank of Mozambique, Rogerio Zandamela, said he believed that, with the signing of this memorandum, the conditions had been established to identify and mitigate activities related to the illicit circulation of capital in the country. “We are aware that our financial system is exposed to the risks of money laundering and of financing terrorism, which makes it imperative that we increasingly strengthen the mechanisms to identify and combat this evil”, he declared.

Zandamela wanted the central bank to adopt a regulatory framework in line with the current challenges, and with the strategic orientation to implement a more effective and comprehensive monitoring system.

Speaking to reporters, French ambassador David Izzo said he hopes that, with this support, the Mozambican banking system will become more robust and prepared to control illicit flows of capital intended for terrorist groups. “This cooperation with the Bank of Mozambique is at the heart of our support against terrorism”, he said. “We know that there is no terrorism without finance and that there are links between the trafficking of all kinds in which transfers of money are not screened”.

Electricity to reach over ten million more households by 2024

President Filipe Nyusi on 1 July pledged that over ten million households will have access to electricity in their homes for the first time by 2024 in the framework of the “Energy for All” Programme, intended to secure universal access to electrical power.

President Nyusi reaffirmed the government’s commitment to achieving this goal at the inauguration of a power supply system in Macate district, in the central province of Manica. This cost US\$238,000 disbursed by the government and will benefit 250 households. Presently, 66 connections have been established.

“Six months ago, I announced the abolition of the electricity connection fee, a move intended to fast track new connections and hasten the achievement of universal access to energy. We are not only encouraged but enthusiastic with the results attained so far. About 500 new consumers are connected to the national grid, every day,” President Nyusi said.

Since the elimination of the fee, he added, 115,317 households have been connected, while neighbourhoods and other public spaces have been illuminated, thus transforming the lives of many Mozambicans.

“Macate is now in a position to improve its production

levels and we would like to urge the district to step up such levels to justify the investment we have made,” the President stressed, pointing out that the impact of electricity goes beyond the economic front. Energy answers the consumption needs of households and its availability will leverage the use of health and education facilities, thus boosting the quality of life.

Because of these reasons and the urgent need to shake up the productive sectors, President Nyusi advised the local government to spread the productive use of electricity, by promoting investment in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, fisheries, and agro-processing.

The darkness into which Macate used to plunge every night is a thing of the past, and so President Nyusi asked every resident to safeguard the correct functioning of the system and ensure the longevity of the equipment, taking into account that it is a collective asset.

CMG and iGas become shareholders in ROMPCO

The Mozambican Gas Company (CMG) in partnership with the South African based “iGas”, an affiliate of the Central Energy Fund (CEF), will become shareholders of the Republic of Mozambique Pipeline Company (ROMPCO), with holdings of 25 per cent and 40 per cent respectively.

The move comes after a public announcement recently made by Sasol, whereby the South African petrochemical giant declared the conclusion of the sale and purchase agreement of 30 per cent of its shares in ROMPCO, valued at US\$290 million.

A joint press release from CMG and iGas says that Sasol will hold 20 per cent of the shares, thus becoming a minority shareholder in ROMPCO, which operates the 865-kilometre long gas pipeline between Mozambique and South Africa.

Estevao Pale, the chairperson of the board of Mozambique’s National Hydrocarbons Company (ENH), the mother company of CMG, said that besides the social and economic impact for the country, the joint decision to exercise the pre-emptive right on the acquisition of Sasol shares is a new chapter for ROMPCO, as it promotes broader cooperation space for ENH and CEF.

“Having the governments of the two countries as majority shareholders of the cross-border pipeline is strategic, taking into account that the ROMPCO pipeline is the only gas source for the South African market, and gas is the alternative supplier of clean energy,” Pale said.

For his part, the Executive Director of CEF Group, Ishmael Poolo, declared that “the acquisition of the shares announces a new era in the promotion of partnerships as well as for the establishment of a solid base to face the challenges ahead of South Africa’s future energy security”.

The Mozambican Gas Company (CMG), affiliated with ENH, is a Mozambican company founded in 2002, to provide a transmission service for natural gas and other hydrocarbons,

ADB appoints new country manager

The African Development Bank (ADB) on 7 July announced the appointment of Cesar Augusto Mba Abogo as Country Manager for Mozambique. He will take up his post on 16 August, replacing the incumbent, Pietro Toigo.

Cesar Augusto Mba Abogo is an economist from Equatorial Guinea who has specialised in natural resource economics, development economics, public policy, and international negotiations. From April 2019 to October 2020, he served as Equatorial Guinea's Minister of Finance. According to a press release from the ADB, "he was appointed during challenging times and was mandated with articulating a people-centric strategy for equitable and sustainable economic diversification".

Commenting on his appointment, Abogo said "we are currently at a historic crossroads in the history of our continent, and I am excited at the prospect of making my contribution to the African Development Bank, our flagship development institution".

He added, "I look forward to boosting the Bank's activities in Mozambique, a country with a culture and history that I have been passionate about for decades".

Cesar holds a Master's degree in Human Development and Governance, from the Universidad Oberta de Catalunya (Spain), and a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the Universidad de las Islas Baleares (Spain). He is currently doing a PhD in African and International Studies at the Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Spain.

Commenting on his appointment, ADP President Akinwumi Adesina pointed out that the new representative "is a seasoned and respected economist, with extensive public sector management experience".

Adesina added, "having served in different capacities in the Government of Equatorial Guinea, he brings strong experience in working with national, international and non-governmental partners. His experience and skills will serve the Bank well in Mozambique".

The African Development Bank financed its first project in Mozambique in 1977 and since then has focussed on supporting projects covering agriculture, transport, water and sanitation, energy, communications, mining, and finance. Its total active investment in Mozambique, as of October 2020, was just under US\$1.4 billion.

ADB supports rehabilitation of Machipanda line

The African Development Bank (ADB) on 29 June announced that it has granted US\$665,000 to support the rehabilitation of the Machipanda railway which runs between the Mozambican port of Beira and the border with Zimbabwe.

The grant, which comes from the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (NEPAD-IPPF) Special Fund, will fund the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment studies to ensure that the project takes into consideration resilience and sustainability.

The rehabilitation project includes welding the ends of new tracks to make them more robust, enabling the railway to bear 60-tonne wagons rather than the current maximum of 40 tonnes. In addition, work on reducing the curvature of fourteen critical bends along the line will allow trains to travel at 60 kilometres per hour which is twice the current speed limit.

The work is being carried out by the publicly-owned Ports and Railway Company (CFM). It began in 2019 and will be completed next year at a total cost of around US\$150 million.

Commenting on the role of the grant in the project, Pietro Toigo, ADB country manager in Mozambique, said that "as part of its Integrate Africa strategy, ADB is committed to strengthening the transboundary rail link between Mozambique and Zimbabwe in a manner that is sensitive to social and environmental impacts".

The rehabilitation project is in alignment with the aims of the African Development Bank's Country Strategy Paper for Mozambique 2018-2022, which focuses on two strategic pillars: infrastructure investments that enable transformative inclusive growth and job creation; and agricultural transformation and value chain development.

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