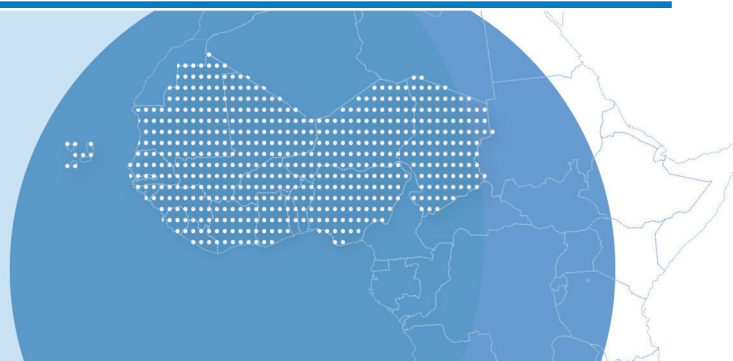


WEEKLY NEWSBRIEF OF THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA CLUB SECRETARIAT



MONITORING REGIONAL TRENDS

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Mali kicks off presidential election campaign



Mali's transitional leader has called on all Malians to work toward ensuring a peaceful campaign and successful presidential election. The election campaign officially began on 7 July following the lifting of a state of emergency, which had banned gatherings of more than 50 people. In a televised address to the nation, Interim President Dioncounda Traoré acknowledged significant challenges but said the country is capable of organising a nationwide vote to restore constitutional order following an 18-month political and security crisis. "We do not make the pretence of trying to organise perfect elections, something which is impossible even under normal conditions," he said. "But we are firmly committed to the conduct of transparent and credible elections whose results will be accepted by all." More than 25 candidates, including four former prime ministers, have declared their intention to stand in the presidential election scheduled for 28 July.

In another key condition for the vote, the Malian army entered the northern city of Kidal as outlined in the peace agreement signed with Touareg rebels last month. The national forces did not meet any resistance from the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), but an army spokesman accused the MNLA of violating the terms of the peace deal by mobilising women and children to throw stones at black civilians, Malian soldiers and African troops among UN peacekeeping forces. Given the need to guarantee security and distribute approximately 7 million voter registration cards, some officials and observers have raised concerns about the country's ability to hold free and fair elections in just three weeks time. Hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the conflict could be unable to exercise their right to vote. Media reports said several presidential candidates planned to petition to the Constitutional Court for a delay.

Habré arrest could set international precedent



In a move that could set an important international precedent, a Senegalese court has charged former Chadian President Hissène Habré with crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture. Appearing in court on 2 July, Habré was remanded in custody pending trial. Senegalese gendarmes arrested Habré on 30 June in Dakar, where he has been living in exile since he was overthrown in a coup 22 years ago. The news prompted celebrations in Chad, where authorities say Habré orchestrated the torture and killing of up to 40 000 people during his 1982-1990 rule. Previous Senegalese governments

failed to prosecute him, citing a lack of jurisdiction and funds. Shortly after his election in 2012, Senegalese President Macky Sall pledged to take up the issue and organise a fair trial for the former Chadian ruler. Working with the AU Commission, Senegal established a special court within its judiciary to handle the proceedings. The trial represents the first time that a former head of state has faced prosecution in the domestic courts of another country for alleged human rights violations. Human rights campaigners said it sends a strong message to dictators everywhere that they can no longer expect to evade justice.

Guinea government, opposition reach agreement on legislative elections



Guinean President Alpha Condé

Guinea will hold long overdue legislative elections at the end of September under an agreement between the ruling party and opposition parties. The vote is the final step in the process to return the country to civilian rule following a 2008 military coup. It is also seen as key to attracting much needed investment and unlocking nearly EUR 200 million in development assistance from the EU. Originally set to take place in 2011, the elections have been delayed several times because of disagreements between the government of President Alpha Condé and his opponents. Opposition leaders objected

to the most recent date, June 30, claiming that it was chosen without consultation. They had accused Condé of planning to rig the vote. Some 50 people have been killed and hundreds wounded in protests over the past three months. Under the deal signed on 3 July, the opposition agreed to the retention of South African company Waymark to compile the voter register. The government accepted opposition demands to allow overseas Guineans to vote. A committee made up of ruling party representatives and opposition supporters will oversee the actions of the Independent National Electoral Committee.

Regional agricultural market information goes online



The ECOWAS Commission has launched a new web site to facilitate intra-regional trade in agricultural and food products. The online home of the West African Market Information Systems Network (WAMIS-NET), the web site aims to provide timely and accurate data on 400 commodity markets in nine participating member states. Speaking at the 3 July launching ceremony, the acting director of the ECOWAS Community Computer Centre, Osei Tutu Agyman-Duah, said the website, www.resimao.net, will put strategic information at the fingertips of producers and other stakeholders. "When you talk about local farmers, these days everybody has some kind of smartphone; all that

he needs to know is how to access the information," Agyman-Duah said. He added that the initiative will involve a variety of stakeholders to maximise the sharing of information and best practices. The International Fertiliser Development Centre in Ghana has already partnered with WAMIS-NET to provide prices for fertilisers, seeds and pesticides. By allowing producers to capitalise on opportunities in regional markets, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, Lapodini Marc Atouga, said the web site will support food security, poverty reduction and job creation for young people across the region.

African leaders adopt pledge to end hunger by 2025



African leaders unanimously adopted a pledge to eliminate hunger on the continent within 12 years during a High Level Meeting of African and international leaders, held on 1 July in Addis Ababa. The declaration puts forth a "Renewed Partnership" between

African countries, partner organisations, civil society and the private sector to seek ways to scale up proven measures to empower farmers, improve child and maternal nutrition and extend social protections to vulnerable groups. The meeting was jointly organised by the AU, the FAO and the Lula Institute of Brazil under the theme "Towards African Renaissance". African governments vowed to follow through on past commitments to increase budget allocations to agriculture while encouraging greater private sector investment in the sector. AU and FAO leaders took the opportunity to recognise countries that have made impressive strides in

reducing hunger. FAO Director General Jose Graziano Da Silva said Benin, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria and Togo are among the nations that have already met the MDG target of reducing the number of hungry people by half from 1990 levels. AU Commission Chairwoman Nkomsana Dlamini-Zuma highlighted Ghana's efforts in implementing a school feeding programme using locally produced food. She said the programme has contributed to increased student enrolment and helped to reduce hunger rates in Ghana by 75% between 1990 and 2004.

Stakeholders validate action plan for the Great Green Wall



Regional stakeholders validated an action plan and strategy for the implementation of the Great Green Wall initiative for the Sahara and Sahel. Adopted by African heads of state in 2007, the Great Green Wall initiative seeks to halt the advance of the Sahara desert by planting a defensive band of trees stretching from Mauritania to Djibouti. Officials and experts from participating countries and partner organisations attended a workshop from 1-2 July in Ouagadougou dedicated to building capacity in support of the project. In remarks to open the session, the Burkinabe

minister for the environment and sustainable development, Salif Ouédraogo, said the meeting attests to the strong commitment among African leaders to confront the challenges of desertification, climate change and loss of bio-diversity. Ouédraogo said the Green Wall initiative has evolved beyond the initial idea of planting trees to include a range of interventions to promote sustainable land management. The ultimate objective is not only to stop and reverse land degradation but also to strengthen the resilience of Sahara-Saharan people and eco-systems.

ECREEE leads effort to develop efficient lighting strategy



Regional energy authorities and experts met from 2-3 July in Dakar to chart a course for the development of sustainable lighting solutions in West Africa. The ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) organised the multi-thematic workshop on efficient lighting in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme and with the support of the Club of African Agencies and Structures in charge of Rural Electrification (Club ER). The meeting follows on the High Level Meeting on the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, held in October 2012 in Accra. At the Accra meeting, national and regional officials responsible for

energy and environmental programmes adopted the ECOWAS Energy Efficiency Policy and Action Plan. One of the priority initiatives of the plan is the development of efficient on-grid and off-grid lighting. Member states have committed to introduce policies to phase out inefficient incandescent lamps by 2016 and completely eliminate them by 2020. As the region works to expand electricity access, ECREEE says a transition to sustainable lighting technology in all ECOWAS countries would significantly reduce carbon emissions and produce annual energy savings of 2.4 terawatt hours, enough to supply electricity to 1.2 million households.

West African countries explore strategies to boost livestock sector



Recognising its importance for food security and poverty reduction, several West African countries are taking steps to promote livestock sector development. In Senegal, stakeholders held a national consultation workshop on livestock, meat and dairy on 2 July

in Dakar. The Senegalese minister in charge of livestock, Aminata Mbengue Ndiaye, told participants that despite considerable regional livestock resources, large quantities of meat and other animal products are imported into the region from outside the continent. She said the sector needs more productive investment and capacity building to meet consumer demand in livestock sub-sectors. Livestock experts addressed similar concerns during a national consultative multidisciplinary stakeholders' workshop in Ghana. Anthony Nsoh Akunzule, of the National Livestock Policy Focal Point, noted that more

than 20% of livestock produced in Africa is lost to animal diseases. Ghana and Liberia are among the countries benefiting from a pan-African initiative to develop strong policy frameworks in support of livestock sector development. Co-ordinated by the African Union - Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), with financial support from the AU Commission and the EU, the programme supports the establishment of Livestock Policy Hubs (LPH) to promote effective strategies for livestock breeding, marketing and health.

BOAD partners Africa Finance Corporation on infrastructure



BOAD President Christian Adovelande

The West African Development Bank (BOAD) and the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC) have agreed to work together to support infrastructure development in the UEMOA zone. The MoU, signed on 5 July at the BOAD headquarters in Lomé, provides a framework for collaboration on project finance and structuring, trade finance, technical appraisal and due diligence. As a regional financial institution for UEMOA, the BOAD provides financing for development projects in the eight member countries, with a particular focus on poverty reduction, economic integration and private sector development. The Lagos-based AFC is an

African-led multi-lateral finance institution that seeks to mobilise private capital to fill gaps in funding and expertise for infrastructure projects across the continent. BOAD President Christian Adovelande said the partnership will allow both organisations to leverage greater financial and technical resources through direct investment and co-financing of key development projects. "We believe strategic investment collaboration with organisations such as AFC is essential in the fulfilment of our mandate to enhance economic development across our member states," he said.

Singapore aims to boost economic ties with West Africa

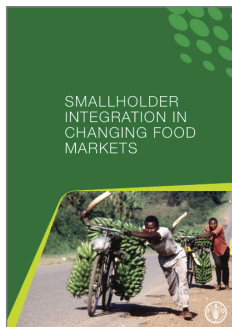


Ian Lee, Centre Director, International Enterprise Singapore

Trade relations between ECOWAS and Singapore have developed rapidly over the past five years, and the small island nation plans to further increase its presence in West Africa. Between 2008 and 2012, ECOWAS-Singapore trade grew at a compound annual rate of 10% and now exceeds USD 900 million, according to International Enterprise (IE) Singapore, a division of the Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry. Ian Lee, the Ghana-based Centre Director for IE Singapore, said the economic ties are primarily driven by the oil and gas industry, but Singaporean companies are currently present in 11 ECOWAS countries, working in a variety of sectors including

agriculture, infrastructure and food and beverage. Lee said Singapore sees important synergies with West Africa and hopes to increase its engagement in the region. "ECOWAS is among the world's fastest-growing regions today," he said. "As it embarks on a path of swift socio-economic development, partners that can bring meaningful investments will be crucial to its long-term growth. Singapore hopes to be such a partner and share our expertise with ECOWAS through our public and private sectors." Having experienced its own period of rapid development, Lee said Singapore has a wealth of experience and capacity in key areas such as education, finance, ICT and urban infrastructure.

Smallholder Integration in Changing Food Markets



→ Report in English: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3292e/i3292e.pdf>

Small-scale agricultural producers provide the majority of food consumed in developing countries, and their success is widely seen as critical to ensuring food security. Recent increases in prices for staple food products have provided an opportunity for smallholder farmers to increase their own incomes and food security by producing marketable surpluses. Yet the response to the increase in prices has been rather moderate. Based on FAO research, this report explores the factors that prevent many small-scale producers from participating in

agricultural markets. Describing the various constraints faced by different categories of producers, the report argues that both producers and markets are highly heterogeneous, and policies and interventions to encourage the development of inclusive markets must take into account these differences. It calls for an evidence-based approach to reduce the likelihood of policy failure. The paper concludes with recommendations for context-specific policies, strategies and institutional reforms to increase smallholder integration in local food markets.

Sahel Regional Strategy Mid-Year Review 2013



→ Report in English: <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROWCA/Funding%20update/2013%20Sahel%20Strategy%20MYR%20DOCUMENT.pdf>

The need for humanitarian assistance in the Sahel region of West Africa is greater than initially estimated. Aid agencies have revised upward their appeal for funds to help people affected by food insecurity and conflict in nine countries. The mid-year review of the 2013 Sahel Strategy from UNOCHA appeals for USD 1.72 billion to fund programmes targeting food insecurity and acute malnutrition in Burkina Faso, northern Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, northern Nigeria and Senegal. The new figure represents a 3% increase over the USD 1.66 billion

requested in January. The increase in need is attributed to a number of factors including altered conditions in Mali and Nigeria. The January escalation in the Mali conflict disrupted agricultural activity and caused more people to be displaced, while in Nigeria the report cites the continuing impact of the 2012 floods and market disruptions caused by the military campaign against Boko Haram. So far aid agencies have received USD 607 million in response to the appeal, leaving a shortfall of USD 1.1 billion.