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Mozambique joins International Coffee Organisation

Mozambique has joined the International Coffee Organisation (ICO) to promote the country as a source of some of the world's most environmentally and socially sustainable coffee. During a ceremony in central London on 13 June, Minister of Agriculture Celso Correia signed the International Coffee Agreement in the presence of the ICO's Executive Director, Vanusia Nogueira. Also present were representatives from the country's growing coffee sector, overseen by Amocafe.

By joining the ICO, Mozambique will contribute to the development of global policies on coffee sustainability and participate in the exchange of knowledge with other coffee-producing nations.

According to a joint press release from the Mozambican government and the ICO, "Mozambican coffee is celebrated for its commitment to habitat restoration and biodiversity preservation". It adds that coffee production "relies on partnerships with rural communities, enabling local farmers to benefit from training and access to resources and markets. The country's coffee industry is dedicated to long-term sustainability through initiatives such as organic farming, agroforestry and resource diversification within Protected Areas".

Correia emphasised that "This is a historic day for Mozambique as we join the International Coffee Organisation. Our coffee sector is growing fast and is an important part of our plans for the future and the change we wish to bring to our country".

He added, "Coffee is being grown in areas that include some of the most biodiverse in the world and we are committed to ensuring that the crop's growth supports the protection of the natural environment. The Government is working closely with rural farmers to support them in the industry, and we have created systems that ensure the vast majority of profits go back to those who grow the crop".

As a result, he added, "Consumers will not only enjoy a unique taste experience, but also support local farmers and their sustainable practices, and help preserve the biodiversity of the country's landscapes".

Welcoming Mozambique to the ICO, Vanusia Nogueira stressed "I am convinced that Mozambique's contribution, as a full partner of the ICO and the new ICA, will be crucial in shaping the coffee industry for a bright, sustainable future".

The signing ceremony was followed by a celebratory coffee morning at London's famous "Groucho Club" in Soho. Among those attending the event were celebrity "coffee influencers", roasting companies, representatives of international organisations, as well as celebrities and artists.

One of the coffee brands available at the event was "Nossa Gorongosa", which is grown in the Gorongosa National Park. This coffee is symbolic of how conflict has been replaced by development in Mozambique. The Gorongosa mountain range for many years hosted the headquarters of the country's main opposition party,

Renamo, when it was in rebellion against the government, and supported by apartheid South Africa.

However, following negotiations and military pressure, Renamo laid down its arms and now claims to be a solely political organisation. Since then, the Mozambican government has worked with American philanthropist Greg Carr, international cooperation partners, and small-scale farmers to set up a successful commercial coffee operation. Over a quarter of a million indigenous coffee saplings have been planted by more than 800 farmers resulting in the export of around 150 tonnes of Arabica coffee. "Nossa Gorongosa" is now sold, among many other places, in the upmarket British supermarket chain "Waitrose" with all profits being fed back into girls' education in the National Park.

Also available at the event was Cafe do Ibo which is made from the country's oldest coffee variety from the species *Zanguebariae*. It is best drunk as a black filter coffee to savour its unique herbal flavours.

Correia explained to AIM that these speciality beans are grown in the Quirimbas Archipelago, off the coast of the northern province of Cabo Delgado. They are very special due to being naturally low in caffeine.

The coffee comes from a producer's association established in 2012. Since then, under the guidance of the Ministry of Agriculture, it has received financial support from Italy through the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) for its commercial development. This marketing has been done in partnership with one of the world's most prominent coffee producers, Illycaffè, and its charitable arm the Ernesto Illy Foundation.

Another coffee showcased at the event was Cafe Vumba which has a remarkable flavour profile. It is produced from a blend of the Arabica beans Catimor, Costa Rica and SL28. It is produced by a project based in central Mozambique near the border with Zimbabwe which focuses on promoting women producers. It expects to have 2,100 female members by 2028.

The other three coffees featured at the Groucho Club were Cafe Niassa, Cafe de Manica, and Cafe Chimanamani. What all the coffees made available had in common was that they are produced by small-scale farmers with the ethos promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture of increasing local incomes whilst protecting the local environment from deforestation and preserving the soil, flora, and fauna.

Mozambique to sell an extra 100 megawatts of power to South Africa

Mozambique will make a further 100 megawatts of electricity available to help South Africa face its current energy crisis, the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Carlos Zacarias, announced in Pretoria on 12 June.

The minister was responding to a request for additional power made by the South African government at a meeting in Maputo on 29 May.

“The Mozambican government has immediately available 100 megawatts of power generated at the Nacala floating power station (off the coast of the northern province of Nampula)”, said Zacarias. “The commercial agreement defining the price, the transmission mechanisms, and the start of channelling the power will be closed very soon”.

For his part, Kgosisentsho Ramokgoba, the Minister in the South African Presidency for Energy, thanked the Mozambican government for its quick response. “We were hoping for 80 megawatts, and today we received a promise of 100 MW”, he said. “The technical staff must now work to make the operation viable”.

He declared that the Mozambican electricity will reduce the high costs of South Africa’s current electricity deficit. The shortage of electricity has forced the South African power utility, Eskom, to introduce a regime of rotating power cuts, known as “load shedding”.

At the meeting, Zacarias also announced that, within six months, Mozambique will have a further 600 megawatts available, from the Ressano Garcia gas-fired power station, on the border with South Africa, and from the planned Maputo floating power station.

The floating facility in the Bay of Nacala is the Turkish owned “Karpowership (Mozambique) Mehmet Bay power station”, which generates 125 megawatts, sold to the Mozambican electricity company, EDM, under a ten-year contract. A second Karpowership floating station might be mounted on a ship in the Bay of Maputo. However, this is far from certain, due to environmental concerns.

There are other major power projects on the drawing board, notably the Temane Thermal Power Station, in Inhambane province, which should generate 450 megawatts as of January 2025, using the natural gas from the Pande and Temane onshore fields as its fuel.

In the longer term, a new hydroelectric dam at Mphanda Nkuwa, on the Zambezi will be built, about 60 kilometres downstream from the existing dam at Cahora Bassa. It will generate 1,500 megawatts by 2030.

The five giant turbines at Cahora Bassa can, in theory, generate 2,075 megawatts. Most of this power is already sold to Eskom.

Plans to build the Mphanda Nkuwa dam, and a second power station at Cahora Bassa, have been delayed for decades, because of Eskom’s reluctance to sign a firm agreement on the purchase of more Mozambican power.

President inaugurates water supply system

President Filipe Nyusi on 14 June commissioned a new water supply system in the Pussulane resettlement neighbourhood in Marracuene district, 30 kilometres north of Maputo City. The system will ensure access to clean drinking water for over 8,000 people, according to a report carried by the television station, STV.

Budgeted at 22 million meticaís (US\$343,750), disbursed by the Mozambican government and its partners, the new water plant will also carry drinking water to households who were resettled in Pussulane, following the deadly mudslides, in February 2019, at the Hulene garbage dump on the Maputo outskirts.

Addressing the ceremony, President Nyusi downplayed the repeated and scornful criticism by his detractors of the inaugurations he has been commissioning. “From what we heard, the new system will bring drinking water to 8,000 consumers. It is a motive for great pride for us, but for others, it is just a small system which does not deserve the president’s attention,” he said.

President Nyusi pointed out that his critics seem to have forgotten that there are a great many small systems scattered across the country within the communities, villages and towns where large numbers of Mozambicans live.

He said there have been enormous improvements in access to water over the past decade. “From 2015 to the present, the proportion of the rural Mozambican population with access to safe drinking water has risen from 38.9 per cent to 56 per cent”, he stressed. Access to clean water was thus no longer the privilege of people living in the major urban centres.

Including both urban and rural areas, the number of people with access to safe water has risen to 65 per cent, which is about 20 million Mozambicans, said President Nyusi.

On behalf of the country’s cooperation partners, David Young, the deputy director in the Mozambican office of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), said the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom will continue to work in close partnership with the Mozambican government to provide more water and improve sanitation. “For the country’s water and sanitation programme, the US Government, through its development agency USAID, is channelling US\$20 million for improved access to drinking water and sanitation for over one million people in Mozambique”, he said.

The residents of Pussulane trust access to drinking water will bring meaningful social and economic impacts. “The newly inaugurated water supply system will have a great impact on our lives since the long distances we used to walk to fetch water have now been reduced”, said a representative of the local community.

The new water plant receives electricity from the public grid and is equipped with solar panels, ensuring a nonstop water supply to the consumers, 24 hours a day.

US\$377 million available for increased energy access

The Mozambican government has US\$377 million available to increase the rate of access to electricity from 49 per cent to 64 per cent of the population by 2024, in the context of the Energy for All Programme (ProEnergia). The program aims to ensure universal access to electricity by 2030.

According to the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Carlos Zacarias, speaking on 19 June in Maputo during the annual meeting of the Energy Sector Working Group (ESWG), good relations between Mozambique and its partners have facilitated the achievement of the electrification targets set by the government. “The commitment of partners to our cause has allowed us to electrify the most remote areas of our country and promote clean energy in the context of energy transition”, the minister said, explaining that the amount corresponds to the second phase of ProEnergia.

For the first phase, Mozambique received financing of US\$152 million that allowed new connections and increased the electrification rate from 35 per cent in 2019 to the current 49 per cent.

The minister also praised the approval of the Electricity Law that will allow an increase in electricity production in the order of 600 megawatts. “In 2022, the new Electricity Act was passed as part of efforts to create an attractive legal framework for new entrants. This new regulatory framework gives room for, among others, private actors to contribute to raising the power generation capacity by 600 MW in the present governance cycle, of which 200 MW will come from renewable sources”, Zacarias said.

ProEnergia is funded by the Mozambican government, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, Sweden, Norway, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, and the European Union.

The Energy Sector Working Group meeting aims to assess the level of implementation of cooperation programmes in the energy sector.

Government clamps down on under-invoicing

The Mozambican government is to stop under-invoicing and tax evasion in the mineral sector by introducing prices in force in the international market.

According to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, cited in the daily newspaper “Noticias” on 19 June, the under-invoicing of Mozambican minerals has resulted in the loss of many millions of dollars every year. “The taxes charged to mining companies have so far been based on the prices that they [the same companies] declare. There is a huge risk that these companies declare lower prices than the real ones, aiming to reduce the taxes that they must pay to the state”, said the source.

According to the government’s Economic Acceleration Package, it was found that the country has suffered an average annual loss over the past decade of about US\$1.6 billion due to under-invoicing and other mechanisms of tax evasion.

Maputo municipal workers on strike

Staff of Maputo Municipal Council went on strike on 19 June, demanding that they be paid in accordance with the recently approved Single Wage Table (TSU) for public administration.

This is the second time in six months that Maputo municipal workers have taken strike action in pursuit of their incorporation into the TSU.

One municipal worker, Aquilino Francisco, cited by the television station STV, said there had been various meetings and promises, which had resulted in nothing.

The law on the TSU is ambiguous, and it is not clear whether it covers municipalities. Certainly, the Maputo municipal council has ruled out paying wages in line with the TSU, because it would be far too expensive. The Council estimates that it would need an extra 30 million meticais a month to bring municipal wages into line with the TSU. The municipal director of planning and finance, Ossemame Nancy, warned: “If the municipality were to pay wages based on the TSU, it would be left with no capacity to provide basic public health services, such as the collection of solid waste”.

The head of human resources in the municipality, Octavio de Jesus, agreed. He said that, since wages would be greater than the city’s internally generated revenue, it would be quite unable to pay wages based on the TSU. “To apply the TSU, the municipality needs an injection of funds from the central government”, said de Jesus. “When possible, the TSU will be applied”.

The municipality is in contact with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, seeking a solution.

The municipality has rather more than 4,000 employees, most of whom are on the minimum wage. If the TSU were to be introduced, their wages would double.

At a meeting on 12 April, chaired by the Mayor of Maputo, Eneas Comiche, he said there was not enough money in the municipality’s coffers to implement the TSU. The workers have not accepted this. One of them, Abilio Taulane, told reporters they were not on strike, but merely “holding a demonstration, because they made us a promise”.

“Suspending the demonstration depends on the answer they give us”, he added.

Average prices fell in May

The overall level of prices in Mozambique fell in May, according to the latest figures from the National Statistics Institute (INE).

Inflation gave way to deflation, with an average decline in prices over the month of 0.39 per cent.

Inflation in the first five months of 2023 was 3.16 per cent. Such a relatively low figure will feed hopes that Mozambican inflation over the entire year will remain at well under ten per cent.

Annual inflation (1 June 2022 to 31 May 2023) was 8.23 per cent. The annual inflation rate is thus declining – from 10.82 per cent in March, to 9.61 per cent in April, and now to 8.23 per cent.

Final Renamo military base closed

President Filipe Nyusi and Ossufo Momade, leader of the country's largest opposition party, Renamo, on 15 June jointly led the ceremony at which the last Renamo military base was closed.

Symbolising the closure, Momade gave President Nyusi a rifle, which he said was the last of Renamo's firearms. 347 Renamo officers were demobilised at the base, located at Vanduzi, in Gorongosa district, in the central province of Sofala. This brought the total number of former Renamo fighters demobilised since 2019 to 5,221.

Under the DDR (Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration) programme, 16 Renamo bases were dismantled.

President Nyusi and Momade both called for tolerance and mutual understanding to secure peace. Mozambicans should advance hand in hand, declared President Nyusi, "since the prevalence of definitive peace depends on all of us".

"Our effective weapon is, and should always be dialogue", added the President. "We must not allow violence and blackmail to destroy the bridges of understanding which we are building together".

Momade called on the demobilised fighters to remain faithful to Renamo and to the memory of his predecessors as Renamo leader, Andre Matsangaissa and Afonso Dhlakama.

The Vanduzi base should have closed in December – but the closure was repeatedly postponed, mainly because of Renamo's demand that pensions should be paid to all its former guerrillas. Only after President Nyusi had promised pensions did Momade agree to shutting down the base, and demobilising the last of what is euphemistically referred to as Renamo's "residual force".

The end of the Renamo bases does not solve all of President Nyusi's military headaches. The demobilisation of Renamo does not affect the situation in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, where Islamist terrorists continue to wage war against the Mozambican state and its allies from Rwanda and SADC (Southern African Development Community).

President Nyusi receives MDM leader

President Filipe Nyusi on 19 June granted an audience to Lutero Simango, leader of the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), the second largest opposition party in the country.

During the meeting, President Nyusi said he was willing to enter into dialogue, not only with the MDM, but with the main opposition force, Renamo, and with civil society organisations. "The country belongs to all Mozambicans, and Mozambicans should have the space to talk about their country", said the President. "We know that good ideas do not have political party colours".

Summarising the meeting, President Nyusi said they

had discussed the fight against terrorism in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, the government's economic diplomacy, and various socio-economic and legal matters. "All these aspects were referred to, and we took note of what we can make use of", he added.

For his part, Simango praised President Nyusi for the closure on 15 June of Renamo's final military base at Vanduzi, in the central district of Gorongosa, which was the culmination of the Demobilisation, Disarmament, and Reintegration (DDR) of Renamo's militia.

"We had the privilege to say that it is necessary to continue pacifying the country", declared the MDM leader. "We recognise the effort that is being made to stabilise the situation in the north of the country".

Simango urged President Nyusi to establish the condition for Mozambique's mineral resources to be processed inside the country and to be exported as finished goods, rather than simply as raw materials. "We believe the country needs an economy that generates not only wealth but also opportunities and job creation for our fellow citizens", he declared.

Simango also took the opportunity to complain to President Nyusi about the alleged illegalities that had marked the voter registration that had run from 20 April to 3 June. He claimed that the distribution of the voter registration brigades had not been in proportion to the size of the population and that more brigades were stationed in relatively sparsely populated municipalities in the south of the country than in more populous cities and towns in the centre and north.

Losses of 30 million meticaís from Beira fire

Mozambique's publicly owned electricity company, EDM, has estimated the losses caused by the devastating fire in the central city of Beira on 17 June at about 30 million meticaís (US\$470,000).

The fire occurred in the sub-station in the neighbourhood of Munhava. Power was cut to the greater part of the city, depriving 160,000 EDM clients of electricity. The blaze destroyed seven panels which supply power to 27 of Beira's neighbourhoods.

Speaking at a press conference in Beira, EDM's National Director of Transmission, Alberto Banze, guaranteed that the first consignment of equipment to re-establish the power supply would arrive in Beira on 18 June.

Cited by Radio Mozambique, Banze said the fire was caused by a short circuit, and EDM is investigating the origin of that short circuit. "The colleagues who were there tried to put out the fire with the available extinguishers, but the heat was so intense that they were unable to do so", Banze added. They immediately called for assistance from the Fire Brigade, which responded quickly and was able to douse the flames.

Banze said that teams have been mobilised from across the EDM central region to repair the damage. Equipment from Zambezia province has been sent to join the material already in Beira, and Banze hoped that power would be restored to parts of the city by 19 June.

Renamo softens district elections stance

Mozambique's main opposition party, Renamo, has softened its position towards the election of district assemblies, according to a report from the newsheet "Carta de Mocambique" on 19 June.

As part of the package of decentralisation measures approved in 2018, the Mozambican constitution was amended to include an article stating that the first elections of district assemblies will be held in 2024. But nothing at all, in the Constitution, or any other legislation, states what powers district assemblies will have, and how they will relate to the existing provincial and municipal assemblies.

Last year, President Filipe Nyusi called for a national reflection on the feasibility of district elections in 2024. A Commission on the matter was set up, which reported back saying that it would be impossible to hold the elections in 2024. The parliamentary group of the ruling Frelimo Party reacted by submitting a constitutional amendment, eliminating any date for the district elections. Instead, they would be held "when the conditions have been created". That amendment will go before an extraordinary sitting of the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, in August, where Frelimo has an overwhelming majority.

On 16 June, Renamo leader Ossufo Momade suggested that elections could be held, not in all 154 districts, but in only some of them. He was speaking in the central province of Manica, at a meeting with citizens from Guro and Catandica, two districts where municipal elections will be held in October.

He suggested that the principle of "gradualism", already in effect with regard to municipal assemblies, should be extended to the districts. Municipalisation began in 1998, with elections for mayors and assemblies in just 33 cities and towns. Gradually, more towns have been municipalised until reaching the current figure of 65 municipalities.

The same approach, Momade said, could be taken to the districts. "Concerning the district elections, we reiterate our position that they should be held since this is a constitutional command. So, we are proposing the creation of a technical working group formed by staff from the three parties with seats in parliament (Frelimo, Renamo and the Mozambique Democratic Movement, MDM)".

"Our desire", he continued, "is that gradualism in decentralisation should be achieved by holding district elections in some districts".

This is the first time Renamo has proposed that the elections be held in some, rather than all, districts. Momade did not say which districts he believed should hold elections. One possibility would be to avoid holding elections in districts which cover the same, or much the same, area as municipalities – such as all the provincial capitals. There is a precedent for this. Maputo City is a municipality, a province and a district. But no provincial assembly has been set up in the city since it would duplicate the work of the municipal assembly.

Spain disburses US\$164,000 to combat fake news

The Spanish government on 19 June disbursed €150,000 (US\$164,000) to support actions against fake news during the current electoral process in Mozambique, which runs until 2025. The amount will be channelled through the United Nations Development Programme (Democracy-UNDP), a platform installed at the headquarters of the National Elections Commission (CNE) in Maputo.

The platform, which aims to ensure credible elections, receives funding from partners and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

The collaboration agreement signed on 19 June in Maputo by the Spanish Ambassador Alberto Cerezo and the resident representative of the UNDP in Mozambique, Christy Ahenkora, was witnessed by CNE President, Bishop Carlos Matsinhe.

Speaking minutes after the signing, Matsinhe said that the support will help surpass part of the CNE's budget deficit, as it covers important areas of the electoral process. "The amount donated today concurs with the development at the national level, of a platform for identifying fake news and misinformation on social media. We are all aware of how dangerous fake news can be if not mitigated", Matsinhe said.

"We want to thank the Embassy of Spain for this donation; a noble gesture of solidarity and friendship between the peoples of Spain and Mozambique", he added.

For his part, Cerezo said that the support is fundamental to increasing the health of Mozambican democracy, stressing that it will focus on providing special care to groups sometimes marginalised in society, mainly women and people with disabilities. "We, at the Spanish Embassy, are representatives of a feminist government, which officially declares itself feminist. We think it is very important and fundamental to also develop the role of women in the electoral process", said the Spanish diplomat, who hopes that the coming elections will be transparent, credible, free and fair.

Tanker seized in Beira

The Mozambican Tax Authority (AT) has seized a tanker truck carrying 10,000 litres of diesel in the central port of Beira, as its driver was trying to smuggle the product into the country.

According to the Sofala provincial customs director, Dionisio Chivambo, cited in the Maputo daily "Noticias" on 13 June, the loss caused by tax evasion, over the last month alone, has reached 10 million meticais (US\$156,000).

Chivambo added that a car was seized carrying 250 mobile phones, 40 computers, video games, watches, and other materials, all attempting to evade paying taxes.

Delayed compensation undermines heavy sands exploration in Jangamo

The delayed compensation and resettlement of 60 households by the company Mutamba Mineral Sands is undermining the beginning of the exploitation of heavy mineral sands in Jangamo District, in the southern province of Inhambane.

According to the Maputo daily "Noticias", the households should already have been resettled and mining of the sands should have started earlier this year.

"The government of Jangamo District is imposing the compensation of households as a condition for mining. The 60 households must be compensated first", said Jose Jeremias, Jangamo district administrator. He added there is an agreement with the company requiring the employment of 100 young local people in the project.

"When it comes to population, we hope that the company can work carefully regarding resettlement. Afterwards, they can occupy the 262-hectare space. We have carried out two community consultations, but two more are underway", he said, adding that the government has approved the environmental study.

The district administrator explained that the land where the households must be resettled, has already been identified and this space is being divided into plots. "Currently, we are discussing the type of houses to be built. Furthermore, we have cultural issues that must be observed", he said.

Mutamba Mineral Sands has confirmed the existence of 4.4 million tonnes of titanium minerals in the Jangamo sands.

Eighth round of polio vaccination

The Mozambican Ministry of Health on 15 June launched the eighth round of vaccination against polio. This national vaccination campaign is scheduled to last for four days with a target of vaccinating more than 19 million children under 15 years of age.

Last year, nine cases of polio were diagnosed in the western province of Tete. According to the chief doctor in the province, Xarif Gentil, five of these cases resulted in paralysis, with the children unable to move their legs. Their future is grim. "There is no possibility that they will be able to walk again", said Gentil, cited by the television station, STV.

The current campaign is taking place, not only in all the country's health units but also in schools, churches, markets and any other places where large numbers of people gather together. The vaccination brigades are also going door-to-door.

In Maputo city, more than 900 vaccination teams are working in the seven municipal districts with a target of vaccinating 673,000 children.

"Polio is a highly contagious disease, caused by the polio virus that attacks the central nervous system. It can cause paralysis, and so we have to cut the transmission so that no child is affected", said Belia Xerinda, the municipal director of health.

Global fund calls for combined efforts to reduce HIV infection rate

The head of the Grant Management Division at the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, Mark Addington, has called for combined efforts between state and non-governmental institutions and communities to reduce the HIV infection rate, which remains high in Mozambique.

Addington, who was addressing reporters in Maputo on 15 June after meeting with the Prime Minister, Adriano Maleiane, acknowledged that the fight against AIDS has not been easy "but we believe that our organisations, including the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, UNAIDS and the Global Fund, and civil society organisations all working together will certainly achieve the excellent goals in Mozambique."

"We want to take this opportune moment to thank the US government for being one of our biggest contributors in the response against HIV, and we have felt very successful in the progress that Mozambique has been implementing", he said.

During his meeting with Maleiane, Edington said he was moved by the Mozambican government's commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention.

For his part, the deputy head of the US Mission in Mozambique, Jeremy Neitzke, said that most of the HIV-positive Mozambicans receive benefits from the US government, through the initiatives underway in Mozambique. Currently, about two million Mozambicans are living with HIV/AIDS and, according to Neitzke, this is the main focus of US investment. He pledged that the US will continue to offer its support to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Mozambique.

Exports from Manica reach US\$32 million

The export of various types of goods from the central province of Manica reached US\$32 million last year compared with US\$31 million in 2021.

According to Maria Assuncao, Manica provincial director of Industry and Trade, cited in the Maputo daily "Noticias" on 14 June, US\$7 million came from the export of fruit. "Our goal is to strengthen fruit producers so that they can master improved agricultural techniques to guarantee quality", Assuncao said, adding that "we must diversify production."

Assuncao noted that the products were exported to 18 countries, notably to Zimbabwe, Botswana, China, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates.

"The province currently exports mango, avocado, bauxite, fertilisers, gemstones, marble, gold and other mineral and natural resources", she said, advancing that "We want to organise meetings to attract industrial processors in various sectors".

One of the main constraints, she said, is the lack of coordination between producers and sellers. She also lamented the lack of information provided to the District Economic Services to facilitate the sales in each season.

Chinese business to invest US\$40 billion in Sofala

The Chinese business group Eternal Tsingshan is to invest US\$40 billion in the construction of a “Green Industrial Park” and a seaport in the districts of Dondo and Muanza, in the central Mozambican province of Sofala.

According to the Minister of Industry and Trade, Silvino Moreno, who was speaking on 14 June in Maputo at the signing ceremony of the agreement of principles between the government of Mozambique and the Eternal Tsingshan Group, the Project presents favourable indicators for positive impacts on the Mozambican economy.

Under the investment proposal, the minister said, the project aims to build and operate an Industrial Park for the production of various products and a seaport for the export of manufactured goods.

“The project is part of the National Industrialise Mozambique Programme (PRONAI) and is synonymous with investment in job creation and a contribution to the growth of the national economy. The project will be an unquestionable gain for our country”, he said.

According to Moreno, the initiative aims to contribute to the increase of national industrial production, prioritising the use of local raw materials, stimulating production and marketing, as well as contributing to rural transformation and generating employment and income with the participation of national and foreign private businesses.

In the first phase, it is expected to create about 10,000 jobs for Mozambicans.

For his part, the representative of the Eternal Tsingshan Group, Jianqiang Sun, said the project is a development opportunity for both parties. “This is a very important project for Mozambican industry, and it is an opportunity for Tsingshan to be part of this project. I am sure that this project will have mutual benefit for both parties. We will create many jobs, power plants and other infrastructure”, Jianqiang said.

The project is waiting for approval from the Council of Ministers (Cabinet) and the creation of roads, water, and electricity supplies. It is expected to start between 2023 and 2024. It is not clear exactly where the proposed new port will be built. Any new port on the Sofala coast will be in direct competition with the existing port of Beira.

Water company claims massive theft

The commercial director of the Maputo Metropolitan Water Company (AdRMM), Cremildo Miguel, cited in the newssheet “Carta de Mocambique” on 15 June, claimed that three out of every ten of the company’s clients make clandestine connections to the water network, causing huge losses to the Mozambican state.

This follows an AdRMM communique published in May which estimated at 25,000 the number of clients with overdue water bills, and clandestine connections to

the network. This was causing the company monthly losses of 50 million meticaís (US\$ 780,000).

AdRMM says illegal consumption of water is one of its major headaches. Some clients, it alleges, break into the network and siphon out water into tanker trucks. This water is then sold in outlying areas where AdRMM does not reach.

The company is now launching a campaign to disconnect from the water network clients with unpaid bills. “We have been recording cases in which we cut off the water supply in the morning, but by the end of the day, the client has reconnected his installation to the network”, said Miguel. As a result, the company is now opting to remove these connections altogether “to guarantee that there are no further losses”, he said.

The theft and resale of water “involve middle and high-income households who also use clandestine water to build their own houses”, Miguel accused.

Government forecasts seven per cent growth

The Mozambican government has forecast that the economy will grow by seven per cent this year – considerably higher than the five per cent forecast in the government’s own Economic and Social Plan for 2023.

Speaking on 13 June after the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), the government spokesperson, Deputy Justice Minister Filimao Suaze, attributed this improvement to faster-than-expected growth in the world economy as it emerges from the depression caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In Mozambique, the country was recovering, not only from the pandemic but also from recent natural disasters such as Cyclone Freddy, which affected over 1.3 million people. Nonetheless, the latest statistics indicate increased economic growth.

Mozambique was no exception to the general trend of post-pandemic recovery, said Suaze. “Our optimism is expressed by this re-animation of our economy”, he added. “The scenarios we have for revenue collection, and the functioning of our fiscal scenario as a whole, lead to an optimism which I think is justified if we look at the post-Covid world”.

LAM to begin flights to Lusaka

Mozambique Airlines (LAM) has announced that it will begin flights between Maputo and the Zambian capital, Lusaka, with a stop in Harare, as of 30 June.

A LAM press release said the introduction of this route will strengthen the ties between neighbouring countries and promote regional connectivity. “The start of flights to Lusaka is part of the strategy of including the capitals of southern African countries in LAM’s destinations”, the release added. Currently, the other cities of the Southern African Development Community served are Johannesburg, Harare and Dar es Salaam.

The Maputo-Lusaka flights depart from Maputo at 12.30 on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, arriving in Lusaka at 15.50. The return flights will take off from Lusaka at 16.30, arriving in Maputo at 19.50.

El Nino could cause hunger

Southern and central Mozambique could face drought due to the “El Nino” weather phenomenon, warns Bernadino Nhantumbo, a researcher at the National Meteorological Institute (INAM), cited by Radio Mozambique.

“El Nino” is associated with the warming of the surface waters in the central and equatorial Pacific, which disrupts world weather patterns, and is a key factor in causing low rainfall in southern Africa. Nhantumbo said that, if these fears are borne out, then agriculture could be seriously affected.

He explained that, in general, “El Nino” causes lower-than-normal rains in southern Mozambique, and higher-than-normal rains in the north.

Southern Mozambique is characterised by irregular rains. With “El Nino” this irregularity increases, endangering the rural population who live based on subsistence, rain-fed agriculture.

Nhantumbo warned there is a high likelihood that, in the coming year, the water requirements of crops in the southern provinces cannot be met, “and this has an impact on the capacity to feed the communities”.

The impact of “El Nino”, he said, will be felt at the start of the rainy season (in September/October) but its maximum impact could hit the country between December 2012 and February 2024, at the peak of the rainy season.

“We are worried about what might happen with the rains in this period, which is strategic in terms of storing water, both for human consumption and for agriculture”, said Nhantumbo.

Niassa to produce wheat

The northern province of Niassa intends from the 2023-2024 Agricultural Campaign to begin producing wheat, according to the provincial Secretary of State, Lina Portugal.

Currently, the Mozambican Agricultural Research Institute (IIAM), is developing varieties of wheat adapted to the agro-ecological conditions of the province. According to the Secretary of State’s press office, the authorities are waiting for these varieties to be approved by the National Directorate of Agricultural and Livestock Health.

To see for herself the level of preparation seeking to make wheat production a reality in the province, Lina Portugal visited the IIAM on 9 June. During her visit, she praised the work being undertaken by the IIAM to improve the seeds of various crops, which “will thrust agricultural production forward, and attract more investment to the province, mainly in agro-processing.”

“Sometimes we have to find alternatives because of international crises”, said Portugal. “We have a grain crisis which particularly affects wheat, and, as the province of Niassa, we want to make a great difference in increasing production, and hence reducing the import of wheat”.

Egypt promises to train special forces

President Filipe Nyusi and his Egyptian counterpart, Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, on 9 June reached an agreement on cooperation in security, under which Egypt will help train Mozambican special forces in the fight against terrorism and other crimes,

The willingness of Egypt to support Mozambican security came after Al-Sisi was briefed on the situation in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, where, despite significant advances in the fight against the jihadists, sporadic islamist attacks are continuing.

Al-Sisi gave his government’s commitment after a meeting with President Nyusi in Maputo. The Egyptian leader was in the capital city for several hours, as part of a tour of several African countries.

In a statement to the press, President Nyusi said the two presidents had reviewed several themes, including terrorism in Mozambique, and security in the world, bearing in mind that Al-Sisi is one of six African heads of state who are seeking a peaceful solution to the Russian war against Ukraine.

“We discussed many aspects and right now the priority areas are security and the fight against terrorism”, said President Nyusi. “We shall explore the training of special forces against terrorism and against other crimes that have been emerging in Mozambique”.

President Nyusi added that, in addition to security issues, the Presidents assessed the socio-economic situation of the two countries, and pledged to strengthen cooperation in areas such as infrastructures, agriculture and fisheries, by reactivating the joint commissions between the two countries to produce a matrix of concrete actions.

For his part, Al-Sisi said that his country has broad experience in dealing with terrorism. This is a phenomenon, he stressed, that Egypt has been suffering from for years, due to Islamic extremism. He promised to support Mozambique in building the capacity of its armed forces to better handle terrorism, which he regarded as a global threat.

“We shall bring the experience of Egypt in the fight against terrorism and other emerging crimes”, Al-Sisi told the press.

He said he also wants to bring to Mozambique religious training, to share methods of spreading messages of tolerance, thus avoiding the islamist extremism which foments terrorism.

As for economic cooperation, Al-Sisi said that about 5,000 Egyptian companies are willing to explore areas of investment and to build up the capacity of Mozambican enterprises in energy, transport, education and health, among other areas.

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

Over US\$60 million lost due to illegal fishing

Mozambique has lost, over the last year, US\$60 million due to illegal fishing, according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) director in the country, Solani Mhango.

Mhango told AIM on 8 June in Maputo, on the sidelines of the World Oceans Day festivities, that overfishing is one of the biggest problems facing Mozambican fisheries. “If we look at the oceans, the major problem we see is overfishing in Mozambique. Mozambique is one of the African countries with the most extensive coastline, and over 60 per cent of the population living in this area has a great dependence on marine resources”, said Mhango.

“So, there are problems related to overfishing that we call illegal”, Mhango said, adding that “there are challenges but I think the government is doing a lot and organisations, like ours, see the role of supporting the government”.

According to the director, Mozambique, as a member of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), should be open for fisheries monitoring. “What we do on land affects the oceans. We need the oceans for our existence on this planet, so for us this day means the commitment of the government and other social actors for the preservation and protection of the marine ecosystem for the protection of our and future generations”, he said.

The event, promoted by the Ministry of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries, was held under the slogan “Planet Ocean, the Tides Are Changing”.

Mozambican ruby sold for record price

A 55.22-carat ruby named “Estrela de Fura” (“Star of Rage”), discovered by the Canadian company Fura Gems in Montepuez district, in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado, hit a record price when it was sold for US\$34.8 million at an auction in New York on 7 June. According to Forbes Magazine, this is the largest ruby to be sold at auction.

The stone went under the hammer in New York less than a year after Fura Gems discovered it in one of its mines in Mozambique. The finished ruby was cut and polished from a 101-carat rough.

According to Quig Bruning, head of Sotheby’s Jewellery America, the ‘Estrela de Fura’ “is undoubtedly positioned to become the standard bearer for African rubies - and gemstones in general, bringing global awareness to their ability to be on par with, and even outshine, those from Burma”.

Although rubies were first discovered in Mozambique several decades ago, a significant industry did not emerge there until 2009, when a huge deposit of the stones was found near the northern city of Montepuez. Mozambique is now one of the most productive ruby mining countries in the world.

Nine arrested for wildlife crimes

The Cabo Delgado provincial attorney’s office in northern Mozambique on 6 June announced the arrest of eight members of staff working in various institutions at the airport in the provincial capital, Pemba, plus a local businessman, all accused of trafficking in protected species of wildlife.

Among those arrested are staff of Mozambique Airlines (LAM), the customs service, the provincial directorate of economic activities, and the Mozambican police. They are accused of facilitating the trafficking to Malaysia of cargo consisting of pieces of ivory, the bones of wild animals yet to be identified, and lion teeth and claws.

The detentions in Pemba follow the seizure on 27 May by the Tanzanian police, at Dar es Salaam International Airport, of boxes containing pieces of ivory and other animal parts, which had been dispatched at Pemba, with the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur as their final destination.

The traffickers had attempted to pass this cargo off as a shipment of shellfish. But when the cargo was opened, it was found to consist of 166 pieces of ivory in 16 boxes, five boxes of animal bones, 65 lion claws and 20 lion teeth.

According to the spokesperson of the provincial attorney’s office, Noelia Madeira, if their involvement is proven, the nine suspects and any others involved will face prosecution for slaughter, transport and export of prohibited and protected species, corruption, smuggling, embezzlement, forgery of documents, criminal conspiracy and money laundering.

“Once the occurrence was confirmed, a team of prosecutors from the Attorney’s office and inspectors from the National Criminal Investigation Service (Sernic) were deployed to Pemba Airport to investigate the facts. The preliminary investigations resulted in the arrest of a LAM air traffic technician”, Madeira explained.

Madeira said the behaviour of the suspects reflects the action of transnational organised crime. She said that measures are underway to identify and neutralise others involved in the trafficking network.

To carry out the operation, Madeira added, the group created a fictitious company that did not have the legally required documents. The news sheet “Carta de Mocambique” named the company Zein Mariscos Ltd, based in Pemba.

Madeira said the Public Prosecutor’s Office is in permanent contact with the Central Office for the Fight Against Organised Crime, and the Assets Recovery Office, to recover the illicit goods now in the hands of the Tanzanian authorities. A team of prosecutors and Sernic investigators will soon visit Tanzania.

Manica closes cholera treatment centres

The health services of the central province of Manica have closed all the cholera treatment centres in the province. For the past two months, the province has recorded no cases of cholera, and so the authorities have declared Manica free of the disease. Earlier in the year, Manica had over 1,600 cases of cholera, with nine deaths.

“It’s been two months since we recorded any new cases of cholera”, said Flavio Roque, the Manica provincial chief doctor. “But we are urging the public to continue observing all measures of individual and collective hygiene to avoid the re-appearance of the disease”.

Speaking in the provincial capital, Chimoio, where he announced the start this week of another round of vaccination against polio, Roque stressed “We cannot be complacent, and think that the cholera outbreak has finished”.

“Let’s wash our hands correctly, and let’s wash the food we eat raw”, he said. “Let’s clean our yards, and let’s use chlorine and certeza to purify the water” (certeza is a commercial brand of purifier).

The cholera outbreak began in late January in Tambara district, in the north of the province, and then spread to the districts of Manica, Machaze, Gondola, Vanduzi, and Chimoio city.

Japan donates ambulances

The Mozambican Health Ministry on 12 June received a donation of 28 ambulances from Japan.

According to a report in the daily “O Pais”, the Japanese grant also included 2,000 articulated hospital beds, over 5,000 simple beds, more than 200 cardiac monitors, caesarean kits, and amputation kits.

During the ceremony, at which the ambulances were handed over, the Japanese ambassador, Hajime Kimura, said “The other material has already arrived. Only these ambulances were missing. I am very happy that I can witness their arrival”.

Health Minister Armindo Tiago said the Japanese equipment will help improve the working conditions of Mozambican health professionals. “The government and its partners”, he said, “are acquiring various medical materials, including material for diagnosis and surgical equipment. Today, we shall send the articulated beds to the provinces. We shall also distribute, through the entire country, more than 10,000 sphygmomanometers and more than 4,000 stretchers”.
