

WEEKLY NEWSBRIEF OF THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA CLUB SECRETARIAT

MONITORING REGIONAL TRENDS

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In Senegal, Obama pledges support for agriculture and infrastructure



Senegalese President Macky Sall and US President Barack Obama

US President Barack Obama vowed to continue support for agriculture and infrastructure development in Africa during a state visit to Senegal. The American president was in Dakar from 26-28 June, kicking off a three-nation tour of the continent. At a joint press conference, the two leaders affirmed their partnership in support of development, governance and economic engagement between the US and Africa. Obama said he chose to start his African tour in Senegal to celebrate the country's commitment to democracy, which he said serves as an example for all African countries. "All too often the world overlooks the amazing progress that Africa is making, including progress in strengthening democracy," Obama said. "Here in West Africa we see progress in Sierra Leone and Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger, in Ghana and here in Senegal." Obama said that while Africa faces continuing challenges, the continent holds great promise and must be better integrated into the global economy. He pledged to push to extend the African Growth and

Opportunity Act (AGOA), a free trade pact between the US and Africa that is set to expire in 2015. The US president also said he is seeking to finalise a trade and investment agreement with ECOWAS. The Senegalese leader welcomed these initiatives and looked forward to future co-operation. "We have a historical opportunity here to open new prospects for relations on the basis of complementarity, by offering greater opportunities to our youth and by stimulating trade and investments for shared prosperity," Sall said. On the second day of his visit, the US president attended a food security exhibition with Senegalese farmers and entrepreneurs employing new technologies to increase agricultural productivity. Last year, Obama launched the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition initiative of the G8, which aims to increase agricultural productivity through private sector investment. Nine African countries have joined the initiative, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria. Senegal plans to join the initiative later this year.

Security concerns strike blow against FDI inflows to West Africa



Security concerns caused West Africa to miss out on a trend of greater foreign direct investment in Africa in 2012. New figures from the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) show global FDI inflows declined 18%

last year. Investors wary over macroeconomic weakness and policy uncertainty in advanced economies pulled back, investing just USD 1.3 trillion compared to USD 1.6 trillion in 2011. Investment inflows to developed countries fell 32%, and for the first time, developing economies attracted more FDI inflows than developed countries. Africa and South America were the only two regions to see an increase in FDI inflows last year. FDI inflows to African countries grew 5% to USD 50 billion, with the majority of investments going into the exploitation of natural resources. In contrast, FDI inflows to the West African region

contracted by 5% to USD 16.8 billion, largely due to security concerns in Nigeria, West Africa's largest economy. FDI inflows to Nigeria fell 21% to USD 7 billion, compared to USD 8.9 billion in 2011. Despite the decline, Nigeria remained the largest recipient of FDI on the continent. In a possible sign of recovery following the post-election crisis of 2011, Côte d'Ivoire attracted USD 478 million in FDI in 2012, an increase of 67% over 2011. Mauritania was another strong performer in the region. The country's mining sector helped attract USD 1.2 billion in investment, double the amount in 2011.

Gulf of Guinea countries adopt code of conduct on maritime security



Leaders from West and Central Africa adopted a regional strategy to combat piracy and other illegal activities in the Gulf of Guinea. The "Code of Conduct concerning the Prevention and Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illegal Maritime Activities in West and Central Africa,"

constitutes an initial step toward a legally binding framework. Thirteen heads of state and government from member countries of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) attended a summit on maritime security from 24-25 June in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Thirteen other African countries sent high-level representatives, while partner countries and international organisations also participated in the meeting. In the final declaration, the African leaders committed to pool resources, co-ordinate actions and share information to enhance security in the waters of West and Central Africa. They announced the creation of

an inter-regional co-ordination centre to implement the strategy and called for the deployment of an international naval force and establishment of a rapid response force to counter threats in the Gulf of Guinea. Ivoirian President and current ECOWAS Chairman Alassane Ouattara, said insecurity in the Gulf threatens global economic interests and requires an international response. "I urge the international community to show the same firmness in the Gulf of Guinea as displayed in the Gulf of Aden, where the presence of international naval forces has helped to drastically reduce acts of piracy," Ouattara said.

Mali: UN peacekeepers take over from AFISMA



West African troops in Mali traded their headgear for the signature blue berets of the UN as the ECOWAS-led military mission officially become a UN peacekeeping operation. A ceremony to mark the transfer of authority from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to the UN Multi-dimensional Integrated Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was held on 1 July in Bamako. Ahead of the ceremony, defence and security chiefs from troop-contributing ECOWAS countries met with UN officials to discuss the final arrangements to ensure a smooth transition. The UN secretary-

general has named Major General Jean Bosco Kazura of Rwanda as commander of the 12 600-troop UN force, which is expected to be fully deployed ahead of the presidential election scheduled for 28 July. Meanwhile, the leader of the March 2012 military coup that helped propel the Islamist takeover of northern Mali has apologised for his actions. Captain Amadou Sanogo spoke on 26 June, during a ceremony to reconcile factions of the Malian army. "Above being soldiers, we are humans and we make mistakes without meaning to," Sanogo said. "We dare to hope that our apologies will be accepted."

UEMOA Council of Ministers reports increase in food production



UEMOA countries have recorded a significant increase in food production, including a substantial rise in the production of major export crops. The final results of the 2012-2013 agricultural campaign were presented during the 2nd Ordinary Session of the UEMOA Council of Ministers, held on 28 June in Dakar. Council chairman Abdel Karim Konaté, the Malian finance minister, said that with the exception of cocoa, the agricultural sector has improved significantly over production figures for the 2011-2012 season. Assessing overall economic performance, Konaté said, "The economic growth of the Union, already well beyond the rate of

6%, will accelerate slightly compared to 2012." He noted that the vitality of the extractive industries is fuelling much of the growth in the non-agricultural economy. The quarterly Council of Ministers meeting provides an opportunity for various UEMOA institutions to take stock of economic and financial conditions within the Union. The ministers also reviewed a report on the implementation of the multi-lateral surveillance process for the co-ordination of macroeconomic policy. They recommended the adoption of a Supplementary Act establishing a common peace and security policy for the Union.

Mano River countries to develop joint security strategy



Member countries of the Mano River Union (MRU) have agreed on the need to develop a joint strategy to combat the cross-border movement of armed groups and illicit weapons. Ministers from Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone held discussion on 29 June in Dakar, along with repre-

sentatives from the MRU Secretariat, the ECOWAS Commission, the AU and the UN. Stakeholders are seeking action on a number of UN Security Council resolutions that have called for a regional security strategy for the MRU area. After decades of war and conflict, MRU countries have achieved a remarkable turnaround and are experiencing the economic benefits of peace. Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone are among the continent's fastest growing economies, with GDP growth rates of 9.8% and

19.7% respectively in 2012. A comprehensive security strategy is seen as critical to consolidate peace and foster greater prosperity. ECOWAS Commission President Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo challenged stakeholders to come up with a realistic action plan to guarantee security and ensure that the region's natural resources are used to the benefit of its people. "Our joint efforts should focus on initiatives to reconcile people around a common vision of unity, inclusion and a culture of democracy," Ouédraogo said.

ECOWAS defence chiefs urge new thinking, technology to address security



West Africa needs advanced technology and new thinking to address emerging political and security challenges in the region. Ghana's Deputy Defence Minister, Ebenezer Oklety Terlabi, delivered that message at the opening of the 32nd ordinary session of the Committee of ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff (CCDS) on 26 June in Accra. Defence and security officials from ECOWAS member countries held discussions around the theme "Enhancing ECOWAS Military Cooperation for Peace, Stability and Development". The Accra meeting follows a series of extraordinary sessions dealing with the security crises in Mali and Guinea Bissau. Items on the agenda included the political reconciliation

process in Mali as well as the transformation of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) into a UN peacekeeping mission. The defence chiefs also called for the strengthening of the ECOWAS mission and security sector reform programme in Guinea Bissau and discussed regional counter-terrorism and anti-piracy initiatives. The ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Salamatu Hussaini Suleiman, praised the committee's efforts to resolve the conflict in Mali and urged continued engagement. "We must congratulate ourselves and ensure that our troops are brought to standard to the requirement of the new (UN) mission," she said.

West African countries beef up flood defences ahead of rainy season



West African and Sahel countries are taking steps to strengthen flood defences ahead of the annual rainy season. From Senegal to Chad, authorities are working to improve drainage systems, train emergency workers, plan evacuation routes and conduct public information campaigns. Heavy rains caused widespread flooding in Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal in 2012. The flooding killed hundreds of people, destroyed millions of homes and washed away vast swaths of farmland. The African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) has predicted normal to above average rainfall across the Sahel during the 2013 rainy season. During

a June meeting on disaster preparedness, ECOWAS officials agreed to co-ordinate emergency responses and improve the collection and sharing of climate-related data. "ECOWAS nations [must] work towards building regional drought, flood and epidemics early warning systems and search and rescue platforms that will enhance our co-operation," said Alhaji Mohammed Sani Sidi, head of the Nigerian National Emergency Management Agency. Sidi said the damage caused by the 2012 flooding has served as a "wake up call" for regional authorities. "There is more attention this year as decision-makers have realised the human and financial costs involved."

Women leaders advocate gender perspectives in peace and security



Some 150 women leaders from nine West African countries have called for greater attention to women's concerns in conflict prevention and resolution. The UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and UN Women, in collaboration with ECOWAS and the Mano River Union, organised a video conference to mark the 4th edition of the Open Day on women, peace and security. The virtual meeting allowed women activists to discuss the implementation of the regional action plan for UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and others, which call for greater participation of women and the incorporation of gender perspectives in all UN peace and security efforts.

ECOWAS member states and Mauritania adopted the regional action plan in 2010, and 11 countries have developed national action plans. "This positive and encouraging result is to the credit of the dynamism of women in the countries of the sub-region," according to Said Djinnit, the special representative of the UN secretary-general for West Africa. "They have always played a key role in conflict resolution, but also in the pacification of the political space in West Africa." Djinnit said ensuring women's involvement is critical to resolving conflicts in a non-violent and sustainable manner.

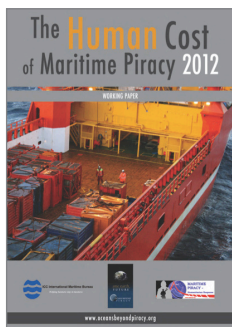
Niger sets example for combatting hunger



Niger has been invited to present its strategy for reducing hunger before a high-level international meeting on the issue. In the past five years, Niger has achieved significant increases in crop yields through a programme that promotes agricultural intensification and producers' organisations. The Nigerien Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with the FAO and with funding from the EU, Belgium, Luxemburg and Spain, has supported a network of co-operative input shops that now reach over half of the country's agricultural villages. Yields have increased by an average of 100% for sorghum and 81% for millet. Lessons from the programme are now

incorporated in Niger's overall strategy to combat hunger. The Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens (3N) strategy was to be presented before a high-level panel of African and international leaders meeting from 30 June - 1 July in Addis Ababa seeking to intensify efforts to end hunger on the continent. With low soil fertility and high population growth, Niger continues to face serious and structural food security challenges. But FAO figures show the country has achieved a threefold reduction in under-nourishment over the past two decades. Under-nourishment now affects one in eight Nigeriens, compared to nearly one in three from 1990-1992.

The Human Cost of Maritime Piracy 2012



→ Report in English: <http://oceans-beyondpiracy.org/sites/default/files/hcop2012forweb.pdf>

For the first time, the number of pirate attacks off West Africa surpassed the number of incidents off the Somali coastline in 2012. A new report from the International Maritime Bureau, Oceans Beyond Piracy and the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme finds that overall, pirate attacks declined significantly in 2012 compared to 2011. However, a 78% drop in attacks off Somalia coincided with a marked increase in attacks in the Gulf of Guinea. Pirates attacked 966 sailors in West African waters last year, compared to 851 off the Somali coast. The attackers took 206 seafarers as hostages during the year, killing five of them. The riskiest

area was off the coast of Nigeria, where pirates target tankers exporting crude oil and importing refined petroleum products. Despite the alarming rise in the number of attacks, the report says West African piracy has not garnered as much international attention as Somalia, where international navies have instituted patrols. It calls for a co-ordinated international response to ensure the safety of ships, cargo and sailors operating in the Gulf of Guinea. Beyond a security response, the report argues that a durable solution to piracy must be found on-shore, in the development of alternative economic opportunities.

Trouble in Timbuktu: Northern Mali after the Islamist occupation



→ Report in English: <http://www.irinnews.org/webspecial/mali/index.html>

→ Report in French: <http://www.irinnews.org/webspecial/mali/indexfr.html>

Five months after French and West African forces drove out Islamist militants, northern Mali is struggling to recover from the nine-month occupation by the rebels. This multimedia internet documentary from the IRIN news agency takes readers inside the legendary city of Timbuktu. Through photographs, video and text, it tells the city's story in the voice of its residents. A tour guide narrates what happened after the Islamists arrived in the city and imposed a harsh form of Islamic law. An army

commander recounts the on-going security challenges, while displaced persons talk about the fear of returning and the process of reconciliation that lies ahead. The city's mayor, Hallé Ousmane, meets with some of the few remaining civil servants in a ransacked building and describes their efforts to restore public services. "Timbuktu is free again, but it is a town where there is no economy at all, a town where everything is gone, everything is lost, apart from hope," he says.