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President declares peace as main task of his governance

President Filipe Nyusi on 15 January told reporters that efforts to bring peace to the country were among the main highlights of his government's performance during his second five-year term of office as President of the Republic.

The President was speaking at a Maputo press conference, marking the start of the third year of his second term. He recalled that when he first took office, in 2015, armed attacks by militiamen of the main opposition party Renamo were continuing in the central provinces.

Peace with Renamo was always a priority, he said. "We had to work to reach where we are today, where our brothers in Renamo are no longer living in the mountains", Nyusi added.

The President signed a peace agreement with Renamo leader Ossufo Momade in August 2019, under which former Renamo fighters are being demobilised, disarmed, and reintegrated into society.

President Nyusi said his second term of office has also been marked by terrorism in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, which he regarded as a new challenge for Mozambique. Although terrorism was "a universal phenomenon", Mozambique had not experienced it previously. "We are containing and managing it to guarantee that the country remains stable", said the President.

President Nyusi was speaking shortly before flying to the United Arab Emirates, where he will attend the opening of the "Week of Sustainability", discussing the Energy Transition.

According to a press release from President Nyusi's office "the Week of Sustainability is an international business event, organised by the UAE, through a body dedicated to the development of clean energies in the context of the international agenda for zero carbon emissions and containing climate change".

This will be President Nyusi's second visit to the UAE in less than three months. The previous visit was in October 2022, and Nyusi described it as "very productive".

Thirty hectares of crops destroyed in Gaza

About 30 hectares of maize have been destroyed by flooding on the Limpopo River, in Chibuto district, in the southern province of Gaza. The flooding was caused by the ongoing discharges from the Massingir dam.

According to the Chibuto district director of infrastructure, Manuel Tivane, quoted in the daily newspaper "O Pais" on 16 January, close to 19,000 people may have been affected by the floods. "The floods destroyed the maize crop. Other crops were in development, and had not yet reached the ripening stage", Tivane said.

The National Water Resource Management Directorate had warned of possible further flooding in the southern region of the country, which could make some of the roads in Gaza impassable.

The authorities in Chibuto district have also urged the public to abandon immediately flood-prone areas in the Limpopo River basin, following a sharp increase in discharges from the Massingir dam, further upstream.

The flood is due to the increased flow of some of the major rivers in neighbouring South Africa and Eswatini. It is also threatening some districts in Maputo province, such as Magude and Moamba in the Incomati river basin. Some parts of Magude district cannot be reached by road because increased discharges from some dams in South Africa have raised the level of the Incomati.

According to the Magude district administrator, Lazaro Bambamba, the flooding has already affected about 1,500 households in Malemane. "We have lost some crops, including 7.5 hectares of maize, beans and sweet potatoes", he said.

The flood has also interrupted road traffic in Malhanganine and made it impossible to use the road bridge over the Incomati.

UK court of appeal rejects case against Cabo Delgado LNG

The United Kingdom Court of Appeal in London has ruled that British government funding of up to US\$1.15 billion for liquefied natural gas (LNG) operations in Mozambique is lawful. The court thus threw out an appeal by the environmental organisation, Friends of the Earth (FOE), which was attempting to halt British funding for Mozambican LNG.

According to a report from the Reuters news agency, FOE had asked the court to rule that the British government had wrongly decided that funding the LNG project would be compatible with the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The project in question is led by the French oil and gas company, TotalEnergies, and involves building two LNG plants on the Afungi peninsula in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado.

Currently, the project is on hold because of Islamist terrorism in Cabo Delgado. However, Total Energies has vowed to resume the project when the security situation allows.

Investment in the project is put at over US\$20 billion, and UK Export Finance (UKEF) has committed to providing direct loans and guarantees to banks to support the design, building and operation of the project.

FOE's legal action failed in a lower court and was dismissed by the Court of Appeal in a written ruling on 13 January. Judge Geoffrey Vos said the Paris Agreement was only one of a range of factors UKEF took into account when reaching the decision to fund the project.

Vos added that UKEF's view that funding the project was aligned with the UK's obligations under the Paris Agreement was "tenable" and that there was no requirement for it to be "certain that the decision complied with those obligations".

Nigerian detained in possession of cocaine

Mozambique's National Criminal Investigation Service (Sernic) on 13 January detained a 54-year-old Nigerian citizen in possession of 18 kilos of cocaine at Maputo International Airport.

According to Sernic spokesperson Hilario Lole, the Nigerian was detained as he disembarked at the airport. His journey had begun in Brazil.

Lole said that the drugs were in the Nigerian's luggage, disguised as packets of coffee. He said that when these packets were opened, they were found to contain a white powder which, on testing, proved to be cocaine.

Sernic is now formalising the detention, added Lole, and is continuing investigations to discover other members of the drug trafficking ring. He hoped that the Nigerian will divulge all details about the route and the final destination of the cocaine.

This is the first seizure of illicit drugs at the airport this year.

Government to invest US\$313 million on rural roads

The Mozambican Government, through the Ministry of Public Works, intends to invest this year 20 billion meticaís (US\$ 313 million) for the rehabilitation of rural roads and the installation of bridges.

According to a document of the Annual Plan of Activities and Budget of the Road Fund, cited in the Maputo daily newspaper "Noticias" on 4 January, this amount is a cut of over a billion meticaís compared to the previous year.

Of the funds, more than nine billion meticaís will come from tax revenues, including fuel taxes, and road tolls. Just over ten billion meticaís will come from donations from development partners and international financial institutions.

"A total of 14,290 kilometres of rural roads are under rehabilitation in the provinces of Zambezia and Nampula", says the document, adding that work is also underway to build bridges over the Buzi, Mutivasse, and Save Rivers in Sofala and Nampula.

There is a need, the document says, to mobilise more resources to cover the budget deficit for the implementation of additional actions of the Integrated Rural Road Development Project and to repair the damage caused by the tropical storms Ana and Gombe, which had their greatest impact in Zambezia and Nampula.

Last year, the Public Works Ministry rehabilitated 530 kilometres of rural roads and tarred 145 kilometres. and "this year it intends to speed up the works in order to enable the easy circulation of people and goods".

Niassa needs US\$4 million to maintain roads

The northern province of Niassa needs 265 million meticaís (US\$4.1 million) to fund the maintenance of roads in order to minimise the impact of natural disasters, especially extreme rainfall.

Referring to a study conducted in that province, Celso Cardoso of the National Roads Administration (ANE), quoted the Maputo daily newspaper "Noticias" on 5 January, said that without maintenance roads will be hit by mudslides or damage to the structures used to drain stormwater.

According to Cardoso, several interventions are urgently needed because many of these sections do not have alternative routes. Without such interventions, some sections will be isolated from the rest of the province indefinitely.

"The rains that have been falling heavily in recent days are contributing to the saturation of the soil, a fact that is already hindering the free movement of vehicles of all kinds", he said.

Recently, Cardoso said, ANE mobilised contractors to ensure the maintenance of some stretches of road to avoid interruption in traffic.

State pensioners to receive “13th payment”

The Mozambican government has reiterated its commitment to pay the New Year bonus to state pensioners. The bonus, known as “the 13th month”, is equivalent to an extra month of the basic wages.

It is normally paid in January to all employees of the public administration. But in mid-December, in his annual State of the Nation address, given to the country’s parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, President Filipe Nyusi announced that there is not enough money in the state budget to pay the bonus.

However, he said the government would seek the resources to pay the 13th month to all pensioners “because of the vulnerability of this social group”.

The Deputy Minister of State Administration, Inocencio Impissa, cited in the newssheet “Carta de Mocambique” on 13 January, guaranteed that the pensioner’s bonus is now being processed.

“This is a promise already made by the head of state, so the funds must be processed”, he said. “The 13th month is generally paid as from the second or third week of January. The expectation is that it will be the same this year”.

Impissa added that the 13th month will also be paid to 18,000 workers of the public administration who are not yet receiving pensions but are in the process of being retired.

The decision not to pay the 13th month seems not to apply to municipal workers. Beira and Quelimane municipal councils have both announced that they will pay the bonus to all their workforce.

USAID donates oxygen cylinders

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) on 12 January announced the delivery of 100 oxygen cylinders for each provincial hospital in Mozambique and 285 oxygen concentrators for provincial and district hospitals.

According to a USAID press release, “the donated cylinders and concentrators will help ensure the availability of oxygen to hospital patients suffering from severe respiratory illness, including COVID-19”.

“This latest donation from the American people”, said the release, “builds on previous support to the Mozambican Ministry of Health with a total of 1,100 oxygen cylinders, 300 oxygen concentrators, 50 portable ventilators, a PSA plant, and various other oxygen delivery equipment, and training to healthcare providers. In addition, the U.S. government has provided the country with 14.2 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines. The total value of the US funding provided to Mozambique to combat COVID-19 now stands at over US\$107 million”.

Cited by the release, USAID Mission Director Helen Pataki said: “For many sick people, oxygen can mean the difference between life and death. Our donation ensures that regional hospitals can store more oxygen, having it available when there are sudden spikes in

illnesses. We want regional hospitals to have what they need to treat critically ill people locally.”

Health programmes, added the release, “represent a critical component of the broader US Government’s assistance in Mozambique. In close collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Mozambique, the US Government provides more than US\$500 million in annual assistance to improve the quality of education and healthcare, promote economic prosperity, and support the overall development of the nation”.

Call for preventive measures against cholera and Covid-19

Health Minister Armindo Tiago on 10 January called for strengthened preventive measures against cholera and Covid-19. Speaking to reporters after the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), Tiago noted that cases of Covid-19 have been on the increase across the globe, particularly in Asia and Latin America.

“The Council of Ministers is recommending strengthened control and prevention measures”, he said. “We all know what they are – particularly the washing of hands and vaccination”.

Over 96 per cent of adult Mozambicans were vaccinated against Covid-19 last year. Tiago said the country has sufficient stocks of vaccines to provide booster shots.

The number of new cases of Covid-19 reported by the health authorities is fluctuating. Thus, there were 59 new cases reported on 8 January, but only seven on 9 January.

As for cholera, Tiago said that cases have been reported from Lago and Lichinga districts, in Niassa province, from Caia, in Sofala, and from Tete city. To date, 1,016 cases of cholera have been notified and eight deaths, all of them in Niassa.

The disease appears to have spread into Mozambique from Malawi, where there have been 21,024 cases and about 700 cholera deaths.

The lethality rate in Mozambique remains low, which Tiago attributed to the timely treatment of patients and the availability of medicines for the disease.

“Poor sanitation contributes to the spread of the disease”, said Jose Manuel, the Niassa provincial health director, cited in the Maputo daily newspaper “Noticias” on 11 January, adding that more than half of the inhabitants of the province do not have access to clean drinking water.

Some of the 655 cases of cholera confirmed in Niassa, the director said, were admitted to the 15 treatment centres in a very weak state of health.

But Manuel guaranteed that the provincial deposit of medicines in Lichinga received a few days ago significant quantities of drugs to face the outbreak, notably 7,000 units of rehydration serum.

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

Extradition of alleged kidnapper delayed

Extradition proceedings against alleged kidnapping mastermind Esmael (Rico) Nangy began on 9 January in the magistrate's court at Tembisa, in South Africa, but were adjourned until 16 January. The prosecution opposed granting bail for Nangy because of the seriousness of the accusations he is facing.

The court was told that the Mozambican authorities issued a warrant for Nangy's arrest on 18 July last year. The delay in the court hearing will allow the South African prosecutors to coordinate the extradition proceedings with their Mozambican counterparts.

Apparently, the prosecutor dealing with the case has not received from the Directorate of Public Prosecutions details of the charges against Nandy.

Nangy's lawyer, Calvin Maille, protested his client's innocence. He told reporters that Nangy is a well-known businessman in the transport area and has permanent South African resident status. He has no criminal record, said Maille, and is not a suspect in any other cases.

"He purchased a property in South Africa in 2016, and is a permanent resident in this country", he added.

A police source in Maputo, cited the newsheet "Carta de Mocambique" on 10 January, said that Nangy is a suspect in a kidnapping case that took place in Maputo last year. A vehicle owned by Nangy was seized because of its similarity with a vehicle caught on surveillance cameras at the site of the kidnapping. Since then, a driver and a mechanic employed by Nangy have been under police custody in Maputo.

A source in Nangy's family told reporters he will fight against extradition to Maputo. This source said the firearm found in Nangy's possession is licensed, and that the various mobile phones seized by the police belong to his children.

Justice staff complicit in kidnapping

The General Director of Mozambique's National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC), Nelson Rego, acknowledged in Maputo on 9 January that some kidnapping cases have involved staff from the institutions of the administration of justice.

"We are concerned about the involvement of some employees of the organs of the administration of justice who collaborate in the crime of kidnapping", Rego said, speaking at a ceremony marking the sixth anniversary of the foundation of SERNIC. The ceremony was held under the slogan: "For a SERNIC Engaged in Strategies for the Clarification of Organised and Transnational Crime, with Focus on Money Laundering, Terrorism Financing and Kidnapping".

Rego also acknowledged the complexity of solving cases of kidnapping, "given its modus-operandi, and the means and methods used in the negotiation of ransoms".

In addition to solving several crimes related to kidnapping, according to Rego, SERNIC's challenge is to stop money laundering so that Mozambique comes off the grey list, since it presents weaknesses in the fight

against this evil, according to a study by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

In order to achieve these objectives, he said, the revision of the law on SERNIC should be accelerated, since it will allow the establishment of specialised units that will work in coordination with the central offices for the recovery of assets and the fight against organised and transnational crime.

"We also have, as a challenge, the approval of our first strategic plan for the 2023-2030 period. We must also purify our ranks, work on specialised training for members, and invest in modern technical resources and equipment", he added.

Interior Minister Arsenia Massingue, who also attended the ceremony, challenged SERNIC to deepen its methods of instigation to ensure a timely fight against terrorism, and those who are financing and supporting it. "The prevention and fight against crime requires staff who are properly trained to fully exercise their activities, in compliance with the legislation, and with respect for human rights and the dignity of life", Massingue said.

Illegal timber seized

The National Environmental Quality Control Agency (AQUA) has ordered the seizure of 100 cubic metres of black chacate wood illegally logged in the central province of Sofala.

The timber was being transported in four trucks, belonging to a forestry operator in the neighbouring province of Manica. "This operator is authorised to work in Manica province, but he crossed the provincial boundary", the AQUA delegate in Sofala, Morgado Mussengue, explained to reporters. "Instead of working in Tambara district (in Manica), he was logging in Chemba (Sofala)".

The offence can incur a fine of over 900,000 meticaís (US\$14,000). The case will now go to court, said Mussengue, and, if the operator does not pay the fine within 15 days, the seized timber should be sold at public auction.

Government to set maximum profit margins

The Mozambican government intends to set maximum profit margins to ban price speculation in the marketing of building materials.

"Among the materials to be covered are cement, iron, and zinc plate", the National Director of Domestic Trade at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Zulmira Macamo, told reporters at the end of a meeting held on 5 January in Maputo.

Currently, said Macamo, talks are underway with the private sector and other institutions for the implementation of these measures. "This is an effort to allow construction materials to be incorporated into the regulations on fixing maximum profit margins for basic products", she said.

According to Macamo, this measure will protect the purchasing power of consumers at a time when the cost of living is worsening.

Armed forces launch operation against bases

The Mozambican Armed Forces (FADM) on 3 January announced that “Operation Vulcao IV” has begun in the bush of Macomia district, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, with the purpose of destroying Islamist terrorist bases in this area.

The FADM statement said the operation is being undertaken by the Mozambican forces together with their allies from Rwanda and SADC (Southern African Development Community).

It follows last year’s “Vulcao I” operations, which destroyed the large jihadist base known as “Kathupa”. “Vulcao I”, the FADM states, also led to the elimination of terrorist leaders and the seizure of arms caches.

The terrorist bases that are the target of “Vulcao IV” are located north of the Messalo River (in Muidumbe district) and west of the Chai administrative post, in Macomia. The long-term goal of the operation is to re-establish security in Muidumbe and Macomia districts.

The FADM has also promised to rescue hostages kidnapped by the terrorists, and return them to normal civilian life.

Nacala municipal workers on strike

Some of the employees of the Nacala Port Municipal Council, in the northern province of Nampula, have gone on strike over two months’ unpaid wages, according to a report in the independent newsheet “Carta de Mocambique”.

The paper said that, by 4 January, the 613 council workers had not received their wages for November and December. The strikers are also demanding the traditional end-of-year bonus, known as “the 13th month” since it is equivalent to an extra month of the basic wage.

The central government says there is not enough money in the state budget to pay the bonus to all workers in the public administration. However, it seems that this position is not binding on municipalities, since both Maputo and Beira Councils have indicated that they will pay the 13th month.

“We have no wages and there is no information about it”, said one of the strikers. “We know that wages are a sacred matter. We spent Christmas with nothing. This January, we have children desperate, since they do not know if they are going to school or not. We are hearing rumours that we won’t get paid until February.”

The workers sent the Council a warning of their intention to go on strike on 3 January but the matter was not considered by the Mayor of Nacala, Raul Novinte.

In an attempt to calm the workers, the director of the municipal office of Communication and Image, Arlindo Chissale, attempted to speak to the workers but was received with violence.

“The delay in paying wages is due to the increase in the number of employees, with the recent inclusion of about 100 municipal police officers, and the promotion of others, raising the monthly wages bill from 8.5

million to 13.3 million meticaís (from US\$133,000 to US\$208,000)”, Chissale said.

This strike takes place a fortnight after employees of the Maputo Municipal Council (CMCM) also went on strike to demand salary payment based on the Single Wage Table (TSU), which has been in force for public administration since October.

But there is enormous confusion over which categories of public sector workers are covered by the TSU, and which are not.

Complicating the situation in Nacala is the rivalry between the ruling Frelimo Party and the main opposition party, Renamo. Nacala is one of the municipalities run by Renamo, while the strikers are allegedly Frelimo members. This led Chissale, interviewed by the newsheet “Mediafax”, to claim that there was “an outside hand” at work, which had “infiltrated” the municipal workforce.

Mozambique takes up seat on Security Council

Mozambique took up its seat as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council at the UN headquarters in New York, on 3 January.

Addressing the ceremony, the Mozambican ambassador to the UN, Pedro Comissario, speaking on behalf of President Filipe Nyusi, pledged “to fully devote our energies with the cooperation of fellow members of this august body to the maintenance of peace and security worldwide. This is a primary responsibility of the UN charter assigned to the Council”.

“The imperative of searching for peaceful solutions to conflicts and the duty to cooperate with other nations are sacred principles enshrined in the Constitution of Mozambique”, added Comissario. “As an elected member we will therefore attach great attention to situations that constitute serious threats to the peaceful existence of states in the 21st century”.

“Paramount among contemporary threats to national peace and security is the progressive Africanisation of terrorism affecting our continent”, he warned. “We think this must be stemmed and reversed. The international community must pool its efforts towards this endeavour”.

Ambassador Comissario noted that the UN “was created to be a centre for harmonising the actions of nations in the attainment of our common goals, including international peace and security, the pursuit of friendly relations among nations and international cooperation”.

“We believe achieving these goals can open avenues, as the charter says, for the promotion of social progress, better standards of living and broader freedom. We must continue to live up to the Charter’s call”, declared Comissario.

During the ceremony, the Security Council hoisted the flags of Mozambique, and the other four countries elected last year as non-permanent members of the Council, namely Ecuador, Japan, Malta, and Switzerland.

Mozambican banks produce profits of US\$205 million

The Mozambican banking sector has recorded profits of around 13.1 billion meticaïs (US\$205 million) with an increase of 1.1 billion meticaïs (28.88 per cent) from foreign exchange revaluation, as well as 0.9 billion (20.29 per cent) from financial operations and 4.4 billion meticaïs (15.95 per cent) in net interest income.

The data, which appear in the Financial Stability Bulletin for June 2022, made public recently by the Mozambican Central Bank, represent an increase of 2.2 billion meticaïs when compared to the same period in 2021.

“Structurally, deposits continued to be the main and most profitable source of funding for the banking sector, with a weight of 98.02 per cent, with the other sources of resources having maintained a residual weight”, the document says, cited in the Maputo daily newspaper “Noticias” on 4 January.

Regarding the structure of deposits, 58.69 per cent correspond to demand deposits with the remainder equivalent to the term component (39.58 per cent) and other deposits (1.73 per cent).

“In relation to the same period of 2021, time deposit and other deposits recorded increases equivalent to 20.97 per cent and 51.49 per cent, while demand deposits decreased by 1.41 per cent”, the Bulletin says.

Festive season tourism revenue may reach over US\$14 million

The revenue collected in the Mozambican tourism sector between 15 December and 15 January may reach about 900 million meticaïs (US\$ 14 million), as a result of the arrival of a thousand international visitors.

According to Edson Vala, from the National Directorate of Tourism, quoted in the Maputo daily newspaper “Noticias” on 3 January, this amount represents an increase of 200 million meticaïs compared to the same period last year.

“The growth in the tourism sector in the country is due to the easing of the Covid-19 prevention measures in the

domestic and global markets”, Vala said, adding that many tourists have used the recently created electronic visa platform (E-Visa), operated by the National Immigration Service (SENAMI), to enter the country.

However, the vice president of the Board of Directors of the Confederation of Mozambican Business Associations (CTA), Vasco Manhica, speaking to reporters recently, criticised the flaws presented by the E-Visa system, linking them to the failures of the banking system.

“There are flaws in the electronic system for obtaining visas. The platform exists, but it still has some shortcomings. There are also failures in the banking system, and this creates inconveniences”, he said.

US\$20 million for Gorongosa coffee study

About US\$20 million will be spent on a baseline study for coffee production in Gorongosa National Park, in the central province of Sofala. The study to be financed by the Dutch authorities, according to the administrator of Gorongosa district, Pedro Massengue, will cover 45 beneficiaries, as well as enhance the biodiversity of the district.

The administrator, cited in the Maputo daily newspaper “Noticias” on 3 January, said that the project will also benefit 15 producers who will be trained in conservation issues, in an initiative that will also cover schools to reduce the rates of chronic malnutrition among children.

“The coffee from Gorongosa is popular in the United Kingdom because it is organic and its production does not depend on any chemical product”, Massengue said.

According to the source, similar projects have a direct impact “on the acquisition of means of transport, growth in the number of flour mills, construction of improved houses, carpentry and mechanical workshops, among others.”

The administrator also recalled that 152.3 tonnes of organic coffee produced in Gorongosa will be exported to the European and American markets, boosting the lives of family sector producers.
