



WEST AFRICA BRIEF

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AFDB ANNUAL MEETINGS: FOCUS ON WEST AFRICA



Some 3 000 development partners gathered from 21-25 May at the 53rd annual meetings of the African Development Bank (AfDB) in Busan, Korea. “Accelerating Africa’s Industrialization,” one of AfDB’s five priority areas, was the official theme of the event. What’s in it for West Africa? AfDB is increasing its presence in West Africa, with the approval of three new country offices in Benin, Guinea and Niger in February 2017. With UA 1.24 billion in 2017 in approved projects, West Africa attracted the highest rate of AfDB approvals in 2017 (25.7%). The transport sector, with a regional express train project and an urban transport programme for Dakar, absorbed 38% of AfDB’s spending in the region. With respect to industrialisation, several flagship projects are being implemented in West Africa. In Guinea, AfDB is co-financing the development of an integrated

bauxite mining and transportation infrastructure operation. In Mauritania, AfDB supported the National Industrial and Mining Company (SNIM) to expand its operations. Some 600 jobs were created. A number of new agreements were signed on the side-lines of the Busan meetings, including a new USD 3 million loan with Sierra Leone’s Union Trust Bank (UTB) to support women-owned businesses and SMEs working in the agricultural, energy, manufacturing and service sectors. AfDB is also co-funding, together with the African Development Fund and the EU, the regional road network integration project in the Lake Chad Basin to link the towns of Yagoua in Cameroon and Bongor in Chad with a 14-km road and a 620-meter bridge over the Logone River. The next AfDB annual meetings are scheduled to take place in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

The West Africa Brief is published by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD). It presents political, economic and social developments in the region. Special focus is given to news regarding regional organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS) as well other SWAC Members’ activities. The articles should not be reported as representing the official views of the OECD or of its member countries. Contact: julia.wanjiru@oecd.org

THE EU MOBILISES SUPPORT FOR **GAMBIA'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN**



On 22 May 2018, the European Union and Gambia co-chaired an international conference in Brussels to strengthen international, political and financial support for the country, following its peaceful transition of power in January 2017. Delegations from 43 countries and ten international organisations participated in the event. The Gambian government presented its National Development Plan (2018-2021), adopted in January 2018, which sets out eight strategic priorities: governance, economic growth, agriculture & fisheries modernisation, investing in people,

infrastructure & energy services, tourism, youth and the private sector. In a joint communiqué, the government of Gambia and the EU reaffirmed their “support and solidarity in assisting the transition from a dictatorship to a fully-fledged democracy.” The total amount of pledges is EUR 1.45 billion, for the next 3 years of which the EU is contributing an additional EUR 140 million more than the EUR 225 million that had already been committed. President Barrow presented a financing package to development partners that showed EUR 1.6 billion out of the EUR 2.4 billion total estimate. The rest will be sourced from the government’s progressive fiscal measures. This means that Gambia’s development plan is almost fully funded. The international conference was followed by a business forum, which brought together European, regional and Gambian business representatives. Gambia has a population of some two million people and is West Africa’s second smallest country after Cabo Verde.

NIGERIA: AFTER THREE YEARS IN POWER, HOW IS BUHARI DOING?



The Buharimeter is assessing President Buhari’s performance and popularity on a regular basis through opinion polls. While Buhari already announced his intention to seek re-election in 2019, Nigerians expressed mixed feelings about his political performance. Buhari’s promise to fight corruption, insecurity and unemployment remains a “work in progress” at best or a “broken promise” for those who are disappointed with Buhari’s results. A recent Buharimeter poll indicates that 54% of Nigerians think that the public declaration of President Muhammadu Buhari’s assets and liabilities fell short of standard practice.

Moreover, no ministers publicly declared their assets and liabilities upon assuming office in September 2015. While Nigerians generally support Buhari’s fight against corruption, the vast majority is unaware of the measures introduced to carry out this promise. Given the depth of this challenge, fighting corruption remains of paramount importance for the country. Moreover, Nigeria’s security situation remains extremely precarious. While the Buhari administration made significant gains against the Boko Haram insurgency, violent clashes between herders and farmers and the rise of tribal tensions are clearly compromising the country’s security record. As for his promise to increase employment, the ministry of labour indicates that 5-7 million jobs have been created in the food economy. However, the unemployment rate, estimated at 18.8% in 2017, has risen over consecutive years since 2014. The absolute number of unemployed people increased to an estimated 15.9 million people, while the underemployed were at about 18 million (21.2%). Combined, 40% of the country’s labour force is either underemployed or jobless.

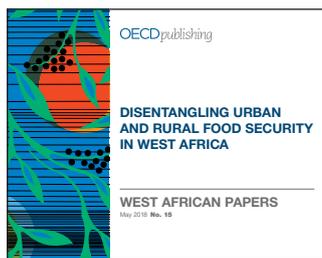
BENIN: TRANSIT TRADE WITH NIGERIA ACCOUNTS FOR 20% OF GDP

According to the COFACE economic forecast, Benin’s economic prospects are good. Its economy is expected to grow by 5.6% in 2018, thanks to its improved agricultural performance and Nigeria’s economic recovery. In the absence of major climatic shocks, cotton production, Benin’s main export product, is likely to increase. The inflation rate, estimated at 2% for 2018, remains below the UEMOA threshold of 3%. Informal trade continues to occupy a predominate position, with transit trade and re-export trade to Nigeria representing 20% of the GDP. Some 80% of Benin’s imports are destined for Nigeria. The completion of a railway line connecting Cotonou to Niamey might further

boost activity at the Cotonou’s port. The government’s 2016-21 action plan, “Revealing Benin”, aims to develop Benin’s untapped business potential through 45 flagship projects and a new law on public-private partnerships. However, Benin still has a long way to go to improve its business environment. It is currently ranked at position 151 (out of 190 countries) on the World Bank’s Doing Business 2018 Index. Benin’s narrow and volatile export base, its strong dependence on Nigeria, its erratic electricity supply and governance shortcomings are among the weaknesses that impede Benin’s development prospects.

MUST READ

DISENTANGLING URBAN AND RURAL FOOD SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA



The analysis of the most recent West Africa paper reveals that the region suffers from the double burden of under- and over-nutrition. While over 58 million people in the region are underweight, some 52 million people, mostly urban dwellers, are

either overweight or obese. Food and nutrition security data for West Africa's growing urban population is scarce and fragmented. The paper calls for greater efforts to identify appropriate metrics to monitor food and nutrition security in urban areas.

GERMANY'S GROWING COMMITMENT TO SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA



Security co-operation with Africa has not traditionally been one of Germany's key priorities. Its co-operation with the continent is mainly managed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) and not the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. However, the country has progressively increased its presence in the Sahel

and West Africa region and actively supports the peace process in Mali and the G5 Sahel Joint Force. It is contributing some EUR 48 million for the purchase of equipment and training for the joint force. This paper, published by the GRIP Belgian Research Group, analyses the status of Germany's presence in the region and its current commitments.

OPINION

A TURNING POINT FOR WEST AFRICA'S FIGHT AGAINST ORGANISED CRIME?

"ECOWAS leadership changes may add much-needed political momentum in the region's response to transnational organised crime", indicates William Assanvo, co-ordinator for the Regional Organised Crime Observatory, in an article published by Enact Africa.

While the region has successfully put in place legal co-operation frameworks within ECOWAS, regional co-operation is still lacking. "The regional body seems unable to articulate a unified stance on organised crime, including the complex and changing ways in which it manifests and affects the region. This significantly

hampers effective action", explains Assanvo. Beyond drug-trafficking, various types of transnational crimes continue to evolve across the region. "With decisive action and the updating and implementation of existing protocols, the region could do much to address the issues", concludes Assanvo.

WE ARE EXHAUSTED BY THE TALK, TALK AND TALK



On the occasion of Africa Day 2018, Jay Naidoo, a former minister in Nelson Mandela's cabinet during South Africa's first post-apartheid government, reflected on the state of the continent. "We are exhausted by the talk, talk and talk. Our lives are littered with the broken promises of leaders. Our current leaders are out of touch. We are the richest continent under the ground but we are the poorest in the world. It's time for leadership and governance. It's time the older generation moved out of the way," he wrote. "With more

than half the youth on our continent without basic skills, this is a major bottleneck. Clearly we need industry, academia and government to align our education investment with our new growth path and industrial strategy." He noted that civil society organisations at grassroots levels have a crucial role to play in mobilising an African Agenda, led by African governments, but he said that their work should be "done transparently in a way that involves citizens, civil society and business."

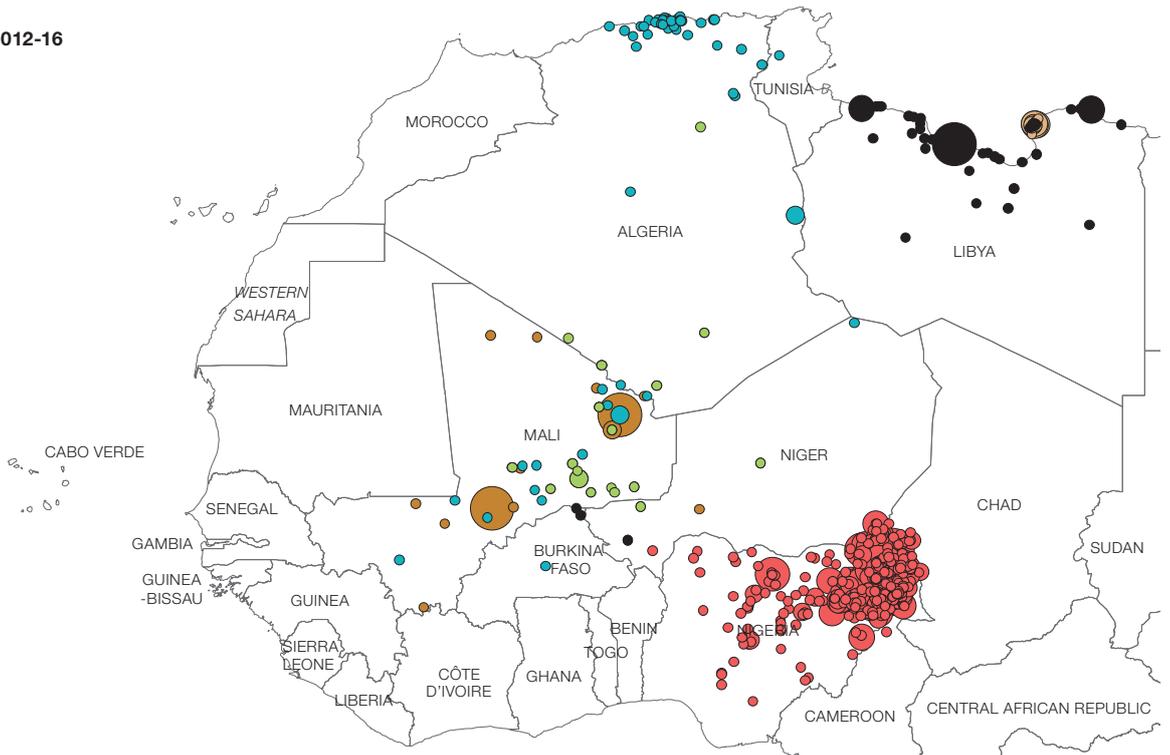
MAPS & FACTS: VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE SAHARA-SAHEL

Number of victims, 2012-16

- 1-50
- > 50-100
- > 100-500
- > 500-1 000
- > 1 000-1 342

Terrorist groups

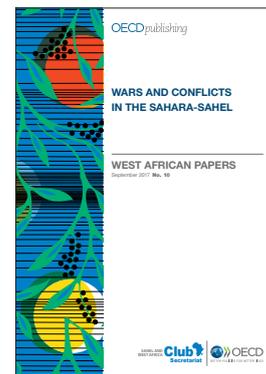
- Ansar Sharia
- Islamic State
- AQIM and allies
- Ansar Dine
- MUJAO
- Boko Haram



Note: The groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) are Al-Mourabitoun and Those Who Sign in Blood. Only violent events attributed to an identified perpetrator are taken into consideration. Source: ACLED, data 2012-16, www.acleddata.com/data/africa

Numerous extremists groups are active across the Sahara-Sahel area and in the Lake Chad region. Most are extremely mobile and operate easily across national territories because of the porous nature of national borders in the region. Their actions are being increasingly constrained by military responses launched by national governments in alliance with international partners. Moreover, warring parties regularly develop temporary allegiances against a common enemy, but tend to not contribute to the establishment of a stable coalition between diverse and conflicting factions, thus obstructing efforts to achieve peace (i.e. conflict in Mali). The mapping of the attacks

that have been carried out by the main extremist groups in the region since the start of the war in Mali in 2012 illustrates the trans-national activity of terrorist groups. The Boko Haram insurgency caused, by far, the largest number of civilian casualties, mostly in northeastern Nigeria. Concerns over the deteriorating security situation has prompted calls for co-ordinated regional action to promote security, governance and development, and has given impetus to the creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Military Force. Additionally, the newly established Alliance for the Sahel aims to enhance regional partners' co-ordination, while also scaling up the impact of development initiatives.



Extract

Walther, O. (2017), "Wars and Conflicts in the Sahara-Sahel", West African Papers, No. 10, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/8bbc5813-en>

WHO'S WHO: MOHAMED KOANDA, COMPUTER SCIENCE ENGINEER



A talented young IT professional from Burkina Faso has received academic honours in the United States. Mohamed Koanda won the 2018 Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence at Buffalo State. The Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence honours State University of New York students who been recognised for their integration of academic excellence with other aspects of their lives. Koanda was

selected as the top talent out of 1 900 students in his category and is the first Burkinabe to receive the award. The President of Burkina Faso personally congratulated Koanda for his achievement in a tweet. Koanda completed a bachelor's degree in computer information systems (CIS) and a minor in mathematics from the State University of New York. He arrived in the United States in 2011 without any English skills.