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Cllr. Arthur T. Johnson

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P11



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# Continental News

## Ethiopia's enslaved child maids seek solace at night school

Each day, 12-year-old Tesfa waits for the clock to strike 3:30 p.m. and provide her respite from the cooking, cleaning and beatings she endures working as a maid in Ethiopia's capital.

Once she finishes her daily tasks - which include caring for a toddler - Tesfa runs to a primary school to avoid being late for a catch-up class tailored towards underage domestic workers. "I'm only happy when I come here," Tesfa, whose name was changed to protect her identity, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation after a class in Addis Ababa last month.

Fiddling with her necklace, she spoke of sleeping on the floor, eating only leftovers and being denied any days off.

"I do anything (the employers) order me to do ... they beat me, always," added Tesfa. She was left with the



family last year by an aunt who took her from northern Ethiopia to Addis Ababa.

Tesfa is one of countless girls working as maids in cities across Ethiopia although official data is lacking. Most come from rural areas and are

sent away in search of a living by their families - often via labour brokers or with relatives.

Kept indoors, far from home, and unprotected by labour law, many child servants are denied an

education, exploited and enslaved, according to activists that work with such

victims.

Run by a local charity, the two-hour lessons are attended by about 130 pupils, most of them young maids, who have permission from their employers to go to school once their chores are done. "These children are hungry for education," Fikirte Assefa, a volunteer for the Organization for Prevention, Rehabilitation and Integration of Female Street Children (OPRIFS), which has been running the early evening classes since 2006.

"(The classes give them) hope and a vision," Fikirte added, recounting success stories of former child maids she had worked with who later went on to become nurses, doctors and engineers. AFP

## Senegal confirms second coronavirus case

A second person in Senegal has tested positive for coronavirus, the country's health ministry confirms.

It says the patient is an 80-year-old French national who arrived in the West African country on 29 February. He is being treated at the same hospital for infectious diseases in the capital city,

Dakar, where another Frenchman was hospitalised for coronavirus last week.

News of this second confirmed case in Senegal brings the total number of confirmed cases on the African continent to 12. Other countries with patients who tested positive for the virus are:

- Algeria - five people
- Egypt - two people

- Morocco - one person
- Nigeria - one person
- Tunisia - one person

Senegal is one of the 33 sub-Saharan African nations with testing facilities for coronavirus. The authorities say they are well prepared to deal with the virus. On Monday the World Health Organization (WHO) told the BBC it expected the remaining 14 sub-Saharan nations currently without testing equipment to gain facilities within a fortnight. BBC



## Ghana's ex-football chief charged with fraud

Ghana's former football chief Kwesi Nyantakyi has been charged with fraud at a high court in the capital, Accra.

He pleaded not guilty to the charges that arose from an undercover investigation for the BBC in 2018 which sought to expose corruption in African football.

Mr Nyantakyi was filmed

cut and paste".

He appeared in court on Wednesday with a young football administrator, Abdulai Alhassan, who also denied allegations of fraud, conspiracy to commit fraud and corruption by a public officer. Both men have been granted bail of 1m Ghanaian cedis (\$184,000, £143,000) and are required to report to



The former Ghana Football Association president was granted bail

taking \$65,000 (£48,000) from an undercover reporter.

Following the documentary, called *Betraying the Game*, he resigned from his posts within Fifa and the Confederation of African Football (Caf). But the former Ghana Football Association president dismissed the investigation at the time as "shoddy work with

the police's Criminal Investigation Department every Friday until the next hearing on 25 March.

These are the first charges to arise out of the investigation by Ghanaian journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas, which was broadcast by BBC Africa Eye. BBC

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# EDITORIAL

## Avert another gasoline shortage

**LIBERIA RISKS SLIPPING** back to the recent nightmare of gasoline shortage that nearly brought the entire economy to its knees characterized by hike in prices and protests by commercial cyclists, including trekking by students, marketers and public workers.

**THE MANAGING DIRECTOR** of the Liberia Petroleum Refining Company (LPRC) Marie-Urey Coleman told the Liberian Senate last week that current stock of gas in the country will last for 48 days, with the risk of a return of the recent gasoline crisis this nation experienced.

**SHE HOWEVER DISCLOSED** a vessel of 15,000 metric tons of gasoline is expected to arrive by 10th March.

**MADAM COLEMAN ALSO** told senators the LPRC lacks money to import its petroleum into Liberia, so it relies on private importers to bring in the commodity for the public.

**SHE SAID, PRIOR** to the recent petroleum crisis, she tried to obtain credit from commercial banks to import the product in order to be able to store reserve that would address crisis like the recent shortage that nearly paralyzed the economy.

**THE LPRC HAS** not brought in its own products for about 15-20 years, managing director Coleman disclosed, and stressed that by law, the entity should be the importer of petroleum products for the country other than leaving the business at the hands of private importers.

**THIS IS WHERE** we draw the attention of the senate. If there were laws on the book, why aren't they being implemented? Government should not perpetually treat the LPRC as a "glorified gas station" to borrow the word from the late former managing director, Harry Greaves.

**GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT** create public entities and abandon them by the wayside, because that's what the LPRC is truly is: a storage center for petroleum products brought in by private importers.

**NOW IS TIME** for our policymakers to rethink the issue and take actions on such an issue that is so critical for the smooth running of the economy.

**THE LPRC MANAGEMENT,** thru managing director Coleman, has identified some of the problems the entity faces, including lack of finances. How could government run such institution with great potentials to generate revenue and allow it to struggle; we don't understand.

**NOW THAT THE** senate has been thoroughly briefed, it should communicate to the executive with necessary recommendations to avoid another gas shortage or else, the authorities could be shooting themselves in the leg.

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# COMMENTARY

By Toyin Saraki

## The Gender Gap's Health Consequences

*From labor shortages to racial bias, the barriers to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 - "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages" - are as diverse as they are high. But the chances of success are significantly better if we listen to those who understand the situation on the ground.*

**A**BUJA - We have a decade left to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and we are nowhere near where we need to be to succeed. One crucial reason is that women remain largely excluded from decision-making processes, which leads to policies that do not provide women the support they need to prosper - or even to survive. Nowhere is this dynamic more apparent than in the health sector.

Women comprise roughly 70% of the global health workforce, and perform the majority of the sector's most challenging, dangerous, and labor-intensive jobs. Yet they hold only 25% of the health sector's senior roles, and are rarely represented adequately in policymaking. Instead, they are often expected to remain passive actors, quietly finding ways to do their jobs in difficult - even impossible - circumstances.

The reality for women health workers was reflected in a recent letter to the medical journal *The Lancet* from two Chinese nurses describing the conditions they and their colleagues face on the frontlines of the battle against the new coronavirus, COVID-19, at its source in Wuhan, China. It may be an extreme case (and the letter has now been retracted over claims that it was not a firsthand account), but the challenges described, from shortages of protective equipment to chronic overwork and exhaustion, are all too familiar to health workers everywhere.

Such conditions make essential health-sector jobs unattractive, contributing to severe labor shortages worldwide. The World Health Organization estimates that, for all countries to achieve SDG 3 ("ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages"), an additional nine million nurses and midwives will be needed globally by the year 2030.

Closing this gap is a matter of life and death. For example, midwives are often the difference between safe childbirth and newborn or maternal mortality. Lack of access to them - especially for vulnerable populations, such as poor rural dwellers - is a major reason why two-thirds of all maternal deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa. The WHO estimates that adequate midwifery care (including family planning) could prevent 83% of all maternal deaths, stillbirths, and newborn deaths.

Infant and maternal mortality are hardly limited to developing countries. In the United States, the maternal mortality rate has actually increased in recent decades, from 7.2 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1987 to 16.9 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2016. More than half of these deaths could have been prevented if the mothers had better understood the importance of - and had easier access to - quality prenatal and postpartum care.

There is a clear racial dimension to this disturbing trend. In the US, a black woman is 3-4 times more likely than a white woman to die from complications in pregnancy. In the United Kingdom, that multiple rises to five. While this discrepancy may be partly explained by health complications black women experience, racial bias also plays a role. Black women often report feeling that they are not taken seriously by medical professionals.

The health consequences of not listening to women extend further. Children born to healthy mothers are more likely to remain healthier throughout their lives. Because a woman is most likely to engage with the health sector during pregnancy, the support of a midwife or nurse can pull a woman's entire family into the health-care system.

In a bid to recognize their vital contribution in the health sector, the WHO has designated 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. But beyond celebrating nurses and midwives for their hard work, we must seek to rectify structural inequities that exclude women from leadership positions in these professions. That is a key goal of the upcoming Women in Dev conference - a women-led, women-focused initiative that deserves the support of us all.

From labor shortages to racial bias, the barriers to achieving SDG 3 are as diverse as they are high. But the chances of success are significantly better if we listen to those who understand the situation on the ground, and work to enhance inclusion at all levels, taking into account varying socioeconomic conditions. This will require a fundamental shift in mindset, with publics and policymakers alike recognizing that women - as nurses, midwives, and mothers - are often the gatekeepers of health.

A decade of rapid progress toward SDG 3 is possible. But women must be at the helm.

# OP-ED

By Yoichi Funabashi

## Will American Populism Damage Japan?

*Japan has a wealth of opportunities to help strengthen the liberal international order as a rule-shaper, but its ability to do so is still based on its alliance with the United States. And that could be in jeopardy if November's US presidential election ends up being a contest between President Donald Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders.*

**T**OKYO - Thanks to his strong showing so far in the Democratic primary, US Senator Bernie Sanders is one of the frontrunners for the party's nomination to face President Donald Trump in November. If Sanders does end up as the Democrats' standard-bearer, this year's presidential election will be a choice between his left-wing brand of populism and the right-wing variety espoused by Trump.

For Japan, the potential implications of such a contest could be huge. Since taking office, Trump has consistently shunned multilateralism and pursued a divisive domestic agenda that is contributing to a further hardening of partisan attitudes in the United States. Sanders, meanwhile, seems to share Trump's protectionist instincts regarding trade.

Japanese political and business leaders are especially concerned by the decoupling of economic ties between America and China, the country's two biggest trading partners. A breakdown in US-China trade relations, or a proliferation of protectionist measures around the world, would disrupt global supply chains and could have a devastating impact on Japan's economy, the world's third-largest. On China, Democrats don't appear overwhelmingly different from Trump and the Republicans.

Sanders (technically an independent) has blamed trade agreements for eliminating millions of US jobs, and has voted to pull the United States out of the WTO. And former Vice President Joe Biden, a moderate and now Sanders's main rival for the Democratic nomination, has criticized the manner in which the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was drafted, despite having previously promoted the deal.

Nonetheless, Japan maintains some significant strengths. After Trump withdrew from the TPP in early 2017, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe led the pact's remaining signatories to conclude the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) instead. And a free-trade deal between Japan and the European Union entered into force last year.

Furthermore, Japan's relatively high standing with the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) boosts its chances of playing a greater global leadership role. In fact, one recent regional survey measuring perceptions of trust in major global powers found that Japan ranked well ahead of the EU, the US, China, and India. And among respondents who said they distrusted Japan, the most common reason given was that the country lacked the capacity or political will to act as a global leader.

Japan therefore should build on the trust it enjoys within Southeast Asia, because closer ties with ASEAN are intrinsically valuable and will also better position Japan to engage with the EU. But if Japan is to become a more established vanguard of the rules-based multilateral order, it must act as a rule-shaper and proactive stabilizer. For example, Japan should seek to use its recent large trade deals as leverage to bring the post-Brexit United Kingdom into the CPTPP. At the same time, Japan should perhaps aim to extend its new relationship with the EU to the other CPTPP countries through another pact. This would require aligning CPTPP countries' policies on critical issues such as data and climate change with those of the EU.

In addition, Japan must help to conclude the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a long-envisioned free-trade agreement between the ten ASEAN member countries and the six Indo-Pacific states (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand). Such an effort will face headwinds, in particular India's apparent reluctance to participate in negotiations. India's withdrawal from the RCEP talks would be a major setback to the Abe government's Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy. For now, Japan must strive to ensure that India can eventually be included in the RCEP if conditions allow.

Finally, Japan and China have agreed on the importance of principles such as transparency and debt sustainability with regard to infrastructure investment, which could provide a window for greater bilateral cooperation based on mutually accepted rules. Although the coronavirus will likely force a postponement of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Japan, the outbreak has heightened a sense of mutual vulnerability. Japanese authorities and companies have provided China with over two million masks, and Japan is expected to receive at least a million in return from its neighbor. This "mask diplomacy" has had a stabilizing effect on bilateral ties.

But although Japan has a wealth of opportunities to help strengthen the liberal international order as a rule-shaper, its ability to do so is still based on its cooperation with the US. And the future strength of that alliance will hinge heavily on how Americans vote come November.

American populism's gains, on both the left and the right, will further complicate the US-Japan alliance, thus restricting Japan's role as a rule-shaper. In addition, Japanese policymakers currently must contend with Trump's obstinacy on the issue of Japan's host-nation support for US forces stationed in the country, with the administration appearing to press Japan for a massive increase. Democrats will most likely do the same.

In fact, a victory for either Trump or Sanders will raise anxieties in Japan. The US, it is feared, may treat Japan as a strategic bargaining chip should Trump prevail, or grow even more inward-looking if Sanders does. The sort of polarizing populism exemplified by Trump, Sanders, and several other current world leaders may present Japan and the international order with their biggest challenge of the post-war era.

# OPINION

By Minxin Pei

## Will the Coronavirus Topple China's One-Party Regime?

*In the post-Mao era, the Chinese people and Communist Party leaders have adhered to an implicit social contract: the people tolerate the party's political monopoly, as long as the party delivers economic progress and adequate governance. The party's poor handling of the COVID-19 outbreak has threatened this tacit pact.*

**C**LAREMONT, CALIFORNIA - It may seem preposterous to suggest that the outbreak of the new coronavirus, COVID-19, has imperiled the rule of the Communist Party of China (CPC), especially at a time when the government's aggressive containment efforts seem to be working. But it would be a mistake to underestimate the political implications of China's biggest public-health crisis in recent history.

According to a New York Times analysis, at least 760 million Chinese, or more than half the country's population, are under varying degrees of residential lockdown. This has had serious individual and aggregate consequences, from a young boy remaining home alone for days after witnessing his grandfather's death to a significant economic slowdown. But it seems to have contributed to a dramatic fall in new infections outside Wuhan, where the outbreak began, to low single digits.

Even as China's leaders tout their progress in containing the virus, they are showing signs of stress. Like elites in other autocracies, they feel the most politically vulnerable during crises. They know that, when popular fear and frustration is elevated, even minor missteps could cost them dearly and lead to severe challenges to their power.

And "frustration" is putting it mildly. The Chinese public is well and truly outraged over the authorities' early efforts to suppress information about the new virus, including the fact that it can be transmitted among humans. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the uproar over the February 7 announcement that the Wuhan-based doctor Li Wenliang, whom the local authorities accused of "rumor-mongering" when he attempted to warn his colleagues about the coronavirus back in December, had died of it.

With China's censorship apparatus temporarily weakened - probably because censors had not received clear instructions on how to handle such stories - even official newspapers printed the news of Li's death on their front pages. And business leaders, a typically apolitical group, have denounced the conduct of the Wuhan authorities and demanded accountability.

There is no doubt that the authorities' initial mishandling of the outbreak is what enabled it to spread so widely, with health-care professionals - more than 3,000 of whom have been infected so far - being hit particularly hard. And despite the central government's attempts to scapegoat local authorities - many health officials in Hubei province have been fired - there are likely to be more questions about what Chinese President Xi Jinping knew.

Not surprisingly, Xi has been working hard to repair his image as a strong and competent leader. After the central government ordered the lockdown of Wuhan in late January, Xi appointed Premier Li Keqiang to lead the coronavirus task force. But the fact that it was Li, not Xi, who went to Wuhan seemed to send the wrong message, as Xi realized in the subsequent days.

On February 3, at a Politburo Standing Committee meeting, Xi took an unusually defensive tone in a speech that smacked of damage control. While Xi admitted that he had learned of the outbreak before he sounded the alarm, he emphasized his personal role in leading the fight against the virus.

Moreover, on February 10, Xi made a series of public appearances in Beijing, aimed at reinforcing the impression that he is firmly in command. Three days later, he sacked the party chiefs of Hubei province and Wuhan municipality for their inadequate handling of the crisis. And two days after that, in an unprecedented move, the CPC released the full text of Xi's internal Politburo Standing Committee speech.

Though Xi has apparently regained his aura as a dominant leader - not least thanks to CPC propagandists, who are working overtime to restore his image - the political fallout is likely to be serious. The profound uproar that marked those fleeting moments of relative cyber-freedom - the two weeks, from late January through early February, when censors lost their grip on the popular narrative - should be deeply worrying to the CPC.

Indeed, the CPC may be highly adept at repressing dissent, but repression is not eradication. Even a momentary lapse can unleash bottled-up anti-regime sentiment. One shudders to think what might happen to the CPC's hold on power if Chinese were able to speak freely for a few months, not just a couple of weeks.

The most consequential political upshot of the COVID-19 outbreak may well be the erosion of support for the CPC among China's urban middle class. Not only have their lives been severely disrupted by the epidemic and response; they have been made acutely aware of just how helpless they are under a regime that prizes secrecy and its own power over public health and welfare.

In the post-Mao era, the Chinese people and the CPC have adhered to an implicit social contract: the people tolerate the party's political monopoly, as long as the party delivers sufficient economic progress and adequate governance. The CPC's poor handling of the COVID-19 outbreak threatens this tacit pact. In this sense, China's one-party regime may well be in a more precarious position than it realizes.

## ARTICLE

## ARTICLE

# Work in progress for Africa's remaining conflict hotspots

*Insecurity persists in the DR Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Mali and Libya*

BY: KINGSLEY IGHOBOR

Despite efforts by various stakeholders to establish a peaceful Africa, armed conflicts continue in parts of the continent. The nature of violent conflicts in Africa has changed since before independence when they were mostly ideologically-driven guerilla warfare. Many of the current conflicts are driven by prospects of political power or financial gain, with armed groups fighting to acquire valuable mineral resources, assert their ideology or address grievances.

In its quest to “Silence the Guns” in Africa by 2020, which is its theme for the year, the African Union and other partners ought to focus on the main crisis spots currently: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Libya, where tens of thousands of people have been killed and millions more displaced.

## Democratic Republic of the Congo

The war in the DRC is one of Africa's deadliest. More than five million people have been killed in the Congolese war, according to the news agency Reuters. It began in 1998 with the involvement of about 20 different armed groups who maraud the country's vast jungles. Many of these groups fight each other, while others from neighbouring countries use the Congolese territory to launch attacks on their home countries. Others simply exploit the country's mineral resources, including gold, platinum and coltan fueling the various conflicts further. Among the several armed groups are the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda; the Allied Democratic Forces, a Ugandan rebel group based in the Rwenzori Mountains of eastern Congo; the Lord's Resistance Army, another Ugandan rebel group based along the northern border; the National Forces of Liberation, a Burundian rebel group operating in South Kivu; and the Mai-Mai militias operating in the Kivu.

In the first half of 2019, about 732,000 new displacements were recorded, 718,000 associated with conflict and 14,000 associated with disasters, posing additional challenges for the new DRC government.

About 18,500 UN peacekeepers, including military and police personnel, provide security for civilians threatened by the armed groups and support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. The UN Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) also helps to strengthen institutions for reconciliation, law enforcement and justice, and the equitable management of natural resources. Furthermore, it is involved in disarmament, demobilisation and community violence reduction efforts.

## South Sudan

After a brutal civil war, South Sudan declared its independence from Sudan in 2011. However, tensions persisted over natural resources, specifically access to the oil fields in newly-independent South. Matters have also been strained between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement led by President Salva Kiir, and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition led by Mr. Kiir's former vice president Riek Machar.

Since civil war broke out in 2013, about 380,000 people are reported to have been killed and more than two million have been forced to flee their homes. A 2015 peace deal fell apart after clashes between government forces and rebels. A new “revitalized” peace agreement was signed in 2018 however progress is slow. A second deadline to form a unity government has passed with Mr Machar expressing concerns over some unresolved issues.

The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was established in 2011 and consists of about 17,000 uniformed and civilian personnel. It works to support peace consolidation, assist in protecting civilians, create suitable conditions for the delivery of humanitarian

assistance, among other tasks. As part of its women, peace and security efforts, it is actively working to increase women's participation in political processes.

## Central African Republic

CAR has suffered more than six years of conflict. The initial trigger was the Séléka armed opposition entering the capital city Bangui in March 2013 in opposition to then-President François Bozizé and effectively seizing control of the country. Security conditions deteriorated further in December when clashes erupted between various armed groups. This fighting persists and has been further complicated by the fragmentation and reforming of alliances.

In response, the UN Security Council established the UN Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in April 2014. It was mandated to protect civilians, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and support national efforts to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate former combatants and armed elements.

In February 2019, the Government and 14 armed groups signed a peace agreement which has led to fewer direct clashes. The UN, the African Union and others are cooperating in support of the agreement to end violence against civilians, strengthen the extension of state authority and bring social and economic development to the country.

With approximately 14,000 peacekeepers, MINUSCA continues to support the implementation of the peace deal and its other mandated tasks. However, insecurity and attacks against civilians, humanitarians, and UN peacekeeping forces continue. More than 600,000 people are internally displaced, and thousands have been killed.

## Libya

The ongoing conflict in Libya began in 2011 after the collapse of Muammar Gaddafi's regime and centres mostly around the control of territory and oil fields.

Fighting has been between the House of Representatives' (HoR) which came into office in 2014 and controls eastern and southern Libya and its Tripoli-based rival, the General National Congress (GNC). In December 2015, the warring parties signed the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), committing to a Government of National Accord (GNA). However, the GNA, which is recognised by the UN, continues to face opposition from within the HoR and GNC.

In April 2019, Khalifa Haftar, the head of the self-styled Libyan National Army, which controls much of the countryside, launched an attack on Tripoli. About 1,000 people were reported to have been killed in that attack and more than 128,000 displaced since the latest round of the conflict began in April. A UN arms embargo continues to be breached with both sides drawing on international support for weapons.

The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) was established in September 2011 to assist the country's transitional authorities in their post-conflict efforts. This includes support to implementation of the LPA and future phases of the transition process.

## Nigeria

The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria that began in 2009 has extended to neighbouring countries, including Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Currently led by Abubakar Shekau, the jihadist group's initial objective was to confront what it perceived as the westernization of Nigerian culture. In 2015, Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or ISIS, rebranding his organisation as the Islamic State in West Africa.

More than 30,000 people have been killed in Nigeria's long-running conflict with Boko Haram. About two million people have fled their homes and another 22,000 are missing, believed to have been conscripted. In April 2014, the group abducted 276 girls from a school in Chibok, a village in Borno State, northeast Nigeria. A few managed to escape or be rescued. More than 112 girls remain missing.

A multinational joint task force of about 10,500 troops from



Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria is currently battling the insurgency.

## Mali

In 2012, the Tuareg separatist rebels of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawa (MNLA) conquered northern Mali. Prior to this, a sizable number of Tuareg rebels had moved to Libya to join Muammar Gaddafi's fighting forces. They returned with sophisticated weapons to join the 2012 attack on northern Mali after the fall of Gaddafi's government.

Since then several other armed groups emerged or splintered off from existing ones with different interests related to self-determination and political and socio-economic grievances. The Malian government and two coalitions of these armed groups – the Plateforme and Coordination – signed the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in May 2015. However, fighting continues with armed Islamist groups attacking civilians, state counterterrorism actions, and intercommunal violence.

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established in April 2013 to support political processes and bolster security in the country. The 15,000 uniformed and civilian personnel work to support the implementation of the peace agreement and reduce violence. They also protect civilians, support the re-establishment of state institutions and basic services, and support the cantonment, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of armed groups. MINUSMA is one of the UN's most challenging operations and it has suffered significant casualties in recent years.

## Somalia

The Somali civil war began in 1991 when the government of President Siad Barre was overthrown. Armed groups started competing for power. Without a central administration, Somalia became a failed state, with rival warlords and different groups controlling the capital Mogadishu and other southern parts of the country.

The Al-Shabaab militant group emerged as an offshoot of the Islamic Courts Union which controlled Mogadishu in 2006, while a transitional federal government was in exile in Kenya. Ethiopian forces routed the courts union, paving the way for the government in exile to return home. Al Shabaab carried out attacks against the government, prompting the deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007.

In 2012, a new federal government was constituted. The same year Al-Shabaab declared allegiance to the militant group al-Qaeda. Fighting between armed Islamist groups and pro-government forces has led to the deaths of thousands of civilians and the displacement of over two million people. Despite gains against the group, Al-Shabaab insurgents continue to launch sporadic attacks against civilians and the government.

The UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM) provides policy advice to the Somali government and AMISOM on security sector reforms, disengaging combatants, rule of law, among other issues. Furthermore, UNSAM is helping build the Federal Government's capacity to promote respect for human rights and women's empowerment, promote child protection, and prevent conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/>

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# World Bank Group announces up to \$12 Billion

## -Immediate Support for COVID-19 Country Response

The World Bank Group Wednesday announced an initial package of US\$12 billion in immediate support to assist countries coping with the health and economic impacts

lessen the tragic impacts posed by the COVID-19 (coronavirus).

Through this new fast track package, the World Bank Group will help developing countries strengthen health systems, including better access to

economies. The financial package, with financing drawn from across IDA, IBRD and IFC, will be globally coordinated to support country-based responses.

The COVID-19 support package will make available initial crisis resources of up to \$12 billion in financing – \$8 billion of which is new – on a fast track basis. This comprises up to \$2.7 billion new financing from IBRD; \$1.3 billion from IDA, complemented by reprioritization of \$2 billion of the Bank's existing portfolio; and \$6 billion from IFC, including \$2 billion from existing trade facilities. It will also include policy advice and technical assistance drawing on global expertise and country-level knowledge.

"We are working to provide a fast, flexible response based on developing country needs in dealing with the spread of COVID-19," said World Bank Group President David Malpass. "This includes emergency financing, policy advice, and technical assistance, building on the World Bank Group's existing instruments and expertise to help countries respond to the crisis."

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7



of COVID-19 as it reaches more than 60 countries.

The Bank said the financing is designed to help member countries take effective action to respond to and, where possible,

health services to safeguard people from the epidemic, strengthen disease surveillance, bolster public health interventions, and work with the private sector to reduce the impact on

# Nyenabo chairs GAAB in Brussels

The Head of the Liberian Delegation to the Permanent Mission of the African Union headed by Dr. Isaac W. Nyenabo II was on Wednesday March 4, appointed as Chairman for the period of three (3) months on a rotational basis of the African Group of Ambassadors (GAAB).

The three months tenure of Amb. Nyenabo commences from March 4 through June 4, 2020, with Algeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, São Tomé and Príncipe, South

concerning the next AU-EU Ministerial meeting in Kigali (10th College-to-College) report, State of play on the ACP-EU Post-2020 Cotonou negotiations (African Regional Protocol), Preparation for the upcoming celebration of Africa Day 2020 and The European Development Days.

In his remark, Ambassador Nyenabo expressed warm appreciation and gratitude to the 55 member states of the African Union in Brussels for the opportunity given him to serve as Chair of the Group. He, however, assured his Colleagues President George



Africa, Togo, Uganda serving as Vice-Chairpersons of the Bureau of African Ambassadors.

According to a dispatch from Brussels, Amb. Nyenabo replaces his Kenyan counterpart, H.E Joshua MUGODO (Outgoing Chairperson) whose tour of duty as Chair of the group came to end during the last term.

The incoming Chairman will consider the outcomes of 33rd Summit of the African Union held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 6-10 February 2020; issues

Manneh Weah, President of Liberia commitment to Multilateralism, Regional Integration, effective solidarity, and promotion of Peace. For his part, the outgoing Chairman, Amb. Joshua MUGODO congratulated Amb. Nyenabo on his ascendency and presented the activity report of GAAB for the period.

The African Group of Ambassadors comprises of all diplomatic Missions of all AU Member State accredited to Brussels.

# Global Fund Issues New Guidance in Response to COVID-19

The Global Fund announced today new guidance to enable countries to strengthen their response to the new coronavirus, COVID-19, by using existing grants in a swift, nimble and pragmatic way. Working within its mandate to fight HIV, TB and malaria and to strengthen systems for health, the Global Fund is encouraging countries to reprogram savings from existing grants and to redeploy underutilized resources to mitigate the potential negative consequences of COVID-19 on health and health systems. In exceptional cases, countries may be able to reprogram funding from existing grants to COVID-19 response.

"As was the case with Ebola, the Global Fund is committed to a pragmatic and flexible approach in supporting countries in the fight against COVID-19," said Peter Sands, Executive



Director of the Global Fund. "Our priority is to ensure continuity of lifesaving programs to end HIV, TB and malaria. However, COVID-19 could knock us off track. People infected with HIV, TB and malaria could prove more vulnerable to the new virus

given that their immune systems are already under strain."

Strong health systems are critical to help countries respond to COVID-19, and to reinforce health security. The Global Fund is the largest multilateral provider of

grants to strengthen health systems, investing over \$1 billion a year in key components such as community health workers, disease surveillance systems, supply chains, laboratory networks.

COVID-19 could derail progress on HIV, TB and malaria, through disruption to treatment or other interventions or supply chains of critical medicines and medical supplies. Experience from the 2015 Ebola outbreak

in West Africa suggests that unless mitigating action is taken, additional deaths from existing diseases such as malaria can be at least as high as those from the outbreak itself.

The Global Fund strongly encourages countries to consider and take prompt action under WHO guidance. Particular attention should be given to health worker protection, communication to

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7

**MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS**

**NPHIL express concerns over Dr. Nyan's claims**

The National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) attention has been drawn to an article circulating in both international and local media quoting a Liberian scientist, Dr. Dougbah Nyan, that many laboratories in the United States have reported trouble with the Coronavirus test kits produced by the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "We are very concerned about the accuracy and other diagnostic characteristics of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Test-Kits sent to African countries during this outbreak", he asserted.

Dr. Nyan further indicated that "African countries using any of these faulty testing kits from the US CDC could be at very high risk of misdetection, and therefore possible spread of the virus in the population if positive cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) infections are missed. Some test kits presently used in Liberia were supplied by the US CDC to aid in monitoring the Coronavirus transmission which has already totaled over 80,000 cases worldwide and killed more than 2,500 people", the news article quoted Dr. Nyan.

The National Public Health Institute of Liberia says it has not received any test kits from the US Center for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) to test for COVID-19 as reported by Dr. Nyan. The National Reference Laboratory (NRL) a division under NPHIL has the capacity to test for COVID-19, but the test kits were donated by the World Health Organization (WHO). On March 2, 2020, the World Health Organization supplied 6



kits capable of performing 1000 reactions to test the COVID-19. These kits meet the highest International Standard as set by the WHO.

The Government of the Republic of Liberia through the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) and the Ministry of Health (MoH)

continues to step up its preparedness efforts to protect the country against COVID-19.

With the rapid spread of the virus worldwide, Liberia has reported no confirmed case of COVID-19. Heightened surveillance - monitoring various ports of entry (POEs) and precautionary observation mechanisms are in place as part of preparedness

measures.

NPHIL's Acting Director General, Dr. Mosoka P. Fallah, has stressed the need for a national concerted effort as Liberia prepare against the virus.

**Liberia hails Ghana 63rd Independence anniversary**

President George Manneh Weah has congratulated the Government and people of the Republic of Ghana on the occasion commemorating the

63rd Independence Anniversary of that country.

According to a Foreign Ministry release, President Weah, on behalf of Liberia, and in his own name, conveyed

warmest congratulations and best wishes to President Nana Akufo-Addo, and through him, to the Government and people of Ghana, as they celebrate this historic milestone.

The Liberian President further expressed confidence that as the people of Ghana commemorate this historic event, the cordial ties of friendship and cooperation subsisting between Liberia and Ghana will be further strengthened in the spirit of African Solidarity.

President Weah also assured his Ghanaian counterpart of the two states' continuous collaboration in furtherance of the principles of the Economic Community of West African States, (ECOWAS), the African Union and the United Nations, for the promotion of regional and global peace and security.

The Liberian President



**World Bank Group**

Cont'd from page 6

The financial package will provide grants and low-interest loans from IDA for low income countries and loans from IBRD for middle income countries, using all of the Bank's operational instruments with processing accelerated on a fast track basis. International Finance Corporation, the World Bank Group's private sector arm, will provide its clients with the necessary support to continue operating and to sustain jobs.

The World Bank support will cover a range of interventions to strengthen health services and primary health care, bolster disease monitoring and reporting, train front line health workers, encourage community engagement to maintain public trust, and improve access to treatment for the poorest patients. The Bank will also provide policy and technical advice to ensure countries can access global expertise.

IFC will work with commercial bank clients to expand trade finance and

working capital lines. IFC will also directly support its corporate clients - with a focus on strategic sectors including medical equipment and pharmaceuticals - to sustain supply chains and limit downside risks. These solutions will leverage the lessons learned from similar events in the past with a goal to minimize the negative economic and social impacts of COVID-19 globally.

Countries face different levels of risk and vulnerability to COVID-19, and will require different levels of support. The Bank Group support will prioritize the poorest countries and those at high risk with low capacity. As the spread of COVID-19 and its impact continues to evolve, the World Bank Group will adapt its approach and resources as needed.

The World Bank Group is actively engaged with international institutions and country authorities to help coordinate the global response. -Press release

**Global Fund Issues**

Cont'd from page 6

affected communities, maintenance of essential services, supply chain coordination, early replenishment of stocks, disinfection of assets, and waste management.

Additional activities under the new COVID-19 guidelines include, but are not limited to, epidemic preparedness assessment, laboratory testing, sample transportation, use of surveillance infrastructure, infection control in health facilities, and information campaigns.

The Global Fund will deploy

a fast-track decision making process for COVID-19-related requests for support.

The Global Fund continues to work closely with partners at global, regional and country levels on COVID-19 preparedness and response, from resource mobilisation for CEPI (Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation), mobilising the private sector, securing the supply of vital medical products and expediting the development of diagnostics, to support WHO's overall leadership of the global response. -Press release

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then prayed that the Almighty God will continue to endow President Nana Akufo-Addo with abundant wisdom and

strength as he leads his compatriots to greater prosperity.

# Français

## Coronavirus : l'Afrique espère profiter des leçons d'Ebola

Pour faire face au coronavirus, les pays d'Afrique subsaharienne ne disposent que de fragiles systèmes de santé publique, mais ils peuvent s'appuyer sur l'expérience acquise au cours des précédentes épidémies d'Ebola en République démocratique du Congo et en Afrique de l'Ouest.

En 2014-2016, plus de 11.000 personnes sont mortes en Guinée, au Liberia et en Sierra Leone essentiellement, pendant la pire épidémie d'Ebola jamais enregistrée. A l'époque, l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS) avait été accusée de retard dans sa réponse.

Depuis le début de l'épidémie de coronavirus

partie de Chine, qui a déjà fait plus de 3.000 morts dans le monde, seuls deux cas ont été officiellement confirmés en Afrique subsaharienne, au Nigeria la semaine dernière et au Sénégal lundi. Quelques cas ont aussi été enregistrés dans le nord du continent.

"Les épidémies d'Ebola ont permis aux pays (africains) d'avoir des bases sur lesquelles on s'appuie pour la préparation au Covid-19", affirme Michel Yao, joint par l'AFP à Dakar.

Le directeur Afrique des programmes d'urgence de l'OMS cite la mise en place de systèmes de détection aux frontières des cas suspects, via une prise de température, et de structures d'isolement et de traitement dans les aéroports.

"Les ministères de la Santé ont maintenant l'obligation d'appliquer le Règlement sanitaire international (RSI, remontant à 2005), c'est-à-dire être en mesure de faire remonter précocement les

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



## Un défenseur du tribunal des crimes de guerre au Libéria arrêté par L'EPS

Le principal militant pour la création d'un Tribunal de crimes de guerre et des crimes économiques pour le Libéria a été arrêté et passé à tabac par des agents de la garde présidentielle.

M. Emmanuel Savice a été pris à partie par des agents de The Executive Protection Service (EPS) lors d'une manifestation devant le ministère des Affaires étrangères, où le président George Manneh Weah a

installé son bureau temporaire.

M. Savice était à la tête d'un groupe de manifestants sous la bannière de Libériens unis pour la justice et la responsabilité qui s'étaient réunis devant le palais de l'Assemblée Nationale au Capitole pour saisir le parlement libérien pour la création d'un tribunal de guerre et des crimes économiques. Le groupe s'est rendu par la suite au ministère des Affaires étrangères pour faire échos de

leurs dolences. C'est là que M. Savice a été pris à partie par les agents de l'EPS, puis remis à la police nationale du Libéria.

C'est la troisième fois que l'organisation organise une marche pacifique pour exiger la création d'un tribunal des crimes de guerre et des crimes économiques afin de mettre fin à la culture d'impunité qui règne en maître absolu dans le pays.

M. Savice et ses camarades avaient présenté leur pétition à l'Assemblée nationale pacifiquement et se sont dirigés vers le ministère des Affaires étrangères où ils ont été arrêtés par des agents de l'EPS.

Quelques instants avant devant le bâtiment de l'Assemblée législative, M. Savice avait accusé les parlementaires de n'avoir fait en faveur de la création du tribunal des crimes de guerre et des crimes économiques, « c'est pourquoi les manifestants ont décidé de mener une campagne pour que les auteurs des crimes odieux commis pendant la guerre civile libérienne soient

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



## Le budget national souffre d'un déficit de 20 millions de dollars

Le gouvernement du Libéria est frappé par un déficit budgétaire de 20 millions de dollars américains dans une économie déjà en difficulté.

Déjà, le ministère des Finances et de la Planification du développement ainsi que l'équipe technique du pouvoir législatif libérien, par la voix des comités conjoints législatifs et sénatoriaux sur les voies, les moyens, les finances et le budget des deux chambres ont commencé à revoir le budget national 2019/20 en raison d'un manque à gagner.

Les autorités du ministère des Finances et de la Planification du développement et des deux chambres du parlement élaborent actuellement des détails techniques pour modifier les priorités nationales afin d'ajuster le budget et résoudre les difficultés économiques auxquelles le pays est

La source a en outre rapporté que les autorités fiscales libériennes (LRA) et d'autres organismes générateurs de revenus travaillaient sans relâche pour que les 530.000USD prévus dans le budget national actuel soient collectés.

«La prévision du budget signifie que les domaines qui étaient auparavant capturés avec beaucoup d'attention financière seront désormais réduits pour s'adapter aux réalités actuelles et que le coup d'environ 20 millions de dollars US est un coup dur pour l'économie déjà en difficulté », a déclaré la source par téléphone portable.

Avec ce déficit, le gouvernement, avec la permission de l'Assemblée législative libérienne, révisera les points focaux du budget national 2019/20 et en redirigera certains vers des domaines qui peuvent consommer moins d'argent, mais les domaines prioritaires



confronté.

Selon une source, il sera question de remédier aux lacunes importantes qui ont été observées dans le processus budgétisation et le contrôle des dépenses dans les mois à venir.

« Au cours des dernières semaines, il est devenu clair qu'un nombre important de contrats routiers étaient mis en œuvre sans tenir compte du budget. Les autorités entament des audits des aspects financiers et techniques de ces projets et travaillent avec les parties prenantes concernées pour faire en sorte que les dépenses hors budget ne se reproduira plus », a dit la source.

Bien qu'aucune raison n'ait encore été fournie pour le manque à gagner, on soupçonne que le gouvernement n'a pas généré les revenus nécessaires prévus par les agences génératrices de revenus.

vitaux, y compris les salaires et les avantages sociaux, seront conservés.

Les autorités du ministère des Finances et de la Planification du développement et de l'Assemblée législative libérienne ne semblent pas disposées à présent à commenter la spéculation. Mais dans quelques jours, le gouvernement devrait introduire le processus de prévision à la Chambre des représentants.

C'est le plus gros déficit que l'administration Weah connaisse. Le dernier exercice budgétaire, le gouvernement a enregistré un manque à gagner de 8,2 millions de dollars américains, après avoir omis de collecter 31 millions de dollars américains prévus pour les frais du Fonds routier national pour soutenir le budget budgétaire 2018/2019.



# Français

## Coronavirus :

épidémies et les cas, via le ministère, au niveau de l'OMS", a indiqué sur RFI le directeur des Affaires internationales de l'Institut Pasteur, Pierre-Marie Girard.

"Avec l'épidémie d'Ebola, on peut partir du principe que les systèmes de santé, les plateformes de coopération et de communication et le +monitoring+ (suivi des cas) se sont développés", confirme Dorian Job, médecin basé à Dakar, responsable de programmes pour MSF aux Burkina, Niger, Nigeria et Cameroun.

"Il y a une meilleure surveillance, un meilleur suivi et cela va certainement aider", ajoute-t-il.

- 78 dollars -

Confrontés à des maladies multiples (paludisme, choléra, rougeole...), les pays africains se caractérisent par des systèmes de santé publique très précaires.

D'après la Banque mondiale, les dépenses de santé s'élevaient en 2016 à 78 dollars par habitant en Afrique subsaharienne, pour une moyenne mondiale de 1.026 dollars (avec des pointes à 9.351 dollars en Amérique du nord, et 3.846 dans l'Union européenne).

Le coronavirus arrive au moment où une autre "urgence de santé publique de portée internationale" frappe le continent: une nouvelle épidémie d'Ebola a en effet tué 2.264 personnes depuis août 2018 dans l'est de la République démocratique du Congo.

Aucun nouveau cas n'a été enregistré depuis près de deux semaines, mais les autorités doivent encore

attendre 42 jours au total sans nouveaux cas pour déclarer la fin de l'épidémie.

Déjà mobilisées par Ebola, les autorités sanitaires congolaises prennent, pour prévenir l'arrivée du coronavirus, la température des voyageurs dès leur descente d'avion à l'aéroport de Kinshasa, ou quand ils traversent le fleuve Congo pour Brazzaville, la capitale du Congo voisin.

"Les mesures que nous avons prises pour lutter contre Ebola sont les mêmes que celles que nous avons prises contre le coronavirus, à savoir l'hygiène et le lavage des mains", détaille le professeur congolais Jean-Jacques Muyembe, chef de la riposte anti-Ebola.

Avec l'aide financière du Japon, Kinshasa vient aussi d'inaugurer un "centre de diagnostic et de recherche" au sein de son Institut national de recherche biologique (INRB).

Début février, seuls l'Afrique du Sud et le Sénégal disposaient de laboratoires pour tester des cas présumés de coronavirus. L'OMS a fourni depuis des équipements à une quarantaine de pays.

En Afrique de l'Ouest, les systèmes de santé sont encore marqués par la plus grave épidémie d'Ebola de l'histoire.

"Notre préparation est meilleure du fait des leçons apprises pendant la crise Ebola", affirme au Liberia le directeur général de l'Institut national de santé public, Mosoka P. Fallah.

"La population veut nous donner des informations, explique-t-il. Nous avons même plus de données que prévu, car les Libériens ont encore l'expérience d'Ebola en tête".

## Un défenseur du tribunal

traduits en justice afin qu'ils répondent de leurs actes.

Les agents de la garde présidentielle ont confisqué des appareils photo, des téléphones portables et d'autres gadgets des journalistes qui couvraient l'événement. Parmi les manifestants figurait l'ex-seigneur de guerre, Joshua Milton Blayee, communément appelé «Butt Naked», devenu aujourd'hui un évangéliste.

M. Blayee a déclaré qu'il n'avait pas témoigné devant la Commission de vérité et réconciliation en 2008 en prévision de l'amnistie. Il s'est dit convaincu en tant que Chrétien qu'aucun péché ne reste impuni et fait valoir que

seule la vérité libère. C'est pourquoi il a choisi la voie de la vérité en tant que croyant et fidèle chrétien.

Il a dit avoir vu la violence devenir récurrente dans le pays, ce en raison de la culture d'impunité que continuent de promouvoir les Libériens.

L'ex-seigneur de guerre, qui est largement connu pour avoir prétendument combattu sur le champ de bataille complètement nu, a ajouté que les libériens ne pourront jouir de la vraie liberté que s'ils optent pour la justice. Pour lui, seule la création d'un tribunal de crime de guerre peut mettre fin à la violence dans le pays.

## COMMENTAIRE

Par Toyin Saraki

### Les conséquences des disparités fondées sur le genre sur le secteur de la santé

**A**BUJA - Nous n'avons plus que dix ans devant nous pour atteindre les objectifs de développement durable (ODD) des Nations Unies - et pour être honnête, nous sommes vraiment loin du compte. L'une des principales raisons à cela, c'est que les femmes restent, pour la plupart d'entre elles, exclues des processus de décision, ce qui conduit à des politiques qui n'apportent pas aux femmes le soutien dont elles ont besoin pour s'épanouir - sinon pour survivre. Cette dynamique est particulièrement évidente dans le secteur de la santé.

Les femmes représentent environ 70 % de la main-d'œuvre mondiale dans le secteur de la santé et occupent la majorité des emplois les plus difficiles, les plus dangereux et les plus demandeurs en main-d'œuvre. Pourtant, elles ne détiennent que 25 % des postes de cadres du secteur de la santé et sont rarement représentées adéquatement dans l'élaboration des politiques. Au lieu de cela, on s'attend souvent à ce qu'elles restent des acteurs passifs, trouvant tranquillement des moyens de faire leur travail dans des circonstances difficiles, voire impossibles.

Un témoignage relatant la réalité des professionnelles de santé a été publié dans une lettre récemment adressée à la revue médicale The Lancet par deux infirmières chinoises décrivant les conditions auxquelles elles et leurs collègues sont confrontées sur la ligne de front de la bataille contre le nouveau coronavirus COVID-19, à son épice de Wuhan, en Chine. C'est peut-être un cas extrême (et la lettre a maintenant été retirée du fait qu'il n'était pas un témoignage de première main), mais les difficultés décrites, allant de la pénurie en matériels de protection, à la surcharge chronique et à l'épuisement, ne sont que trop familières pour les professionnels de santé à travers le monde.

De telles conditions rendent les emplois essentiels du secteur de santé peu attrayants, contribuant ainsi à de graves pénuries de main-d'œuvre dans le monde entier. L'Organisation mondiale de la santé estime que, pour tous les pays, la mise en œuvre de l'ODD 3 (« assurer une vie saine et promouvoir le bien-être pour tous les âges »), neuf millions d'infirmières et de sages-femmes supplémentaires seront nécessaires à l'échelle mondiale d'ici 2030.

Comblé ce déficit est une affaire de vie ou de mort. Par exemple, la présence de sages-femmes fait souvent la différence entre un accouchement sûr et une mortalité néonatale ou maternelle. Le manque d'accès à ces sages-femmes - en particulier pour les populations vulnérables, comme les habitants pauvres des zones rurales - est une raison majeure pour laquelle les deux tiers de tous les décès maternels se produisent en Afrique subsaharienne. L'OMS estime que des soins adéquats par des sages-femmes (notamment la planification familiale) pourraient prévenir 83 % de tous les décès maternels, de la mortalité et de la mort néonatale.

Mais la mortalité infantile et maternelle ne se limitent certainement pas aux pays en développement. Aux États-Unis, le taux de mortalité maternelle a en fait augmenté ces dernières décennies, passant de 7,2 décès pour 100 000 naissances vivantes en 1987 à 16,9 décès pour 100 000 naissances vivantes en 2016. Plus de la moitié de ces décès auraient pu être évités si les mères avaient mieux compris l'importance de la qualité des soins prénataux et post-partum - et si elles y avaient accès plus facilement.

Il existe une dimension raciale évidente à cette tendance troublante. Aux États-Unis, une femme noire court un risque 3 à 4 fois plus grand qu'une femme blanche de mourir de complications durant la grossesse. Au Royaume-Uni, ce facteur est cinq fois plus élevé. Bien que cette différence puisse s'expliquer en partie par des complications de santé rencontrées par les femmes noires, le biais racial joue également un rôle. Les femmes noires témoignent souvent qu'elles ont l'impression de ne pas être prises au sérieux par les professionnels de santé.

Les conséquences sanitaires découlant de cette non-écoute des femmes vont encore plus loin. Les enfants nés de mères en bonne santé ont plus de chances de rester en meilleure santé tout au long de leur vie. Étant donné qu'une femme est plus susceptible d'entrer en rapport avec le secteur de la santé durant la grossesse, le soutien d'une sage-femme ou d'une infirmière peut faire entrer toute la famille d'une femme dans le système de soins de santé.

Dans le but de reconnaître officiellement leur contribution vitale au secteur de la santé, l'OMS a désigné 2020 comme l'Année internationale des sages-femmes et du personnel infirmier. Mais non contents de célébrer le travail acharné des sages-femmes et du personnel infirmier, nous devons chercher à corriger les inégalités structurelles qui excluent les femmes des postes de direction dans ces professions. C'est un objectif clé de la prochaine conférence Women in Dev - une initiative dirigée par les femmes, axée sur les femmes et qui mérite notre soutien à tous.

Des pénuries de main-d'œuvre aux préjugés raciaux, les obstacles à la réalisation des ODD 3 sont tout aussi divers qu'ils sont importants. Mais les chances de succès sont nettement meilleures si nous écoutons ceux qui comprennent la situation sur le terrain et si nous nous employons à améliorer l'inclusion à tous les niveaux, en tenant compte des conditions socio-économiques variables. Cela nécessitera un changement fondamental de mentalité, les publics et les décideurs politiques reconnaissant que les femmes - en tant qu'infirmières, sages-femmes et mères - sont souvent les gardiennes de la santé.

Une décennie de progrès rapide vers l'ODD 3 est possible. Mais les femmes doivent être aux commandes.

## FEATURE

By Kingsley L. Ighobor

## First UK-Africa Investment Summit signals post-Brexit plans for continent

The British government promoted the first ever UK-Africa Investment Summit held in London in January 2020 as an opportunity to “showcase and promote the breadth and quality of investment opportunities across Africa.”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was clear on why the event was crucial for his country at this particular time: “Africa is the future and the UK has a huge and active role to play in that future,” he said.

Some 15 African heads of state and governments participated, including presidents Abdel Fatah al-Sisi of Egypt, Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana and Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, along with dozens of leaders of business and international institutions.

South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa withdrew his participation a few days to the summit due to domestic commitments.

At the opening, the British Prime Minister touted Africa’s potential, saying that more than half the world’s 15 fastest-growing economies were in Africa and that “two-thirds of African economies are expanding faster than the global average.”

While the summit also covered the often-stated need to transform this potential into real socio-economic development, the UK’s strategic intent was clear to all, which is to fill the gap—or the loss—that may result from it leaving the European Union at the end of January.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) President Akinwumi Adesina said, to great applause, that the UK need not “get scared of Brexit”. “You can exit and look the other way and Africa will be there,” said Mr. Adesina.

The UK hopes to reverse its dwindling trade with Africa, which fell from 4.2% of its total trade in 2012 to just 2% or \$46 billion in 2018. To put that in perspective, China’s 2018 trade with Africa was \$204 billion, according to the country’s Ministry of Commerce.

With Africa’s new continental free trade area expected to kick off in July 2020, African participants at the summit asked for more robust pan-African deals on goods and services, while urging the UK to do better than the EU’s stringent Economic Partnership Agreements with subregions in Africa.

Unlike the EU, the UK signaled a willingness to eliminate rigid rules of origin on products to allow Africans to easily export to the UK.

It also pledged some \$1.9 billion worth of projects, and signed infrastructure deals with Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and Uganda and the AfDB.

Mr. Johnson also promised a change to the UK’s immigration laws to make it “fairer and more equal between all our global friends and partners, treating people the same wherever they come from.

“By putting people before passports, we will be able to attract the best talent from around the world, wherever they may be,” he added, seeming to address concerns by Africans on the difficulties in acquiring British visas.

The summit is the latest in a long line of similar high-level geo-strategic engagements with Africa.

Japan launched its summit with Africa dubbed the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993; China began organising its version in 2006—the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC); and since 2008, India organises every three years the India-Africa Forum Summit.

In October 2019, the first-ever Russia-Africa summit took place, and in June 2020 France will host the 28th edition of the Africa-France Summit.

In what it called a new scramble for Africa, The Economist advises: “African leaders do not have to choose sides, as they did during the Cold War. They can do business with Western democracies and also with China and Russia—and anyone else with something to offer.”

For the longer term, however, the UK-Africa partnership will hinge on the outcome of trade talks that are expected to begin in February 2020.

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/>

## SEGAL takes step to prevent coronavirus

### -Praises govt. for robust response

By Emmanuel Mondaye

As the Coronavirus disease continues to claim lives worldwide, the management of one of Liberia’s largest private security firm, Security Expert Guard Agency of Liberia (SEGAL) says it has taken measures to protect its employees and staff from the epidemic.

Though Liberia does not have a case of Coronavirus, SEGAL says it has introduced regular hand washing and other health related practices that will help reduce the rate of infection.

Speaking to this paper at his office in

ports of entry in Liberia to check people entering the country.

Mr. Cyrus who has just returned to the country following a business trip abroad, says he witnessed travelers in a West African Country being requested to stand in a strict line to wash hands, take their temperature and at the same time displaying their passports to health authorities for verification.

He indicates further that



Sinkor, Wednesday, 4 March SEGAL Chief Executive Officer and General Manager, Momo T. Cyrus, disclosed the company has placed employees on the alert as a means of creating awareness for the disease ahead in case of any outbreak.

He notes that as a country with weak health system, it is necessary for employees of his institution to adhere to safety rules and guidelines set by the Government of Liberia (GOL).

The SEGAL boss lauds the government of President George Manneh Weah for the robust response by deploying health workers to all

such strong measures by the Government of Liberia are a positive gesture in preventing the epidemic from entering the country.

He promises to stand by the government by ensuring strict adherence to all measures instituted to prevent the virus from entering the country.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

## No rice shortage

Cont’d from back page

can also sustain the local market for additional 8 months.

The figures also suggest that the local rice market will remain in tight for over a year, contrary to speculations and rumors.

During separate interactive discussions with reporters at the Freeport of Monrovia, the Managing Director of UCI, Mr. Wahab Dhaini, the General Manager of SWAT, Mr. Aziz Ezzeddine, the Ware House Manager of K and K, Mr. Mustapha Saleh, and the Import Manager of Fouani Brothers, Suresh Soni, denied reports about stepping up the price of rice.

“As we speak, the price of the commodity remains stable at \$US 13.00 and \$US 10.00, depending on the brand,” said one of the importers during an exclusive interview with the press.

They also assured the Liberian government of their commitment to upholding the Buffer Stock Agreement, as part of efforts to keep the rice mark stable and reliable.

Meanwhile Commerce and Industry

Minister, Professor Wilson K. Tarpeh, speaking to the team of journalists said, the tour was necessary to put to rest, increasing rumors that rice importers had increased the price of the commodity on the Liberian market and to also bring the media face-to-face with importers that are involved in the rice business.

Prof. Tarpeh said Liberians consume an average of 550,000 bags of rice per month depending on the season; noting that the consumption is higher during the Rainy season.

He reiterated government’s commitment to ensuring essential commodities are always available on the local market at affordable prices. —*Press Release*

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# IMF dishes out \$50 billion to fight Coronavirus

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has announced a US\$50 billion package to help combat the deadly Coronavirus which has now affected 93,000 people globally with over 3100 deaths.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva at a Joint Press Conference Wednesday with the World Bank Group President David Malpass said the IMF is making available about \$50 billion through its rapid-disbursing emergency financing facilities for low income and emerging market countries that could potentially seek support.

The IMF boss said of this amount, \$10 billion is available at zero interest for the poorest members through the Rapid Credit Facility.

Ms. Georgieva explained that the rate at which the coronavirus is spreading globally is very serious and could well get worse. "This affects us all," she added.

The IMF boss indicated that the move to make available the initial amount stem from the fear of the potential impact the COVID-19 will have on the global economy.

"Second, to concentrate on a framework for how to think about the shock and



how we - the membership, the Fund, and other global institutions - can support those affected by this crisis in an effective and coordinated way; and Third, in that spirit of cooperation to learn from each other, especially from those most exposed to the outbreak," she said.

The IMF announcement coincides with that of the World Bank's Group 12 billion initial package.

Excerpts of the IMF boss statement

**What We Know**

- We know that the disease is spreading quickly. With over one-third of our membership affected directly, this is no

longer a regional issue - it is a global problem calling for a global response.

- We also know that it will eventually retreat, but we don't know how fast this will happen.

- We know that this shock is somewhat unusual as it affects significant elements of both supply and demand:

- Supply will be disrupted due to morbidity and mortality, but also the containment efforts that restrict mobility and higher costs of doing business due to restricted supply chains and a tightening of credit.

- Demand will also fall due to higher uncertainty,

increased precautionary behavior, containment efforts, and rising financial costs that reduce the ability to spend.

- These effects will spill over across borders.

- Experience suggests that about one-third of the economic losses from the disease will be direct costs: from loss of life, workplace closures, and quarantines. The remaining two-thirds will be indirect, reflecting a retrenchment in consumer confidence and business behavior and a tightening in financial markets.

- The good news is that financial systems are more resilient than before the Global Financial Crisis. However, our biggest challenge right now is handling uncertainty.

- Under any scenario, global growth in 2020 will drop below last year's level. How far it will fall, and for how long, is difficult to predict, and would depend on the epidemic, but also on the timeliness and effectiveness of our actions.

- This is particularly challenging for countries with weaker health systems and response capacity—calling for a global coordination mechanism to accelerate the recovery of demand and supply.

**How to Respond at the Member Level**

- The number one priority in terms of fiscal response is ensuring front-line health-related spending to protect people's wellbeing, take care of the sick, and slow the spread of the virus. I can't emphasize enough the urgency of stepping up health-related measures—and the need to ensure the production of medical supplies so that supply is at par with demand.

- Second, macro-financial policy actions may be required to tackle the supply and demand shocks that

I mentioned above. The aim should "no regret" actions that shorten and soften the economic impact. They should be timely and targeted to the sectors, businesses and households hardest hit.

- A generalized weakening in demand through confidence and spillover channels—including trade and tourism, commodity prices, and tighter financial conditions—would call for an additional policy response to support demand and ensure an adequate supply of credit.

- Third, adequate liquidity will also be needed to offset financial stability risks.

- In short: the situation is evolving rapidly, and we should

stand ready to provide a more forceful, coordinated response if conditions require it. Along these lines, I welcome the statement from the G7 yesterday that they are ready to cooperate further on timely and effective measures.

**How the Fund Can Help**

- For our part, the Fund is ready to help its membership.

- There are many members at risk, including those with weak health systems, inadequate policy space, commodity exporters exposed to terms-of-trade shocks, and others that are particularly vulnerable to spillovers.

- I am particularly concerned about our low-income and more vulnerable members - these countries may see financing needs rise rapidly as the economic and human cost of the virus escalates.

- Our staff are currently working on identifying vulnerable countries and estimating potential financing needs should the situation deteriorate further.

- The Fund has resources available to support the membership:

- Thanks to the generosity of our shareholders, we have about \$1 trillion in overall lending capacity.

- For low-income countries, we have rapid-disbursing emergency financing of up to \$10 billion (50 percent of quota of eligible members) that can be accessed without a full-fledged IMF program.

- Other members can access emergency financing through the Rapid Financing Instrument. This facility could provide about \$40 billion for emerging markets that could potentially approach us for financial support.

- We also have the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust - the CCRT - which provides eligible countries with up-front grants for relief on IMF debt service falling due. The CCRT proved to be effective during the 2014 Ebola outbreak, but is now underfunded with just over \$200 million available against possible needs of over \$1 billion. I called on member countries to help ensure that this facility is fully re-charged and ready for the current crisis.

**In Short**

- Our united message to the public is:

- The Fund is fully committed to supporting our member countries, particularly the most vulnerable;

- We have the tools to help; and

- We are coordinating closely with our partner institutions.

## Government special prosecutor quits

By Winston W. Parley

Special state prosecutor Cllr. Arthur T. Johnson says he has resigned as chairman of the Asset Investigation, Restitution and Recovery Team set up by the Government of Liberia to retrieve stolen public assets

He confirmed the information through mobile phone text exchanges with the Newdawn Newspaper on Wednesday, 4 March without giving any further details as to why he has resigned.

But there are others suggesting here that Cllr. Johnson says he has resigned to avoid risking his career and reputation on grounds that his anticipation and perception about the fight against corruption are not achieving their objectives.

He is quoted in some reports to have alleged that he expected that there will be 'will' in the fight against corruption, but he has now realized that his belief is an illusion.

The Asset Investigation,

Restitution and Recovery Team which he headed is charged to investigate, retribute and recover funds that were allegedly embezzled or misapplied from government.

The Team works along with anti-graft institutions including the General Auditing Commission, (GAC) and the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC), using reports of these institutions to go after embezzled state resources to possibly have suspects retribute them.

During his work with the Asset Recovery Team, Cllr. Johnson and prosecutors from the Ministry of Justice have worked together to try major cases including ongoing prosecution of former Defense Ministry officials over the use of money deducted from the salaries of officers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) as compulsory savings for pension benefits.

Current Army Officials have testified in the case that President George Manneh Weah has committed his government to paying back the soldiers' compulsory savings, but prosecutors are holding the former officials to account.



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With **Emmanuel B. Juduh**

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# No rice shortage

## -MCI says 103,000 metric tons available



Recent speculations fear and rumors about rice shortage on the local market, have been laid to rest, as importers of the staple told journalists who toured warehouses there is sufficient rice on the market.

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the team of journalists was recently taken on a steered tour of warehouses of

Liberia's major rice importers at the Free Port of Monrovia, by Commerce officials led by Minister Wilson K. Tarpeh, along with Deputy Commerce Minister for Trade Services, A.E. Nyemah Wisner.

Based on both data from the rice importers and what was physically seen by the team of reporters during the tour, there is at least 103,000 Metric tons (4,120,000 bags of 25 Kg.), or about eight (8) months of

market demand.

The five major importers include Fouani Brothers; Fouta Corporation; K&K; Supplying West Africa Traders Incorporated (SWAT); and United Commodities Incorporated (UCI).

In addition to the above quantity, importers said they expect about 116,000 Metric Tons (4,640,000 25Kg. bags) between now and early May, with the first 35,000 Metric tons (1,400,000 25Kg. bags) arriving here on March 10.

On the allegation by Rep. Yekeh Kolubah, District 10 Montserrado County, the five businesses told reporters that the wholesale price of rice, which was reduced from US\$16.50 per bag, has been US\$13.00 per bag on the request of President Weah in March 2018, which has never changed. Taking into account the quantity of rice consumed by the country on a monthly basis, the 4,640 bags of rice

**▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 10**



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# Juventus vs Milan Postponed & Barcelona vs Napoli Clash in Doubt

The coronavirus outbreak continues to wreak havoc on football, with Juventus' Coppa Italia semi-final against Milan the latest fixture to be postponed. Barcelona's Champions League meeting with Napoli later this month is also at risk of being rearranged.

It was reported earlier in the week that Juve's game would go ahead - albeit with supporter restrictions in place. However, the club

announced on Tuesday evening that the fixture would be postponed as per directives issued by the Turin state government.

The postponement comes after a spate of cancellations in Serie A recently as Italy attempt to halt the spread of the disease. The government is even considering suspending all football for 30 days while the threat is contained.

Napoli's trip to the Camp Nou is also at risk of being postponed. According to Spain's



Health minister Salvador Illa, Valencia's game against Atalanta next Tuesday and Getafe's Europa league clash with Inter on March 19 could similarly face cancellation.

"These professional sports competition events, in which a high presence of fans coming from the coronavirus risk areas is expected, the recommendation is that they should be held behind closed doors," Illa said (via the Evening Standard).

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