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President calls for political battles to be carried out legally

President Filipe Nyusi said on 25 June that political battles should obey the legal and constitutional dictates of a democratic state, bearing in mind that the municipal elections scheduled for 11 October will be the first elections ever held in the country without any armed political parties.

Speaking in Heroes' Square in central Maputo, on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of Mozambican independence, on 25 June 1975, President Nyusi was referring to the demobilisation and disarmament of the militia of the main opposition party, Renamo. The final Renamo military base was closed on 14 June.

"We can celebrate because, for the first time since 1975, the country does not have any political party that is officially armed. We are all called upon to guarantee that peace is effective and lasting", the President declared.

The President also announced that, across the country, as part of the independence celebrations, 1,059 veterans of the national liberation struggle will be decorated.

Looking ahead to the October municipal elections, President Nyusi said they should be held in a festive environment, as part of "the consolidation of the gains made by our democratic state". He added that, 32 years after the peace agreement signed in Rome between the government and Renamo, "our brothers in Renamo have handed over their last gun to the Mozambican state".

The challenge now, said President Nyusi, was to extinguish the foci of terrorist violence in parts of the northern province of Cabo Delgado, where jihadist groups have been fighting against the Mozambican state since 2017.

"Recently we have witnessed the return of displaced people, thanks to our defence and security forces, with the support of the Mission in Mozambique of the Southern African Development Community (SAMIM) and the Rwandan armed forces", added the President.

President Nyusi recalled the gains made by Mozambican education since the nationalisation of the education system on 24 July 1975. He noted that at the time of independence, 93 per cent of the population was illiterate. The illiteracy rate has now dropped to 39 per cent.

Since 2018, school enrolment fees have been abolished, and basic education is now entirely free of charge. The number of primary schools, President Nyusi

said, had risen from 5,250 to today's figure of 13,250.

In 1975, the country had just nine secondary schools – but today there are 2,450. In 1975, there were 697,975 pupils in Mozambican schools, but this year there are 9,044,576 children in primary and secondary schools, and 48.8 per cent of them are girls.

In 1975, Mozambique had just one university. Today, the country has 56 institutions of higher education, 22 of them publicly owned, and 34 private. The number of technical schools rose from 26 in 1975 to 111 in 2015.

For President Nyusi, one of the major gains of independent Mozambique was the reduction in maternal mortality, which fell from 136 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1982 to 53 deaths today.

The number of health units rose from 579 to 1,779. There were only 171 doctors in Mozambique in 1975, but today there are 2,892. The number of nurses increased dramatically, from 370 in 1980 to 18,579 now.

As for agriculture, President Nyusi noted that in 1975 its main purpose was to supply raw materials (such as cotton, sisal, tea and sugar cane) to the colonial industries. But after independence, the focus switched to satisfying the basic needs of Mozambicans.

The government's agricultural development programme, Sustenta, "seeks to improve the quality of life of rural households through family agriculture in productive value chains".

The results, President Nyusi said, could be seen in rising food production. Today, the country is producing more than two million tonnes of maize a year, and about a quarter of a million tonnes of rice. Annual beef production has risen from 12,270 tonnes in 2015 to 200,151 tonnes now.

As for the justice system, President Nyusi said that under colonial rule, there was no equality before the law. Access to the law varied, depending on one's race, gender and social status. "Today, we have 163 district courts, 43 of which were built between 2018 and now", he added, "Our target is to build 75 courtrooms by 2024".

End of Renamo demobilisation “an example of success”

President Filipe Nyusi declared in Maputo on 23 June that the end of the demobilisation of the militia of the main opposition party, Renamo, is an example of success in peacebuilding and in solving internal conflicts.

The President was speaking at a ceremony marking the end of the demobilisation and disarmament of the former Renamo guerrillas.

The last Renamo military base was closed on 20 June with 347 Renamo officers demobilised at the base, located at Vunduzi, in Gorongosa district, in the central province of Sofala. This brought the total number of former Renamo fighters demobilised since 2019 to 5,221.

“With this process, the country has won credibility as an example of how to lead peace processes”, said President Nyusi.

It is hoped that the ceremony brings to an end the chapter of armed attacks in the central provinces. The shedding of the blood of Mozambican citizens, because of political differences was now a thing of the past, President Nyusi believed.

To guarantee peace, the government has promised to pay pensions to the former Renamo guerrillas – even though the Renamo fighters had never contributed to any pension fund.

Renamo has insisted for months that the right of the demobilised fighters to pensions is included in the peace agreement signed by President Nyusi and Renamo leader Ossufo Momade in 2019. But the President said the right to pensions is not stipulated in any formal accord reached between the government and Renamo. (Since the 2019 agreement has never been published, Renamo could get away with its claim).

President Nyusi added that the end of demobilisation does not mean the end of dialogue for peace. The next step is the reintegration of the former guerrillas into Mozambican society.

“We know that we still have a long path ahead of us”, he said. “Reintegration and reconciliation will require the contribution of everyone. We Mozambicans must tread this path. Peace is not a finished product – it is a continual process”.

Momade called for decent treatment of the former Renamo guerrillas. They should be received and accepted by all Mozambicans, he stressed.

Addressing the former guerrillas, Momade stressed that their demobilisation does not mean the end of Renamo, but was a commitment to peace. He attacked the alleged illegalities that have marked the voter registration, held between 20 April and 3 June, and demanded that they be corrected.

Renamo choosing mayoral candidates

Mozambique’s main opposition party, Renamo, will choose its mayoral candidates for October’s municipal elections within the next fortnight.

The spokesperson for the Renamo Political Commission, Alfredo Magumisse, cited by television station STV said the matter was discussed at a Political Commission meeting on 30 June. He said the meeting fixed dates for the Renamo provincial and district conferences and a subsequent meeting of the National Commission. Between them, these meetings will fix the party’s strategies for the municipal elections.

The local conferences will begin on 7 July. Renamo central brigades, Magumisse said, will work in the provinces from 3 to 10 July, following, assisting, and monitoring the election of candidates to members of the municipal assemblies in each district. The successful candidates will then be approved by the National Commission, which will meet in the central province of Sofala in the second fortnight of July.

Mayors are no longer directly elected – instead the first name on the list of the party which wins most seats in the municipal assembly will become the mayor.

Magumisse added that the National Commission will discuss “strategies for winning the elections faced with a process in which many voters did not register”. The voter registration, held from 20 April to 3 June, was marked by allegations of serious irregularities, which Renamo argues deliberately disenfranchised citizens living in areas believed to favour the opposition. “There are politically strategic aspects that I cannot reveal here”, said Magumisse. “There are municipalities where our adversary mobilised people from one municipality to register in another. The party has to find a way of dealing with these situations”.

He added that only after this series of meetings will Renamo register to take part in the municipal elections.

Although registration began on 26 June, so far only four parties, all of them very small, have delivered their registration papers to the National Elections Commission (CNE),

The latest to do so was the Mozambican Humanitarian Party (PAHUMO), which was set up by a Renamo dissident, Cornelio Quivela, who was once a deputy in the country’s parliament the Assembly of the Republic. PAHUMO won one seat in the municipal assembly in the northern city of Nampula in 2013 but lost it in the subsequent local elections in 2018.

The other three parties who have registered are the Ecology Party, the Electoral Union (UE) and the Reconciliation Movement of Mozambique (MRM), none of which have any representation in the municipal or provincial assemblies, let alone in the national parliament.

Among the documentation that each competing party must submit to the CNE are copies of its Statutes and symbol, the certificate proving that it is duly registered, a list of members of the party leadership, and the identification of the party’s election agent.

No agreement on postponing district elections

Renamo leader Ossufo Momade on 29 June declared that no agreement has been reached with the government on postponing the first elections for district assemblies.

As part of the package of constitutional amendments on decentralisation approved in 2018, the district elections were scheduled for 2024 and this date was put into the Constitution.

Speaking at the inauguration of a new Renamo presidential office in Maputo, Momade attacked President Filipe Nyusi for suggesting that a consensus has been reached on delaying the district elections.

Cited in the newsheet “Mediafax” on 30 June, he said “contrary to what the head of state recently affirmed, there was no consensus between Renamo and the government on not holding the district elections. We are in favour of not violating the Constitution of the Republic”. But he added that, should conditions be shown not to exist for holding district elections over the entire country, “they should be held gradually, in those districts where the conditions do exist, but beginning in 2024, as envisaged in the Constitution”.

The agreement with the government that does exist, said Momade, is for the establishment of a commission to study the best forms of decentralisation. President Nyusi proposed setting up such a commission and Renamo has appointed three members - Saimone Macuiana, Americo Ubisse, and Latino Ligonha.

The parliamentary group of the ruling Frelimo Party has proposed a constitutional amendment removing the commitment to holding district elections in 2024. Instead, the amendment says that elections for the district assemblies will be held when the conditions are ripe. It remains to be seen whether Renamo parliamentarians will vote for this amendment, which will be discussed at an extraordinary sitting of parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, in August.

The commitment to district elections was made in 2018, without any prior discussion on what powers district assemblies will have, and how to avoid overlap between the district assemblies and the existing provincial and municipal assemblies.

Momade also demanded that the granting of pensions to demobilised Renamo guerrillas be sped up. Normally, the allocation of pensions requires a considerable amount of paperwork. But Momade said the process “should be quick and free from the normal bureaucracy of the State because this is a sensitive matter which seeks to guarantee peace”. The pensions are not a favour offered by the government to Renamo, he insisted.

Five billion meticaís for post-cyclone rehabilitation

The government has allocated over five billion meticaís (US\$78 million) to rehabilitate infrastructures destroyed by tropical cyclone Freddy earlier this year.

The Minister of Public Works, Carlos Mesquita, announced this sum during a meeting of the

Coordinating Council of his ministry, held in Inhassoro, in the southern province of Inhambane.

The money will be used to repair buildings and roads damaged by the cyclone and to monitor dams and water sources. Cited by the daily newspaper “O País”, Mesquita said this initiative is part of the government’s post-cyclone emergency plan.

Of all the storms in recent years, Freddy was the cyclone which lasted longest. It formed on 6 February, and lasted for 37 days, hitting Mozambique twice. It first struck Inhambane province, and then, instead of dissipating, it moved back over the warm waters of the Mozambique Channel, where it gathered strength again, before making landfall for a second time, causing severe damage in the central province of Zambezia.

The flooding caused by the cyclone contributed to a rise in the number of cases of water-borne diseases, including cholera.

Mesquita praised the staff of his ministry. “I know that facing this challenge is extremely difficult”, he said. “But the work you do is essential for guaranteeing access to vital infrastructures in the affected areas”.

“Your contributions are making a difference to the lives of the people living in these regions”, he added. “Despite the dangers and adversities, you remain dedicated to building safe roads that are essential for transporting goods and services”.

Trial begins of four accused of illegal building near Beira airport

The trial of four men accused of the illegal construction of a two-storey building within a restricted area belonging to Beira airport began on 29 June in Beira.

The building was being erected near air traffic control equipment and could pose a threat to communications between aircraft and the Beira airport control tower. So, in mid-2021, the Public Prosecutor’s Office embargoed all further work on the site. A prominent embargo notice was slapped on the building, but work has continued.

The four men, three Mozambicans and a Chinese citizen are charged with the crime of disobedience for ignoring the embargo notice. But there are serious doubts as to whether the police arrested the right people since none of the four actually owns the building.

The three Mozambicans claim to be odd-job men, and say they were arrested because they were cooking lunch near the building. A report carried by the television station STV says the Chinese citizen may have been confused with the real owner of the building. He says he was arrested near the building on his way to work.

The arresting police officer could not give the Beira City Court a convincing explanation for why he had detained the four. He told the judge he had found them near the building site and believed that the Chinese was the owner of the job and that the three Mozambicans worked for him. But he could give no evidence.

The three Mozambicans are being held in preventive detention, while the Chinese citizen has been granted provisional freedom.

Mozambique and Malawi to strengthen defence cooperation

The governments of Mozambique and Malawi agreed at a Joint Commission on Defence and Security in Blantyre on 30 June to work to combat cross-border crimes. According to a press release from the Mozambican Defence Ministry, those crimes include terrorism, illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings and drugs, poaching, contraband of minerals, and other environmental crimes.

Collaboration between the two countries in defence and security, the release said, will be undertaken through sharing information, training, and strategic knowledge.

The meeting was chaired by the defence ministers Cristovao Chume of Mozambique and Harry Nkandawire of Malawi.

For Chume, the purpose of the defence and security committees is to discuss the various threats that Mozambique and Malawi face within and along their borders. He urged the defence and security institutions of the two countries to implement fully the decisions taken by the meeting.

Chume reiterated Mozambique's commitment to seek lasting solutions for peace and stability in southern Africa. Bilateral cooperation, he added, should be strengthened at provincial, district and local levels, which would make it possible to reach the objective for which the commission had been established.

Nkandawire expressed his satisfaction at the fact that Mozambique and Malawi have recorded notable growth in the defence and security areas.

The previous meeting of the Commission was held in Maputo in 2022 and the two delegations assessed the degree of implementation of the decisions taken then.

MCC approves US\$500 million in aid for Mozambique

The Board of Directors of the US government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) on 28 June approved a programme of US\$500 million of aid for Mozambique. The aid packages from the MCC are known as compacts, and this one is called the Mozambique Connectivity and Coastal Resilience Compact.

Cited in an MCC press release, the MCC executive director, Alice Albright, said that the Board's approval of the compact reaffirms the commitment of the MCC "to directly tackle economic growth constraints through innovative solutions".

"In Mozambique, we are implementing MCC's most climate-forward compact- a combination of resilient transport infrastructure, green and blue economy opportunities, and policy and institutional reforms to enable more effective and long-term growth", said Albright.

This is MCC's second compact with Mozambique – the first ran from 2008 to 2013 and involved grants of US\$506.9 million spent on water and sanitation, land

tenure, transport and agriculture.

"Through this programme", the release says, "the MCC seeks to improve transport connectivity in rural areas, incentivise commercial agriculture through policy and fiscal reforms, and improve coastal livelihoods through climate resilience initiatives".

The Millennium Challenge Corporation describes itself as "an independent US government development agency working to reduce global poverty through economic growth".

Set up in 2004, MCC provides "time-limited grants that pair investments in infrastructure with policy and institutional reforms to countries that meet rigorous standards for good governance, fighting corruption and respecting democratic rights".

Mozambique can meet debt service obligations, says Finance Minister

Mozambique's Minister of Economy and Finance, Max Tonela, stated on 27 June that the country will be able to meet this year's debt servicing obligations.

According to a report in the daily newspaper "O Pais" on 29 June, Mozambique's total debt stands at US\$14.4 billion. 70 per cent of this is foreign debt and 30 per cent is domestic debt.

Speaking at a press conference to which only foreign journalists were invited (although "O Pais" obtained a recording of the Minister's remarks), Tonela said that this year's debt servicing will be about US\$1.5 billion. To date, the country has paid its creditors US\$764 million, or 48.6 per cent of this year's debt service. Tonela guaranteed that the government will be able to pay the rest by December. "The government has all the conditions required to continue to comply with its obligations", he declared.

Tonela was not worried by a recent negative assessment from the Standard and Poors rating agency. That assessment, he said, "was based on a retroactive framework, above all in the initial months of the year, when the impact of the wage reform implemented by the State last year, was very large from the financial point of view".

To solve this problem, the government took a series of measures, notably through a recent amendment to the law establishing the new Single Wage Table (TSU) for the public administration which, he believes, "will put the State accounts back on the rails in accordance with the projections made, and with the budget for this year".

Tonela was optimistic about the prospects for State revenue from the country's natural gas reserves. He believed that, over the next 25 years, the state will earn an average of US\$750 million a year from the gas. In the early years, he said, revenue from gas would be US\$100 million a year, but would then rise gradually, until it reached about a billion dollars a year.

Tonela also forecast that economic growth this year will reach five per cent, and could reach seven per cent a year over the next two years.

Mocimboa da Praia now stable

Defence Minister Cristovao Chume told reporters on 26 June that the district of Mocimboa da Praia, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, is stable and free from terrorist attacks.

Mocimboa da Praia was the first target for Islamist raids, in October 2017, when police facilities in the district came under attack. Later, Mocimboa town was occupied, and for several months became the main base for the terrorists in the province. But, as of mid-2021, the town has been back in government hands, due to an offensive by the Mozambican defence and security forces, supported by a contingent from Rwanda, who drove the jihadists out and restored state authority.

Two years later, the destruction caused by the jihadists is still very visible. Key buildings, including the Mocimboa da Praia district hospital, suffered extensive damage which has not yet been repaired.

Chume warned against complacency, saying that, in matters of defence and security there is never any complete guarantee. "Events related to security can change from one moment to the next", he said at a press conference marking the end of a visit to the Northern Operational Theatre in Cabo Delgado. He went to the province to assess the security situation and was accompanied by over 40 journalists.

An alteration in security could be the work of just a handful of people. "It's enough for just one person to show up with a gun and to open fire in the midst of the population for us to talk about a security disturbance", said Chume.

Hence, the Mozambican forces are working to prevent any repeat of the events which led to the occupation of Mocimboa da Praia, or to the massive attack against the town of Palma in March 2021, where the jihadists murdered over 1,200 people. The defence and security forces, said the Minister, are "working with lessons learnt from the past".

He pledged that the defence forces are continuing to design better solutions to stop the terrorists from reaching residential areas. In Palma and Mocimboa da Praia, the defence and security forces have gone onto the offensive to prevent the jihadists from approaching the main population centres. Stability would be ensured by an increased presence of troops.

Asked whether, in light of the improved security situation, the French oil and gas company, TotalEnergies, would shortly resume its project to build liquefied natural gas (LNG) plants, on the Afungi peninsula, in Palma, Chume declined to give any definitive answer. "I don't have any credible information about the return of Total", he said. "But I think you could see at the Total site in Afungi, the number of workers who are there, and the number of companies that are operating. This may indicate that Total might soon lift its state of force majeure. But I leave this to Total to answer".

The Mocimboa da Praia district authorities estimate at 68 per cent of the number of people displaced by the

terrorists have now returned home and are developing their productive activities. Chume said that freedom of movement has been largely restored. People are travelling from Mocimboa da Praia to Palma, and even to the provincial capital, Pemba, without any restrictions in terms of security.

Do communities benefit from natural resource exploitation?

A study on the governance of extractive resources, undertaken by a consortium of civil society organisations, has concluded that the exploitation of natural resources in Mozambique has brought more risks than benefits to local communities.

The study covered the southern province of Inhambane, the central provinces of Sofala and Tete, and the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa. Among the problems identified are environmental pollution in Tete, caused by coal mining, the alleged damage to fisheries caused by the research undertaken by the South African hydrocarbon company Sasol on the Inhambane coast, and complaints by Mozambican businessmen that they are not included in extractive industry business opportunities.

Sergio Chichava, director of the Institute of Social and Economic Studies (IESE), divulged data from the study at a Maputo conference on 28 June, stating "the idea is to show that, although Mozambique is rich in natural resources, there remain challenges in their exploitation and management. These challenges should be faced in a serious and responsible manner because they can exacerbate conflicts. People living in areas where the resources are exploited feel few benefits and more risks".

Chichava said that communities living around the Gorongosa National Park, in Sofala province, complain of a lack of access to fishing and firewood for domestic use. Although these resources are within the country's flagship conservation area, the communities claim their poverty gives them a right to use them.

The study draws attention to the way in which conflicts with artisanal miners are handled in Niassa and Cabo Delgado. It says the conflicts are characterised by the expulsion of the miners without negotiation. This could worsen tensions and create resentment.

A representative of the Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy, Jose Amigos, declared that, despite the challenges, Mozambique has taken actions to turn natural resources into a blessing and not a curse.

He stressed that Mozambique has become a reference point in compliance with the standards of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), bringing in its reports recommendations that serve as a basis for correcting actions that are no longer regarded as acceptable for the extractive industry.

As gains for communities, Amigos stressed the government's recent revision of the transfers that extractive industries must make to local communities, from 2.75 per cent of revenue to 7.25 per cent.

Second LNG floating platform planned

The Italian energy company, ENI, is preparing to build and launch a second floating platform to extract natural gas from the depths of the Rovuma Basin, off the coast of the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado.

According to a report published by the Zitamar news agency, the platform will be known as Coral North and will be a duplicate of the Coral South platform, which is already pumping, liquefying, and exporting natural gas.

The consortium headed by ENI, in a pre-viability environmental study cited by Zitamar, declared that a second floating platform would be “the most efficient way to maximise the recovery and profitability of the gas reserves of the Coral field”.

The investment envisaged in the second platform is US\$7 billion and is still subject to approval by the Mozambican government. Under the current calendar, the new platform would begin to produce liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the second half of 2027.

That means that the platform will be in production before the on-shore LNG plants planned for the Afungi peninsula in Palma district. The French oil and gas company, TotalEnergies, stopped work at Afungi and declared force majeure in 2021, because of attacks by Islamist terrorists. The resumption of work by Total will depend on whether the French company is satisfied with the recent improvements in the security situation.

Coral North will be anchored ten kilometres from the Coral South platform which has been liquefying natural gas since October 2022. From then until May of this year the Coral South LNG exports have channelled US\$34 million in revenue to the state coffers.

The platform has the capacity to produce 3.37 million tonnes of LNG a year and the Coral North platform would double that figure.

The main partner in the consortium is Mozambique Rovuma Venture (MRV) which is a joint venture owned by ENI, ExxonMobil and CNODC of China. MRV has a 70 per cent stake in Area Four of the Rovuma Basin. The other partners are Mozambique’s own National Hydrocarbon Company (ENH), Galp of Portugal and Kogas of South Korea, each with ten per cent.

Manuel Chang to be extradited in July

Mozambique’s former finance minister, Manuel Chang, is expected to be extradited from South Africa to New York in July, according to a report carried by the Bloomberg financial agency.

Chang was detained at Johannesburg international airport on 29 December 2018, as he attempted to travel from Maputo to Dubai. He was arrested based on an international warrant issued by US prosecutors, who are charging him with conspiracy to commit money laundering, mail fraud and securities fraud.

The charges arise from the scandal of Mozambique’s “hidden debts” – a term that refers to illicit loans of over US\$2 billion obtained in 2013 and 2014 by three fraudulent, security-linked companies from the banks Credit Suisse and VTB of Russia.

The loans were only possible because Chang, the finance minister at the time, signed loan guarantees for the whole amount. The three companies were unable to repay the loans and the state became liable.

For four years, the South African courts have dealt with competing extradition requests from the US and from Mozambique, who both wanted to put Chang on trial. In May, this part of the saga came to an end when the South African Constitutional Court, the highest court in the land, denied the Mozambican Attorney-General’s Office (PGR) leave to appeal against the extradition of Chang to the US.

Assistant US Attorney Hiral Mehta said at a hearing in Brooklyn federal court in New York on 26 June that the extradition is likely to happen in July.

“He wants to get on a plane and he will likely be here in July, mid-July to late July”, Mehta told US District Court Judge Nicholas Garaufis. “It will take time but he will be extradited”.

This clearly contradicts one of the key arguments by Chang’s legal team, who have claimed that the US prosecutors have lost interest in putting the former finance minister on trial.

Chang’s lawyer, Adam Ford, on 26 June said his client would seek to dismiss the case because the US had taken too long to bring him to trial.

Internet via satellite from 1 July

As of 1 July, the Mozambican company Interactive will supply Internet access via satellite to all Mozambicans according to the company’s chairperson, Daniel David.

Speaking at the Technology Fair, MozTech, organised by the SOICO group, which he also heads, David said that currently, only 23 per cent of the Mozambican population has access to the Internet. Making the Internet accessible, he stressed, is fundamental for “digital inclusion”.

David stated that Mozambique is one of the southern African countries where access to the Internet is most expensive. “We have to fight for the Internet to be accessible to everyone”, he declared.

The main project of Interactive, said David, is to drop Internet prices so that more Mozambicans may gain access. He wanted his group to lead the drive to make internet services accessible, via satellite, to many more Mozambicans. “This was, and always will be the strategy of our group: to innovate and compete, in a way in which we are always leaders. Those who lead invest a lot in their work. That’s what we are doing. For four months we worked with Eutelsat to prepare for this moment. For us, the future begins now”.

Interactive has signed a memorandum of understanding with Eutelsat for Africa, represented at MozTech by its General Director, Philippe Baudrier.

Daniel David said the purpose of MozTech is to encourage digital transformation and to induce competitiveness among individuals and companies. He regarded technology as a basic tool that allows nations to skip redundant stages and win more time to develop their own skills.

Rehabilitation of EN1 postponed until 2024

President Filipe Nyusi announced on 22 June that the rehabilitation of the country's main north-south highway (EN1) will begin in May 2024, thus contradicting the promise given by Public Works Minister Carlos Mesquita that work on rebuilding the road would begin in the second half of 2023.

President Nyusi was speaking in Maputo at the opening session of the 18th edition of the Annual Private Sector Conference (CASP). He did not say why the start of rehabilitation has been postponed.

The initial phase of the work will cover 508 kilometres of EN1. These cover the stretches from the Inchope crossroads to Gorongosa, in the central province of Sofala; from Gorongosa to Caia, on the south bank of the Zambezi River; from Chimuara to Nicoadala, in Zambezia province; and from Metoro to Pemba, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. This work will cost US\$400 million, financed by the World Bank.

In August 2022, Mesquita told reporters that the work would begin in 2023. "The first question was to obtain the financing and at least a part of that has now been guaranteed", he said. "By the second half of 2023, the work will begin".

The Minister has had to back down somewhat: he now claims that the rehabilitation has already begun with a series of studies. "We have to undertake studies", he said. "We have studies, but we have to update them since over time the road has been damaged. Now that we are coming out of the rainy season, there has been additional damage, and that requires deeper analysis".

President Nyusi told the Conference that his government will analyse the various questions presented by the Confederation of Mozambican Business Associations – but he warned this did not mean that the government will allow the CTA "to make the cheapest deals in the world, at the expense of the national economy".

Among the complaints made by CTA chairperson Agostinho Vuma was the accusation that government departments took an inordinately long time before paying invoices submitted by private businesses. These delays are getting longer, and Vuma said they mean that companies, mostly small and medium enterprises, are financing the State, and limiting their own growth.

"We are proposing that the government set maximum limits to the accumulation of these debts", urged Vuma. "The annual state budget should include a specific line for payment of the debts".
