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"He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live."
-Proverbs 15:27

VOL.9 NO. 191

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2019

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UL students reject Dr. Nelson

-disrupt normal classes



Flashback: UL Students Stage Violent Demonstration in Monrovia

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Continental News

Nigeria's 'torture houses' masquerading as schools

The private Islamic boarding school in Daura, northern Nigeria, was not somewhere you would want a child to stay for more than a few minutes, let alone months or years.

The Koranic and Rehabilitation Centre was one of series of institutions raided over the past month where parents have been sending troublesome children and young men who may be addicted to drugs or have committed petty crimes. But the raids have revealed them to be more akin to "torture houses", officials say.

The centre in Daura, President Muhammadu Buhari's hometown, was made up of two main buildings, one clean and well-built where children were taught the Koran.

Across the road was the centre's accommodation - a run-down single-storey compound, made up of five or six dark cells with barred windows and doors around a courtyard. The air was stuffy

and nauseating. Former students told us that up to 40 people were kept in chains in each 7-sq-m (75-sq-ft) cell. Filthy clothes and bedding littered the floor. Those who lived there were often forced to urinate and defecate with their chains on - in the same

place they ate and slept. They would be regularly taken out for beatings or to be raped by the staff.

"It was hell on earth," said Rabi Umar, a former detainee at the centre. Sixty-seven boys and men were freed from the facility. Police said there were

300 people on the school register, but many of them had escaped following a riot the previous weekend.

Over the past month about 600 people have been found to be living in such horrifying conditions: chained, starved and abused.

The first discovery was in late September in the Rigasa neighbourhood of Kaduna city in the north-west. Following a tip-off from a relative, the police found nearly 500 people, including children, detained in appalling conditions. Videos showed rescued students looking dazed, their legs shackled and their bodies covered in blisters. Some of them were pictured dangling from the ceiling. Others had their hands or feet chained to car wheel rims.

Hafsat Baba, Kaduna state's commissioner of human services and social development, told the BBC at the time the authorities

planned to identify all facilities of this type and close them down. She added that they would prosecute the owners of centres "found to be torturing children or holding people in these kind of horrific situations".

Ten days ago, for the first time women were also amongst those rescued - from another institution in Kaduna. This is unusual, according to Ms Baba, who added that these institutions seldom admit both sexes. As the raids continue and more details emerge, they have been met with public outrage, but these institutions were no secret.

Jaafar Jaafar, from online media platform the Daily Nigerian, says people who live there have always known. "I don't think there is any person who grows up in the north who can claim that they aren't aware of these schools - we all know they abuse children there." BBC



People rescued in Rigasa showed signs of being tortured

Zimbabwe condemns US sanctions on security minister

Zimbabwe's government has condemned the US' decision to slap sanctions on State Security Minister Owen Ncube over his alleged involvement in gross violations of human rights, state-owned The Herald reports.

The US State Department announced on Friday that it had credible information on

Mr Ncube's role in "state-sanctioned violence against peaceful protesters, and civil society, as well as against labour leaders and members of the opposition leaders in Zimbabwe".

The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted about the decision: The sanctions were announced as President Emmerson Mnangagwa led the country in an anti-sanctions

march in the capital, Harare. The Zimbabwean government says the sanctions have cost the country billions of dollars in lost revenue as it battles shortages of basic supplies such as fuel, power and water.

The sanctions were imposed since 2001 on top members of the ruling Zanu-PF party and the military. Minister of Information and Publicity Nick Mangwana told the Herald newspaper that the sanctions against his cabinet colleague are "a form of arbitrary justice".

"The US brands itself a fair country but everything we have seen regarding the sanctions issue has been nothing but obstinate arrogance. I advise anyone to check minister Owen Ncube's travel history and see whether the US has ever been part of his prime destinations," Mr Mangwana is quoted as saying.

The Southern African Development Community, a 16-member regional bloc, has urged the US and EU to lift the sanctions against Zimbabwe. BBC



Origin of modern humans 'traced to Botswana'

Scientists say they've pinpointed the homeland of all humans alive today to a region south of the Zambesi River. The area is now dominated by salt pans, but was once home to an enormous lake, which may have been our ancestral heartland 200,000 years ago.

Our ancestors settled for 70,000 years, until the local climate changed, researchers propose.

They began to move on as fertile green corridors opened up, paving the way for future migrations out of Africa. "It has been clear for some time that anatomically modern humans appeared in Africa roughly 200,000 years ago," said Prof Vanessa Hayes, a geneticist at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Australia. "What has been long debated is the exact location of this emergence and subsequent dispersal of our earliest ancestors." Prof Hayes' conclusions have drawn scepticism from other researchers in the field, however. The area in question is south of the Zambesi basin, in northern Botswana.

The researchers think our ancestors settled near Africa's

huge lake system, known as Lake Makgadikgadi, which is now an area of sprawling salt flats.

"It's an extremely large area, it would have been very wet, it would have been very lush," said Prof Hayes. "And it would have actually provided a suitable habitat for modern humans and wildlife to have lived." After staying there for 70,000 years, people began to move on. Shifts in rainfall across the region led to three waves of migration 130,000 and 110,000 years ago, driven by corridors of green fertile land opening up. The first migrants ventured north-east, followed by a second wave of migrants who travelled south-west and a third population remained in the homeland until today. This scenario is based on tracing back the human family tree using hundreds of mitochondrial DNA samples from living Africans - the scrap of DNA that passes down the maternal line from mother to child.

By combining genetics with geology and climate computer model simulations, researchers were able to paint a picture of what the African continent might have been like 200,000 years ago. BBC

EDITORIAL

Governments should heed Ellen's call

UNITED NATIONS GOODWILL Ambassador for Health Workforce, former Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has called on governments around the world and the international community to prioritize quality education for all citizens, with incentive programs for those seeking to become health workers. She notes that one of the most pressing issues in the developing world today is shortage of millions of health workers.

SHE SAID ANY position in health care, be it a surgeon, general practitioner or nurse, requires a high degree of skill, years of training and most importantly an education, but many who desire to become healthcare professionals lack access the education necessary to fulfill these roles.

SHE STRESSES THAT governments can and must do more to provide better training programs that will enable health care professionals to give the care their patients need, and that lack of adequate pay is another obstacle that keeps many potential healthcare professionals away from the field. "Governments should place a priority on increasing funding for the healthcare systems so that qualified workers can receive reasonable wages. While many healthcare workers are motivated by a sense of duty and a desire to help the sick, one cannot feed his or her family on good intentions alone", says the UN Goodwill Ambassador.

WE AGREE WITH Madam Sirleaf that adequate training and better incentives are critical to achieving effective healthcare delivery and should therefore, receive priority from governments, particularly in developing countries.

LIBERIA, LIKE MANY countries in Africa, has a very poor health system that leads to avoidable deaths due to lack of equipment and trained personnel.

THIS HAS TO change if the next generation of leaders and professionals would have the capacity and lifespan to deliver effective public services. For selfish reasons, current leaders in Third World countries continue to have their priorities upside down with primary issues placed at the bottom.

THIS SHOULD NOT be allowed to continue if the world, particularly Africa and specifically, Liberia, must have better healthcare services where infant and maternal mortalities would reduce.

A HEALTHY POPULATION is a great asset to any nation because it drives the wheels of economic development and human progress. But when lawmakers in our country are allowed to continuously allocate for themselves millions in salaries and incentives with little or no attention for critical areas such as health, education, agriculture, among others, we are not going anywhere as a people.

GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE more scholarships in the health sector, including better incentives for healthcare practitioners to ensuring effective healthcare delivery that would ensure a healthy population.

RECENT NATIONWIDE PROTEST by health workers here in demand of salary and improved conditions at the work place, sends a bad image that we in this part of the world are not ready to get on par with our colleagues in the global community.

CONSEQUENTLY, WE JOIN the former president and Goodwill Ambassador for Health Workforce in calling on governments around the world, particularly in Africa and specifically, the Government of Liberia, to recalibrate our health programs for effective healthcare delivery.

The New Dawn
TRULY INDEPENDENT

COMMENTARY

By Peter Cunliffe-Jones , Laura Zommer & Noko Makgato, Will Moy

How Fact-Checking Can Win the Fight Against Misinformation

No one should underestimate the scale of the threat that misinformation and declining trust pose, or the complexity of their causes. But the problem is not nearly as intractable as many people seem to believe.

JOHANNESBURG - According to fact-checkers at the Washington Post, US President Donald Trump has made more than 13,000 false or misleading claims since his inauguration. It is no wonder some people doubt that the fact-checking of politicians' claims is an answer to the problems of this misinformation age.

When politicians and journalists from Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia met at the Global Conference for Media Freedom in London in July, they acknowledged that the rise of misinformation has contributed to declining public trust in politicians and the media. But effective solutions have not been forthcoming. When Europe's political and business elite met the same month for the conference Les Rencontres Économiques d'Aix-en-Provence 2019, they, too, saw few options for renewing trust.

But that does not mean that there are none. As the leaders or founders of fact-checking organizations in Africa, Latin America, and Europe, we know that our work can play a powerful role in countering the effects of misinformation and restoring faith in reliable sources.

Fulfilling this duty requires, first and foremost, a comprehensive understanding of the challenges we face. Most of the world's almost 200 fact-checking organizations operate on the assumption that presenting the public with corrected information will generally convince them to update a false view.

Not surprisingly, most academic work on fact-checking has aimed to test this assumption. The results are promising. While nobody could claim that presenting people with correct information guarantees that they will adjust their views, repeated studies have shown that fact checking helps the public revise their understanding of claims, even when the finding contradicts a firmly held belief.

But simply publishing fact-checks is not enough. For starters, even with the greatest resources it would not be possible to trace all those who have seen the misinformation being corrected and put our fact-check in front of them. And there is simply too much misinformation circulating online and in public debate to fact-check every false claim made.

That is why, beyond identifying and correcting important misinformation, fact-checkers must engage with politicians, the traditional media, social-media platforms, and other relevant institutions to reduce the supply. This means reaching out to public figures to request on-the-record corrections, lodging complaints with standards bodies, and providing training to media organizations. It also means working with tech companies to

find ways to prevent the wider circulation of misinformation, including across international borders.

At the same time, fact-checking organizations should not simply focus on tackling false information, but also on identifying sources of reliable information and pointing their readers and followers to them. And we should work with schools and other educational platforms to help teach people to identify false or misleading claims. This is the approach taken by our organizations, and as small and under-resourced as they are, the impact is already apparent.

For example, in January, Ibrahima Diouf, the economist in charge of writing the manifesto for one of Senegal's major political parties, Parti de l'Unité et du Rassemblement, told a University of Dakar researcher that, because of the Africa Check team's work, writers of political-party manifestos paid more attention to the accuracy of their figures.

Similarly, in South Africa, Febe Potgieter-Gqubule, the general manager of the ruling African National Congress, declared in a public meeting that Africa Check "plays an important role" in keeping political parties and their leaders accountable. A few months earlier, the South African Police Service officially revised the national crime statistics, following an Africa Check intervention, admitting that the data were worse than they had initially reported. Reducing the supply of misinformation by engaging with those in power works.

At the same time, in Argentina, the fact-checking organization Chequeado has created the country's first program to teach critical thinking and news literacy skills to young people. The results of this effort to inoculate the young against the harm caused by misinformation mirrored those of a 2016 study, which showed a huge leap in the ability of school-age children in Uganda to distinguish good and bad health information after being taught similar skills.

Finally, effective fact-checking requires efforts to improve public access to reliable information. In the United Kingdom, for example, Full Fact has worked with the Office of National Statistics not only to open up its data to a wider audience, but also to ensure that it is delivered in a form the public will understand.

While we shouldn't underestimate the scale of the threat posed by misinformation and declining trust, or the complexity of their causes, the problem is not nearly as intractable as some seem to believe. By addressing not only the symptoms of misinformation and mistrust, but also the systemic problems that underlie them, fact-checking organizations, media, government, and business can resist these worrisome trends.

O-PED

By Shlomo Ben-Ami

Trump's Perfidious America

TEL AVIV - US President Donald Trump's abrupt decision to withdraw American troops from Syria, clearing the way for a Turkish offensive against the Kurds, is an unconscionable betrayal of a strategic ally. One would expect such disloyalty from a fascist or otherwise dictatorial regime. And yet, today, it is the United States - a global leader with supposedly high ideals - that has emerged as the world's perfidious empire.

Trump's cavalier abandonment of the Kurds - America's most loyal and effective allies in the war against the Islamic State (ISIS), who until last week shared military outposts with US soldiers - is but the latest in a long series of devastating betrayals by his administration. He set the tone for his presidency by withdrawing the US from the Paris climate agreement, shamelessly placing the financial interests of America's fossil-fuel tycoons above the existential interest of the rest of humanity.

Trump also renounced the Iran nuclear deal and reinstated sanctions, even though Iran had complied with the agreement's obligations (and continued to do so for another year). Even America's European allies are not safe: not only has Trump repeatedly lashed out at NATO allies; his administration is now imposing trade sanctions on up to \$7.5 billion worth of European Union goods. The US would, Trump recently boasted, undoubtedly win a trade war with the EU.

Europe also stands to lose from Trump's abandonment of the Kurds. If, in the ongoing chaos, the thousands of ISIS prisoners held by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces escape - as some already have - America's estranged European allies will suffer. Yet Trump is unconcerned. "Well, they are going to be escaping to Europe, that's where they want to go," he remarked casually at a press conference. "They want to go back to their homes."

America's unreliability as both a global leader and ally or partner is no longer in doubt - and countries are adjusting accordingly. India, for example, is pursuing closer ties with China and Russia, after a decade of ever-deeper relations with the US. (The Kurds, it is worth noting, scrambled to make a deal with Russia, further strengthening the Kremlin's regional influence.)

Meanwhile, America's East Asian allies are weighing their options for mitigating the North Korean threat, in which Trump has apparently lost interest. Trump has shrugged off the North's repeated tests of short-range ballistic missiles - which threaten Seoul and Tokyo, not New York or Washington, DC - declaring that he is not "personally" bothered by them.

Now, South Korea is attempting to reconcile with the North, while Japan raises its defense budget to record levels. Meanwhile - in yet another vote of no confidence in the US - Taiwan seems increasingly inclined to reconcile with China.

Saudi Arabia, too, is adapting to Trump's perfidy. Immediately following last month's attack on Saudi oil installations - claimed by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels, but widely blamed on Iran itself - Trump hinted at military action. But Saudi Arabia knows better than to bet on US loyalty.

In fact, the US withdrawal from Syria came shortly after it moved its Air Force command and control operations out of the Gulf region, where they had been based for almost four decades, further reinforcing expectations of a more comprehensive US departure from the Middle East. That followed Trump's refusal to respond with force when Iran downed a \$150 million American drone and impeded navigation in the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz.

Now, in what could be the mother of all diplomatic revolutions in the region, a Saudi-Iranian rapprochement seems to be in the offing. The other Gulf states would most likely join any such agreement.

The US itself is also desperate to get Iran to the negotiating table. Trump would surely laud a new nuclear deal as a major victory, even though it would probably represent little improvement over its predecessor, much like the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement did not improve upon the North American Free Trade Agreement. Trump may proclaim himself a master of the "art of the deal," but, compared to the Iranians, he is an apprentice negotiator.

Iran's regional posture is strengthened further by the fact that Israel - the US ally that is perhaps least able to handle a betrayal - remains utterly in Trump's thrall. To be sure, Trump has thrown his support behind Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, and has expressed his support for discussions on a formal US-Israel defense treaty. But if Iran decides to retaliate for Israel's repeated attacks on its military installations in Syria and Iraq, there is no guarantee that the US will stand by its ally. After all, like the Kurds, Israel did not "help [the US] in Normandy" - apparently a necessary precondition for US loyalty. (Trump didn't mention, of course, that his own father did not help the US in World War II, either; he avoided service, just as his sons did during the Vietnam War.)

As for Turkey, Trump has threatened to "destroy and obliterate" its economy if it does anything in its war on the Kurds that he considers "off limits." He then sent a bizarre letter warning Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan not to "be a tough guy."

But why would Erdogan listen? Didn't he get away with acquiring Russian-made S-400 missiles over Trump's supposed objections? And has Trump not already handed him the prize of his dreams: a green light to slaughter the Kurds of northern Syria? Not surprisingly, Erdogan reportedly threw the letter straight into the trash.

US President Theodore Roosevelt advised foreign policymakers to "speak softly and carry a big stick." Trump seems to be doing just the opposite. Add to that his ignorance of history and geopolitics, his blind belief in his supposedly "great and unmatched wisdom," and his apparent disregard for the lives of anyone outside his inner circle, and the global danger that America's 45th president poses can hardly be overstated.

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OPINION

By Carl Bildt

Time to Bite the Bullet in Syria

CANBERRA - Recent events in Syria have naturally raised two questions: Who lost the country? And where might the international community go from here?

The first question is easier to answer. Looking back, Syria has probably been lost since the popular uprising in 2011. When President Bashar al-Assad's regime stubbornly refused any effort to resolve the matter peacefully, no outside power proved willing to intervene. Instead, everyone hoped that a mix of sanctions, United Nations-led diplomacy, and halfhearted attempts to support a "moderate" opposition would eventually bring down the regime.

It didn't work. Fundamentalist forces gained political ground and territory, and others, including Iranian-backed militias and the Russian military after the fall of 2015, rushed to Assad's defense. Although the regime had long deprived the Kurds in northern Syria of most of their rights, it started making concessions to them when it came under pressure. As a result, Kurdish militias abstained from challenging Assad, which led much of the broader Syrian opposition to shun them.

After the Islamic State (ISIS) established its "caliphate" in Mosul and Raqqa in 2014 - enabling it to strike even Baghdad - there was an understandable rush to confront the terrorist threat. In Iraq, that task fell largely to Iranian-aligned Shia militias. But in Syria, the situation was more complicated. The United States had no intention of sending in its own combat forces, but it also knew that the Syrian opposition groups that it (and Turkey) had been arming were not up to the challenge. In any case, those groups were focused on toppling Assad, which had ceased to be a high priority for Western policymakers.

Given these constraints, the US threw its support behind the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). The US has long recognized the YPG as an affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which it, along with the European Union and Turkey, classify as a terrorist organization. But even if the decision did not fit with any long-term strategy, it did satisfy short-term tactical needs, and supporting the YPG ultimately proved successful in depriving ISIS of its territory (though the group will remain a long-term threat).

The uprooting of ISIS would have been a good time to launch a political process to resolve the broader conflict. In fact, there were at least two options on the table. The first was to establish a Kurdish/YPG-governed entity in northern and northeastern Syria. But, of course, that would have raised the ire of Turkey, which was not ready to tolerate any PKK presence on its border. In addition to requiring an open-ended US military presence, this scenario would have resulted in Kurds ruling over substantial swaths of non-Kurdish territory.

The other option was to pursue a broader political settlement, with the goal of creating an inclusive governance structure acceptable to the regime in Damascus. Over time, this process could have led to an arrangement similar to that in northern Iraq, where the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) now cooperates closely with Turkey.

But this didn't happen. As the US position evolved, the Trump administration rejected the first option and then actively discouraged the second, making a crisis inevitable. The trigger for the crisis was a telephone call in which US President Donald Trump gave Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan a green light to send forces into Syria. Trump ordered the US military to abandon the area immediately, and added insult to injury by announcing it all on Twitter, shocking both the Kurds and many of his own advisers.

Since then, everything has come crashing down. With their credibility in tatters, US officials have desperately sought to create some kind of policy out of the ruins created by the presidential tweets. The president has threatened to destroy Turkey's economy if it does what he enabled it to do. With Kurds - most of them civilians - fleeing Turkish bombs, the UN Security Council has remained typically silent, while the Europeans have condemned everything and everyone involved.

As foreign-policy disasters go, this is one for the record books. But the seeds for this larger conflagration were sown long before the now-infamous Trump-Erdogan call. Absent any coherent policy, the conditions were ripe for a crisis. The question now is whether there is any constructive way to proceed.

For now, the US has agreed with Turkey on establishing the wide security zone in northern Syria it sought. Russia, meanwhile, has evidently brokered some sort of arrangement between the YPG and the Assad regime. With Russian and Syrian government forces now entering some of the areas vacated by the US, the Trump administration is left trying to manage its relations with Turkey. As for the EU, there is little to be done. Having already cut off all high-level political contacts with Turkey, it is impotent in the face of this latest crisis.

Logic dictates that all of the relevant parties in the region should now sit down and try to come to some kind of agreement. In addition to the KRG, Iraq, and other Arab countries, there also needs to be a place at the table for Turkey, Iran, and the Syrian government. Yes, the Assad regime is associated with a wide range of horrors and atrocities; but there is simply no other way forward.

Regional talks certainly will not come easy. Many parties will have to swallow hard and face difficult realities. Unfortunately, the prospect of a democratic Syria was lost years ago. The top priority now must be to restore stability and prevent further catastrophes. There are no longer any good options, if, in fact, there ever were.

Ma Ellen @ 81

Happy Birthday



The Management and staff of the New Dawn extend warmest felicitations and best wishes to Her Excellency, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of the Republic of Liberia and Noble Peace Laureate, as she celebrates her 81st birthday today, October 29th.

As the first democratically elected female president in Africa, you remain the torchbearer of women leadership on the Continent and the pride of Liberia, for your astute and enviable stewardship.

May God Almighty take you from strength to strength in His infinite blessing.

The NewDawn

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ANC backs off

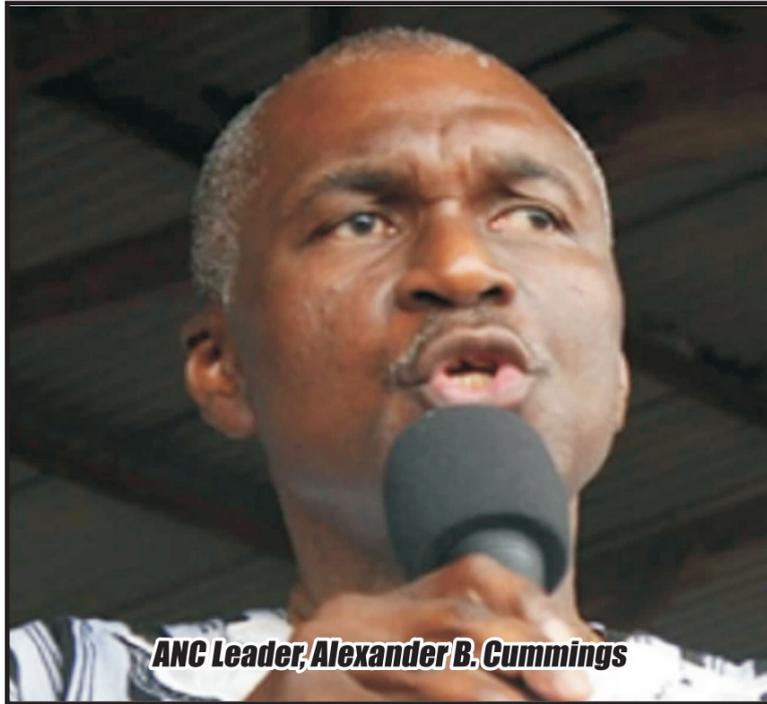
The Alternative National Congress (ANC) appears to be taking a different approach from what is fast becoming a new normal here-protest.

The party in a statement issued over the weekend described the pending December 30, 2019 "Weah Step Down" campaign as unconstitutional, adding that it will not endorse and support such a move.

While acknowledge that it is the right of every citizens to peacefully protest and express their grievances to government for redress, the ANC said the "Weah Step Down" protest, intended to use mass pressure for the sole purpose of effecting regime change and seeking the removal of a constitutionally elected president, is unconstitutional, undemocratic, and repugnant to Liberia's desire for sustainable peace and democracy through competitive electoral politics.

The ANC further noted that if this call for mass protest to effect a regime change was wrong then with "the Ellen Step Down Campaign and it is wrong now".

The party said it is aware that the current economic hardship, massive unemployment, open theft of public resources by



ANC Leader, Alexander B. Cummings

government officials, abuse of state power and the destruction of Liberia's economy by the incompetent Weah's administration are necessary and sufficient reasons for peaceful mass protest.

The party expressed further concern about the fast declining state of the country, and agrees that Liberians have legitimate reasons to protest and demand reform in governance, but to call for the unconstitutional removal of a government is wrong.

The ANC said it supported the June 7TH protest and will support any peaceful protest that demands economic and

political reforms.

"We will support any effort that will rouse the hopes of Liberians, and mobilize the collective outrage of our people to demand better paying jobs, schools and clinics, asset declaration by the president, reduction in official salary, better living conditions, action against corruption, accountability and responsiveness.

The ANC, however, re-emphasized its commitment to the CPP and said it will continue to work with the CPP and other democratic forces in protecting the rights of the Liberian people.

Regional countries push implementation of IHL priorities

By Winston W. Parley

Leaders of the National International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Committee comprising the Ministries of Foreign Affairs,

Justice, and Red Cross of Ghana, Nigeria, The Gambia, Sierra Leone and host Liberia are in Monrovia discussing National IHL Committee mandate, composition and establishing instrument to

insist on their functioning and IHL priorities' implementation.

The Peer-to-Peer Exchange Meeting on practical guidance towards active national IHL Committees in Commonwealth and English-Speaking Nations of West Africa creates the opportunity for peers to meet and share experiences and to find solutions to obstacles facing national committees.

Opening the meeting, Monday, 28 October in Sinkor, Liberia's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs Cllr. Deweh Gray expressed hope that at the end of the meeting it will be seen that "we're moving forward" in terms of countries respecting all conventions on IHL that "we are a signatory to."

Cllr. Gray notes that these meetings provide the opportunity for peers to meet, network, share experiences ... and see how others are



LFA, Petrol Trade

Starts from back page

saying "Everybody knows that football is just more than football. Football is a great unifier."

He said in the next six months, teams from all over the country will play against one another, and at the end, one team will win the title but all will be winners. "We have come today as brothers and sisters of the LFA," said Kaydea.

LFA President Mustapha Raji commended PTI for agreeing to contribute to football in the country, and added the contribution will go a long way in rebranding the entity in the petroleum industry.

He called on all football lovers to contribute to the agreement by buying PTI's products. The football house believes this partnership will move ahead for a longer period.

LFA and PTI marketing and communications departments will collaborate in formulating

a common marketing strategy for the Petrol Trade Cup, including a specifically-designed board for pre and post-match news conferences.

PTI will provide two branded sets of jerseys with its logo for winner of the Petrol Trade Cup to be worn in the Caf Confederation Cup, LFA Super Cup, President George Weah's Cup and Who Owns The Land tournaments, respectively.

Under the agreement, PTI will pay LRD3 million immediately after the signing ceremony, LRD3 million after 60 days, LRD3 million after 90 days for the third payment and LRD3.5 million as cash awards to the four teams at the closing ceremony (champions and runners-up) in the male and female divisions on 3 May 2020.

PTI will also make an additional investment to the LFA, totaling LRD4 million for trophies, medals, promotions and marketing of the Petrol Trade Cup.

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overcoming some of the obstacles facing their own national committees.

She explains so far that the Liberian committee has not had any major obstacle or setback from government officials, saying they have always been available to help.

"Our partners in the Legislature have been able to come to our meetings and help us discuss these issues, show us ways in which we can put forth our national legislation for enactment," she explains.

The Deputy Foreign Minister hopes that [Liberia] would be able to boast of legislating or domesticating the IHL instruments into its own national laws.

From the perspective of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she says the Ministry does all it can to ensure that legislations emanating from the national committee are transmitted to the office of the president and onward to the Legislature for domestication and enactment.

In remarks, River Gee County Sen. Conmany B. Wesseh observes that since the war ended here, there has been growing call about dealing with issues of crimes against humanity, war crimes and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process, which are post arms conflict concerns.

According to Sen. Wesseh, what they are trying to deal with are issues that prepare

people to know that a day might come when there is any conflict, you know there is a question to answer if crimes or acts that are not humane are committed.

"We are prepared to champion the cause of ratification for whatever law we haven't ratified yet," he says.

Also making remarks, Lofa County Sen. Steve Zargo expresses appreciation to the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) for abiding by the Rules of Engagement.

"Today we're proud that even where they are contributing to peace in Mali ... they have been rated high," Sen. Zargo says.

For his part, Liberia National Red Cross Society (LNRCS) Mr. Jerome N.J. Clarke, II, says the IHL today remains unchanging, relevant and uncompromising.

Mr. Clarke urges the need to push forward IHL priorities in the West African region and consolidate efforts and resources, cooperate, plan better in sharing experiences and promoting best practices toward better national implementation of IHL.

In Liberia, Mr. Clarke indicates that the Red Cross is stepping up to the ICRC in providing training and dissemination on IHL to the Armed Forces of Liberia, the police and



MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Persons with Disabilities commit to building synergies with partners

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) have committed to building synergies with partners to increase advocacy and awareness on the roll out of the Land Rights Act (LRA) and the National Action Plan for the Inclusion of PWDs.

The commitment was contained in a draft

brought together approximately two hundred (200) persons comprising stakeholders from the LLA, NCD, National Union of Organizations of the Disabled (NUOD) and others from the three counties - Margibi, Rivercess and Grand Bassa.

It was jointly organized by the Liberia Land Authority

opportunities; loan scheme to improve their livelihoods; Increased budgetary support to education and health care delivery services; Increased advocacy on the NAP and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and set up a joint implementation team to ensure that the provisions are accomplished.

They are also advocating for establishment of a Desk Office at the Land Authority, LLA specialized programs for women with disabilities and educational opportunities for their children among others.

The Executive Director of the National Commission on Disability, Ricardia Dennis says responsibility is placed on Government and society to ensure that the political, legal, social and physical environments to support the inclusion and participation of PWDs in decision making processes.

Ms. Dennis stressed the need for increased advocacy and active collaboration across designated government Ministries, Agencies and Commissions for delivering actions and ensuring that mainstreaming services are accessible to PWDs.

UNDP Program Associate Boye Johnson, urged PWDs not to relent in pushing for recognition and inclusion and removal of barriers that hinder their livelihood and progress.



resolution developed at the end of a two-day sensitization on the Land Rights Act (LRA) and the National Action Plan for the Inclusion of PWDs.

The exercise, held in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County 22-23 October 2019,

(LLA) and the National Commission on Disabilities (NCD) and funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In the resolution, Persons with Disabilities called for among other things; Decentralized training

Paye-Layleh wants NSA boss investigated

Mr. Jonathan Paye-Layleh, the BBC local correspondent here has accused National Security Agency's deputy director Sam Sanyon and a local radio station, Freedom FM, purported to be owned by him (Sanyon) of launching a smear campaign against his person. He is now asking President George Weah to investigate the matter.

In a communication to the president, Journalist Paye-Layleh complained that without any regard for his personal safety and reputation, Freedom FM conducted more than two hours of discussion on him on

journalist.

Mr. Paye-Layleh told President Weah that he had taken his complaint to him directly because the person who owns and operates Freedom FM is a very key national security official and a presidential appointee who is answerable only to the president, his employer.

The journalist asked the Liberian leader to take the matter seriously because the deputy NSA director and his media entity, by their action, have insulted his professional standing and hard-earned character and further exposed his life to danger in a very



Mr. Jonathan Paye-Layleh

October 23rd, inciting and soliciting hate messages from their community of listeners against him.

The station, he says, continued the attack the following day even after the letter had been submitted to the office of the president.

He wonders why, knowing it was going to have him as a subject of discussion, the station did not invite him to be in studio to respond to whatever issues people may have about his work as a

fragile environment.

Mr. Paye-Layleh, in a release, disclosed that he has forwarded copies of his letter to the media and diplomatic communities to be aware of the content so that it is not corrupted or misinterpreted along the way. He promised to remain peaceful and law-abiding as he looks forward to the intervention of the office of President George Manneh Weah.

LERC not taking over LEC

The Liberia Electricity Regulatory Commission (LERC) clarifies that it has no plans to take over the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC).

The Commission says its mandate is to regulate the electricity sector, contrary to a story carried in the online edition of FrontPage Africa Newspaper, 25th October 2019 edition under the caption: "Liberia Electricity Corporation Soon to Be Taken Over by Regulator".

The paper reported that "the challenges facing the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) may soon lead it to be managed by an electricity sector regulator—the Liberia Electricity Regulatory Commission (LERC)".

The LERC in a release issued over the weekend said at no point during the MICAT press briefing on Thursday,



October 24, 2019 did the Managing Director either mention or imply a takeover of the LEC by LERC.

The 2015 Electricity Law of Liberia which established the LERC authorized it to regulate all activities in the electricity

sector, leaving LEC to play its role as an operator. The LERC is duly cognizant of the separation of roles in the sector as provided for in the 2015 Electricity Law of Liberia. -Press release

Regional countries

Cont'd from page 6

other security agencies.

While Liberia no longer experiences armed conflict, Mr. Clarke notes that it is expedient to work together with the army to ensure full compliance with the IHL especially at the time the country is contributing to the UN Peace Keeping Mission in Mali.

"Furthermore, Liberia through its IHL committee has made significant progress toward the domestication process. A bill has been drafted and ready for submission before the Liberian legislature for enactment into law," he

reveals.

He also references a promised strong legislative backing on the speedy domestication of the Convention.

"Finally, the objective of this 2-day peer-to-peer exchange meeting is not only to discuss National IHL Commitment mandate/composition/establishing instrument, but also to insist on their functioning, resources and working procedure to push forward the implementation of IHL priorities, funding from a more pragmatic perspective," he concludes.

Français

La manifestation du 31 décembre risque d'être chaotique, prévient le sénateur Sano Johnson

Le sénateur du comté de Bomi, Sando Johnson, demande à ceux qui préparent la marche du 31 décembre, dont l'objectif serait de pousser le président George Manneh Weah à la démission, de réfléchir aux dangers auxquels leurs actions risquent d'exposer le pays et aux meurtres, aux viols et aux destructions massives des propriétés qui pourraient s'ensuivre.

Au cours d'une émission sur une radio locale, le sénateur Johnson a tenu à rafraîchir la mémoire des Libériens au sujet des quatorze années de guerres civiles qui les ont endeuillés et qui ont détruit le peu d'infrastructures de développement dont disposait le Libéria. Il a rappelé que des mères et des sœurs ont été violées et



assassinées aussi dans la brousse qu'en pleine ville. Il a ainsi mis en garde contre le risque d'une répétition du passé horrible du pays si les libériens n'y prennent pas garde.

« Nous avons traversé une longue crise civile dans ce

pays. Vous savez exactement ce qui nous est arrivé ici ; nos mères, nos sœurs et nos filles ont été violées et tuées dans la brousse, et aussi en pleine ville. Voulons-nous que cet horrible passé se reproduise ? Je vais dire non ! », a martelé M. Johnson.

La campagne pour la démission du chef de l'Etat Weah est planifiée par le Conseil des patriotes (COP), le même groupe qui avait organisé la fameuse manifestation du 7 juin 2019 contre le régime pour exiger des réformes.

Son principal maître d'œuvre Henry Costa a si intensément critiqué le régime que le pouvoir a dû récemment fermer sa station de radio, Roots FM, en représailles.

Même le sénateur Johnson du comté de Bomi avait lui aussi soutenu et pris part à la manifestation du 7 juin. Mais il refuse pour cette fois de cautionner l'appel à la démission du président qui a été élu au second tour de l'élection présidentielle de 2017. Il craint que ce mouvement n'ait des conséquences très fâcheuses pour le pays et ses habitants.

« Je ne les condamne pas ; ils sont libériens. Ils ont le droit de se réunir pacifiquement. Mais il ne faut pas qu'ils tentent de forcer ce gouvernement à la démission. S'ils le font, c'est qu'ils n'aiment pas les gens de ce pays car cela sera inévitablement chaotique. Les gens vont mourir. Les biens des gens vont être détruits. Et aucun bon dirigeant ne voudra que cela se produise », a-t-il

dit, puis ajouté : « Par souci de paix pour Mama Liberia, ils devraient abandonner la campagne pour la démission du président ».

Il a par conséquent appelé les Libériens à ne pas soutenir encore moins participer à la marche du 31 décembre « car ce n'est pas bon pour le pays ».

Le sénateur Johnson a insisté sur la nécessité de renforcer le dialogue avec le gouvernement, au lieu de protester pour la démission de M. Weah. Il a exhorté ses camarades du COP à promouvoir la paix dans le pays. Il a déclaré que s'il a pris part à la manifestation du 7 juin, c'est parce qu'il ne s'agissait pas de forcer le président à rendre le tablier. Il a aussi tenu à souligner que la manifestation prévue pour le 31 décembre contient tous les ingrédients d'une dégringolade de la nation dans une série de violences dont on ne peut prévoir ni les conséquences ni la fin. Il a prévenu que même les organisateurs de ladite manifestation ne sont pas sans savoir que le président Weah a après tout une forte popularité auprès des libériens et des fanatiques qui sont prêts à tout et qui n'accepteront pas que leur mentor soit humilié de la sorte. Le Sénateur Johnson estime qu'il est plutôt préférable de procéder différemment. « Il faut faire des propositions au régime, et si le gouvernement n'écoute pas, que les manifestants attendent les élections sénatoriales de 2020 et l'élection présidentielle de 2023 et qu'ils utilisent leur arme qui est le bulletin de vote pour changer la donne ». « J'appelle donc tout le monde, tous les Libériens de tous les horizons, à abandonner le 31 décembre. Ce n'est pas dans l'intérêt des libériens, ce n'est même pas dans l'intérêt des manifestants eux-mêmes, encore moins dans l'intérêt du pays », a-t-il conseillé.

Le Prix Nobel de Mme Ellen Johnson Sirleaf contesté

Alors que les débats en vue de la création d'un tribunal des crimes de guerre et des crimes économiques au Libéria s'intensifient aussi bien dans le pays qu'à l'étranger, Sheikh Kouyateh, l'un des membres piliers de la Coalition pour le changement démocratique au pouvoir, appelle le Comité Nobel de la paix basé en Norvège à retirer le prix Nobel de la paix à l'ancienne présidente Ellen Johnson Sirleaf qui en fut une des lauréates en 2011.

S'adressant à des journalistes à Monrovia, Kouyateh a affirmé que ceux qui militent en faveur de la création d'un tribunal international pour le Libéria devraient également demander le retrait du prix Nobel de la paix attribué à Mme Sirleaf pour le rôle qu'elle a joué pendant la guerre civile libérienne, « pour avoir financé la destruction des vies humaines et des biens ».

A M. Kouyateh de faire valoir que les aveux de l'ancienne présidente Sirleaf

devant la Commission Vérité et Réconciliation (CVR) en 2009, selon lesquels elle aurait versé 10 000 USD aux rebelles du NPFL commandé par l'ancien président Charles Taylor, est une raison suffisante pour la disqualifier d'une quelconque récompense internationale pour la paix comme le prix Nobel de la paix.

Pour rappel, Mme Sirleaf avait déclaré à l'audience devant la TRC qu'elle avait fait don de l'argent à des fins humanitaires.

En outre, pour M. Kouyateh, la campagne en faveur d'un tribunal des crimes de guerre pour poursuivre ceux qui portent une plus grande responsabilité des crimes commis pendant les 14 années d'hostilité au Libéria aura été un échec si la communauté internationale ne parvient pas à sanctionner toutes les personnes coupables de la destruction du Libéria.

Il estime que le statut de l'ancienne présidente Sirleaf en tant que lauréate du prix Nobel est une gifle pour les 250 000 Libériens qui ont perdu la vie à cause de la guerre civile

brutale.

En 2011, Mme Sirleaf a partagé le prestigieux prix Nobel de la paix avec deux autres militantes de la paix, dont Leymah Gbowee (Libérienne). Le comité du

prix Nobel de la paix a porté son choix sur Mme Sirleaf pour son rôle en faveur de la paix et de la liberté démocratique au fil des ans avant son accession à la présidence libérienne.



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Français

Jean de Gliniasty: « La Russie est de retour en Afrique, avec des préoccupations nouvelles »

Non aux diktats politiques et au chantage monétaire », ont lancé en chœur Vladimir Poutine et ses 43 hôtes chefs d'État africains réunis les 23 et 24 octobre à Sotchi. Jusqu'où la Russie peut-elle aller en Afrique ? Jean de Gliniasty, ancien ambassadeur de France à Moscou et ancien directeur Afrique au Quai d'Orsay. RFI : Avec 43 chefs d'État à Sotchi, peut-on parler d'un succès pour Vladimir Poutine ?

Jean de Gliniasty : Incontestablement. Cela veut dire que la Russie est de retour en Afrique. Elle y avait été pendant toute la période soviétique. Il y avait une éclipse d'une dizaine d'années après la chute du mur. Et maintenant, ils sont de retour avec des préoccupations différentes. Elles étaient idéologiques du temps des Soviétiques (lutte contre le colonialisme, une volonté d'influence face au bloc de l'Ouest). Maintenant, les préoccupations russes en Afrique sont quand même à dominante économique. Vladimir Poutine, n'a-t-il pas aussi du succès parce qu'il résiste aux Occidentaux ? Je ne crois pas que l'Afrique soit dans un état d'esprit anti-occidental. Je crois que les dirigeants africains pensent que plus on est de fous, plus on rit et que mettre en concurrence la Russie avec la Chine, la Turquie, la France, les États-Unis, ça ne peut être que bon pour eux. Et en cela, ils ont raison.

Oui, mais tout de même, dans la déclaration finale, la Russie et les 43 chefs d'État et de gouvernement africains, dénoncent les « diktats politiques et le chantage monétaire »...

En ce qui concerne les « diktats politiques », bien sûr là vous avez tout à fait raison. Les Africains sont un petit peu exaspérés comme d'ailleurs pratiquement tous les pays du monde, il faut le dire, par les leçons de morale, les leçons de démocratie, les leçons de droit de l'homme, etc. Donc, tous ces gouvernements, dont certains d'ailleurs sont assez peu recommandables, sont tout à fait contents de voir que la Russie met l'accent sur le respect de la souveraineté et le conservatisme. Sur ce plan,

il y a effectivement une position idéologique, ça c'est sûr. En ce qui concerne le « chantage monétaire », il y a convergence entre deux choses. Vous savez que les sanctions américaines sont extraterritoriales dès lors que vous touchez au dollar. Le système économique mondial est fondé sur le dollar à un tel point qu'il est très difficile de trouver des monnaies qui vous permettent d'échapper à l'extra-territorialité des sanctions américaines. Donc, il y a chantage monétaire et en ce sens, et ils en ont parlé à Sotchi, comment échapper à la monnaie dollar pour faire du commerce ? Et puis, il y a, il faut le dire, un petit coup de patte à la zone CFA, au franc CFA. Mais la France soutient la création d'une zone monétaire ouest-africaine. C'est plus dirigé contre le dollar que contre le franc CFA.

Lors de ce sommet, le président du Burkina Faso, également président du G5 Sahel [Mauritanie, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Tchad, NDLR], Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, a invité la Russie à rejoindre le pacte pour la sécurité au Sahel qui a été lancé lors du G7 de Biarritz il y a deux mois par Emmanuel Macron et Angela Merkel. Mais la Russie a pourtant été expulsée de ce G8 devenu G7 il y a cinq ans.

La Russie a été expulsée suite à l'annexion de la Crimée et à la crise dans le Donbass. Il est question de l'y faire rentrer. Je ne suis pas sûr d'ailleurs du tout que la Russie souhaite y rentrer. En tout cas, tant notre président français que Trump il y a un moment, et même à plusieurs reprises, ont envisagé de faire rentrer les Russes. Donc en fait, l'initiative sur le Sahel, c'est de dire qu'il faut un peu partager le fardeau. D'abord, je constate que dans la presse russe, pour l'instant on n'en parle pas. Ce qui veut dire que les Russes réfléchissent, que la ligne n'a pas encore été fixée si je puis dire. En tout cas, je n'ai rien trouvé ce matin dans la presse russe. Sur le fond, il n'est pas exclu que Français, Allemands et autres trouvent un modus vivendi. Je me souviens que les Russes étaient intervenus et tout le monde souhaitait qu'ils le fassent.

COMMENTAIRE

Par Peter Cunliffe-Jones, Laura Zommer & Noko Makgato, Will Moy

Comment le décodage peut remporter le combat contre la désinformation

JOHANNESBOURG - Selon les décodeurs du Washington Post, le président des États-Unis Donald Trump s'est livré depuis son investiture à plus de 13 000 déclarations fausses ou trompeuses. On ne peut guère s'étonner que certains, dans ces conditions, émettent des doutes sur les capacités des décodeurs du discours politique à répondre aux questions soulevées par ce nouvel âge de la désinformation.

Lorsque responsables politiques et journalistes d'Europe, des Amériques, d'Afrique et d'Asie se sont retrouvés à la Conférence mondiale pour la liberté des médias, qui s'est tenue à Londres, au mois de juillet, ils n'ont pas caché que la diffusion croissante de la désinformation contribue à la défiance envers les élus et les médias. Mais les solutions efficaces ne se bousculent pas. Les Rencontres économiques d'Aix-en-Provence, en 2019, qui réunissaient les élites politiques et économiques, quelques jours plus tôt, autour du thème « renouer avec la confiance » partageaient ce constat.

Cela ne signifie pas que les solutions n'existent pas. En tant que dirigeants et fondateurs d'organisations spécialisées dans le décodage de l'information, en Afrique, en Amérique latine et en Europe, nous savons que notre travail peut jouer un rôle important dans la lutte contre la désinformation et la reconstruction de la confiance dans des sources fiables.

Pour remplir cette mission, il faut d'abord bien comprendre la nature des enjeux. Les 200 organismes de décodage ou équipes de décodeurs de par le monde travaillent, pour la plupart, en partant de l'hypothèse qu'en fournissant aux citoyens des informations exactes, ils les conduiront généralement à réexaminer leur point de vue lorsque celui-ci s'est auparavant fondé sur de fausses informations.

Comme on pouvait s'en douter, les travaux de recherche sur le décodage tentent presque tous de démontrer cette hypothèse. Les résultats sont encourageants. Si personne ne peut tenir pour certain certain qu'en fournissant aux gens des informations exactes on les entraînera à réviser leur point de vue, les enquêtes successives ont prouvé que le travail des décodeurs aide les citoyens à reconsidérer la façon dont ils comprennent ce qu'on leur affirme, même lorsque les conclusions contredisent des croyances fermement enracinées.

En revanche, la publication d'informations vérifiées et décodées n'est pas suffisante. Quand bien même on disposerait de tous les moyens souhaitables, il demeurerait impossible d'évaluer l'ensemble des cas où la désinformation a pu être corrigée et où les gens ont eu accès à son décodage. Il y a par ailleurs trop de désinformation circulant sur les réseaux et dans le débat public pour qu'on puisse seulement imaginer pouvoir contrôler chaque affirmation inexacte.

C'est pourquoi, outre l'identification et la correction des contre-vérités les plus flagrantes, les décodeurs doivent travailler avec les responsables politiques, les médias traditionnels, les réseaux sociaux et d'une façon générale avec les acteurs de la communication afin de réduire les émissions d'informations fausses. Cela signifie solliciter les personnalités publiques pour qu'elles corrigent publiquement leurs erreurs, déposer

plainte auprès des instances compétentes et former les acteurs médiatiques. Cela signifie aussi travailler avec les entreprises du secteur technologique afin de trouver les moyens qui permettront de stopper la circulation de la désinformation, par-delà les frontières.

Dans le même temps, les structures qui se chargent du décodage ne doivent pas se contenter de cibler les fausses informations, mais compléter leur action en labellisant les sources fiables et en orientant vers elles leurs lecteurs et leurs abonnés. Et nous devons travailler avec les écoles et les plateformes pédagogiques pour les aider à former les gens à la lecture de l'information et à l'identification des affirmations trompeuses. C'est ce que font nos structures, et si petites qu'elles soient, si faibles que soient leurs moyens, les effets se font déjà sentir.

Ainsi au mois de janvier, Ibrahima Diouf, l'économiste chargé de la rédaction du programme économique du Parti de l'unité et du rassemblement, l'une des principales formations politiques sénégalaises, affirmait-il à un chercheur de l'université de Dakar, que les auteurs des programmes des partis politiques accordaient désormais, grâce au travail des décodeurs d'Africa Check, plus d'attention à l'exactitude des chiffres qu'ils citent.

De même, en Afrique du Sud, Febe Potgieter-Gqubule, l'une des dirigeantes de l'ANC, le parti au pouvoir, a-t-elle déclaré, lors d'une réunion publique, qu'Africa Check « joue un rôle important » dans la responsabilisation des partis politiques et de leurs dirigeants auprès des électeurs. Quelques mois plus tôt, la police sud-africaine avait revu ses statistiques de la délinquance, à la suite d'une intervention d'Africa Check, et admis que les chiffres étaient moins bons que ceux qu'elle avait auparavant fournis. Il est donc possible de réduire les émissions d'informations fausses en travaillant avec les pouvoirs publics.

En Argentine, Chequeado a créé le premier programme d'enseignement à la lecture et à la critique des informations auprès des jeunes. Les résultats de cette initiative visant à vacciner la jeunesse contre les dégâts causés par la désinformation font écho à ceux d'une enquête menée en Ouganda auprès de jeunes gens scolarisés montrant qu'après une formation du même type leur capacité à distinguer les informations vraies et fausses quant aux programmes de santé et à leurs succès avait fait des progrès spectaculaires.

Enfin, pour être efficace, le décodage demande qu'on facilite l'accès des citoyens à une information de qualité. Ainsi au Royaume-Uni, l'association Full Fact travaille-t-elle avec le Bureau national des statistiques non seulement afin d'ouvrir à une plus large audience les données de celui-ci mais à les présenter sous une forme aisément compréhensible.

Si nous ne devons pas sous-estimer l'ampleur de la menace que font peser la désinformation et la perte de la confiance, ni nous méprendre sur la complexité des causes, le problème n'est pas aussi difficile à résoudre que certains semblent le croire. En luttant non seulement contre les symptômes de la désinformation et de la défiance, mais aussi contre les problèmes systémiques qui les sous-tendent, les organismes de décodage, les médias, les pouvoirs publics et les entreprises peuvent résister à ces évolutions inquiétantes.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE

Russia strategizes African market

By KesterKennKlomegah*

Russia plans to offer trade subsidies and investment guarantees as an emergency support for Russian companies to penetrate into African market, part of the strategy for strengthening economic ties between Russia and Africa, according a special meeting report released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The report indicated that the Ministry's Business Council had discussed a wide range of issues on promoting Russia and Russian businesses' interests in Africa. Noting further that Africa has huge natural resources still untapped, all kinds of emerging business opportunities and constantly growing consumer market due to the increasing population. It has currently become a new business field for global players.

There was a lot of interesting and demanding work ahead, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at the Ministry's Business Council meeting held July 16 in Moscow. He added "perhaps, there is a need to pay attention to the experience of China, which provides its enterprises with state guarantees and subsidies, thus ensuring the ability of companies to work on a systematic and long-term basis."

According to Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Ministry would continue to provide all-round support for initiatives aimed at strengthen relations between Russia and Africa. "Our African friends have spoken up for closer interaction with Russia and would welcome our companies on their markets. But much depends on the reciprocity of Russian businesses and their readiness to show initiative and ingenuity, as well as to offer quality goods and services," he said at the meeting.

He urged Russian entrepreneurs, both small and medium-sized, to race against other foreign players to get access to the African markets and its trading resources, be fearless of competition and rivalry but play with adequate caution to save Russia's image in Africa.

"We find it important to estimate options for attracting small and medium-sized businesses to African markets. This segment of our cooperation is still insignificant," he stated.

"We will rely on the existing and strengthening foundation of Russian-African cooperation. This year we have significantly intensified political dialogue, cooperation between parliaments and civil societies," Lavrov explained.

"This positive groundwork allows us to convert this into increasing trade, economic and investment exchanges, to expand banking cooperation, the implementation of mutually beneficial projects," he underlined.

Lavrov further underscored the fact that trade and economic relations have reached a new level, and "the first ever Russia-Africa summit, which is to be held in October in Sochi, would give a special impetus to these processes."

The first Russia-Africa summit scheduled to take place in Sochi on October 24 and will be co-chaired by President of Russia Vladimir Putin and President of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who currently chairs the African Union.



In June, Moscow hosted a shareholder meeting of the African Export-Import Bank, as well as the Russia-Africa Economic Conference. Early July, the Russia-Africa Parliamentary Conference was held as part of the International Development of Parliamentarianism Forum, which took place in Moscow.

During the special session on Russia-Africa held July 3, the former Special Presidential Representative to Africa, Professor Alexey Vasilev, pointed out that the level and scope of Russian economic cooperation with Africa has doubled in recent years, "but unfortunately Russian-African cooperation is not in the top five of the foreign players in Africa."

Speaking particularly about trade, Vasilev noted that not all African countries have signed agreements with Russia, for example, on the abolition of double taxation. He urged African countries to make trade choices that are in their best economic interests and further suggested that Russia should also consider the issue of removal of tariff and non-tariff restrictions on economic relations.

In order to increase trade, Russia has to improve its manufacturing base and Africa has to standardize its export products to compete in external markets. Russia has only few manufactured goods that could successfully compete with Western-made products in Africa.

The former Presidential Envoy believes that it is also necessary to create, for example, free trade areas. "But before creating them, we need information. And here, I am ready to reproach the Russian side, providing little or inadequate information to Africans about their capabilities, and on the other hand, reproach the African side, because when our business comes to Africa, they should know where they go, why and what they will get as a result," Vasilev told the gathering of parliamentarians.

Interestingly, there are few Russian traders in Africa and African exporters are not trading in Russia's market, in both cases, due to multiple reasons including inadequate knowledge of trade procedures, rules and regulations as well as the existing market conditions, he pointed out.

"The task before us, especially before the both parliaments, is to harmonize the norms of trade, contract and civil law. The parliamentarians of the two sides have the task to work together on a legislative framework that would be in the interests of both sides.

This should be a matter of priority," Vasilev concluded.

Meanwhile, there is possibility that a memorandum on cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Commission and the African Union will be signed in the near future. This memorandum will bring Russian-African trade and economic cooperation to a higher level and will accelerate the growth of bilateral trade. The Eurasian consumer market, especially the growing middle-class, could be good for African exporters.

Russia is interested in new markets and external alliances more than ever before, while Africa also looks for ways toward economic growth in recent years. In this context, African countries need to think about the smart approaches, mechanisms, and tools to use for effective trade cooperation, according to a new analytical handbook on Russia-Africa published by Modern Diplomacy ahead of Russia-Africa Summit in October.

With the current sanctions of the United States and Europe against Russia, there is this massive opportunity for African producers to develop more effectively their trade relationships with Russia. Try to find answers to a few questions, for example, what are the key initiatives and competencies that can create a deeper strategic trade partnership between Russia and Africa?

In practice of diplomacy, parties usually talk about mutual benefits. While Africans will benefit largely from Russia's trade with the continent, taking into account the changing consumer landscape, it is deeply important for Africans, for example, to negotiate for trade preferences, tariff and tax relief) for their products to Russia and its neighboring republics.

But this factor is often missed. Nevertheless, African leaders and business directors have to take steps to explore two-way corporate business, begin looking at wide range of ways on promoting Africa and its business interests in the Russian Federation, contained in the published geopolitical handbook on Russia-Africa.

Whether Moscow will move from mere intentions to concrete actions, with commitment and consistency, remains largely to be seen in the subsequent years, according to policy experts and observers who monitor developments between Russia and Africa. According to official reports, Russia has a positive dynamics of trade with Africa, its trade exceeded US\$20 billion in 2018. *KesterKennKlomegah writes frequently about Russia-Africa and the BRICS.

UL students reject Dr. Nelson

Protesting students of the University of Liberia on Monday disrupted normal academic activities on both the Capitol Hill and Fendall campuses respectively, rejecting newly

Weah, who is Visitor to the University, dismissed UL President Dr. Ophelia Inez Weeks a week ago, the second female to serve as Head of that institution since the late Dr. Mary Antoinette Brown-Sherman in the 80s, replacing her with Dr. Nelson, former

Presidential Affairs Mr. Nathaniel McGill, from attending a fundraising program at the Capitol Hill campus.

Angry students barricaded the Minister's official vehicle, effectively denying him from disembarking. He was scheduled to have served as chief launcher at the program, organized by the Centennial Class of the Graduate and Professional School.

The University of Liberia (UL) has suffered a series of protests and disruption of normal activities.

Days before President Weah dismissed Dr. Weeks, faculty members at the University began a strike in demand of their unpaid salaries.

The UL faculties' strike came after public high schools teachers abandoned classes in protest for their arrears, which also led kids from these public schools to stage a mass demonstration, demanding President Weah to address their teachers' concerns.

But police used tear gas against the kids who had blocked the main street to speak with President Weah.

Salaries delay remains a serious embarrassment for the Weah regime, prompting civil servants here to threaten a nationwide go - slow by the end of October if government fails to meet a number of demands, including full payment of their



appointed President of the University, Dr. Sarwolo Nelson.

The two campuses were scenes of protest, as students were forced by their protesting colleagues in abandoning classes.

President George Manneh

Dean of Students.

The dismissal by President Weah came just as lecturers were poised to boycott classes in demand of salary.

Monday's demonstrations came just days after the students also prevented the Minister of State for

Rural women seek empowerment

Liberia National Rural Women, an umbrella organization for women in rural parts of the country seeks more support for women's activities, especially rural women who are engaged in agriculture.

Speaking in Bensonville, Montserrado County during programs marking celebration of International Rural Women Day during the weekend, the President of the group, Kabbeh Monger underscored the need to elevate women from mere workshop attendance to empowering their efforts in the agricultural sector.

Madam Monger noted that through corroborative efforts of the umbrella organization,

Against this backdrop, Cllr. Wureh disclosed that the Angie Brooks International is involved with awarding scholarships for further studies to secondary students, who came Divisions I and II in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination.

Montserrado County electoral District #1 Representative Lawrence Morris, who also spoke at the occasion, said central government continues to pay less attention to Agriculture, noting that allocation for the agriculture sector in the national budget is just a drop in the bucket.

He said top officials in the sector are the ones always



women in rural Liberia are making tremendous self initiatives that are helping their households and the Country at large.

She said currently, the Liberia Rural Women has a pilot project of 78 acres farm in Lofa, besides other projects in various parts of Liberia.

She encouraged women at the celebration not to only depend on workshops, but to engage themselves in gainful agriculture activities that will reap future benefits, adding "There will be time that partners will not support us."

Making remarks at the National Rural women Day, the Establishment Coordinator of Angie Brooks International, Cllr. Yvette Chesson Wureh observed that most children of rural women are academically up to the task, but their quests for higher education are often hindered by lack of support.

flying aboard for international conferences, while rural women who are the main players in the sector are left out.

The Montserrado lawmaker said the sector would not develop at the moment because Liberia is currently faced with misplaced leadership.

Rep. Morris continued that government has failed to live up to its budgetary obligation of allotting 10 percent of the national budget to Agriculture.

The celebration, held under the theme: "Empowering Rural Women to Lead Agriculture for Liberia Sustainable Development" brought together representatives from UN Women Liberia, Action Aid, Angie Brooks International, National Traditional Council, Governor Council and the YMCA, amongst others.

Govt. bans dredgers in Liberian water

By Lewis S. Teh

The Ministry of Mines and Energy with immediate effect bans all dredges being used in Liberian waters by both Liberians and foreign nationals.

"With immediate effect, the use of dredges on all water bodies within our borders for mining of gold and diamond is hereby banned", says Mines and Energy Minister Gesler E. Murray.

Addressing a news conference in Monrovia, he disclosed said the ministry has commenced a rigorous exercise aimed at fixing and formalizing the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM) subsector of Liberia.

Murray continues that the ministry has developed a roadmap which will require collective efforts of local government, law enforcement authorities and private citizens.

He details a training program for mining agents and mineral inspectors has been approved and is now being enrolled out, while the ministry has also instituted a training in smart mining techniques for local miners which has commenced



around the national park and protected areas, and is to be replicated across Liberia for the purpose of land reclamation.

The Minister also reveals a moratorium on the issuance of new class C mining license will be instituted, noting that a ban on the use of mercury to recover gold will be robustly reinforced and violators will be severely prosecuted in keeping with the law.

Meanwhile, the Mines and Energy boss warns field personnel from the ministry not to henceforth collect any fees in the execution of their duties, saying the ministry in collaboration with the National Identification Registry or NIR has begun

issuing biometric (ASM) ID cards to all mining actors.

When asked what necessitated these latest actions, Minister Murray explains a long running situation has prompted the ban on dredges saying, "all our mining fields have been inedited by both local and foreign mining dissidents.

He laments that foreign nationals along with some Liberians were being encouraged in plundering the mineral resources of the country particularly, gold and diamond, adding, "This is a measure that we hope will mitigate the issue of illicit mining activities in Liberia."

Murray is apprehensive or skeptical the kind of hidden

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agenda some of these mining dissidents are bringing into the country.

"You all are aware of some terroristic attack in Mali and other countries; it is against this backdrop that the ministry in collaboration with relevant government institutions saw it prudent to identify all miners

in the country."

Dredging is an activity that is carried out to remove unwanted deposits from water pathways. But even though the activity aids regularity in marine traffic, it is not without its disadvantages, as it poses a huge threat to the marine environment.

Finally: He quits



Ex-CBL Governor, Nathaniel R. Patray, III

After months of debates and demands for his removal Executive Governor Central Bank of Liberia (CBL), Nathaniel R. Patray, III, tendered in his letter of resignation on Friday October 25, 2019 as he heads off for his second retirement from the bank.

A release from the CNL however, stated that the

decision by Governor Patray was announced during a general staff meeting at the CBL.

According to the CBL Patray informed the staff that he was leaving the post in keeping with an arrangement with the President and a resolution approved by the Board of Governors of the Bank.

President Weah few months back announced that Patray

was going to be retired as part of efforts to revamp the CBL but that time came a passed as Mr. Patray stay put.

However, on Friday, Patray expressed thanks and appreciation to the President for the opportunity to serve the country as Governor of the Bank. He also thanked the staff of the Central Bank of Liberia and other stakeholders for the cooperation accorded him during his tenure as Executive Governor. He urged the staff to cooperate and show commitment to whomever would be named as his successor.

Patray had previously worked with the erstwhile National Bank of Liberia, now Central Bank of Liberia, as an executive official. He was appointed by President Weah in July 2018, following the resignation of Mr. Milton A. Weeks.

The Deputy Governor for Economic Policy, Dr. Musa Dukuly has been named as Officer-In-Charge, pending the appointment and subsequent confirmation of a new Governor for the CBL.

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LFA, Petrol Trade sign LRD13 million deal

Sally Gaye

The Liberia Football Association (LFA) has signed a LRD13 million agreement with Petrol Trade Incorporated (PTI) to sponsor its knockout competitions for the 2019/2020 season.

At a formal ceremony Friday, PTI chief coordinating officer Abraham Kaydea praised the LFA for the level of



Liberia Football President Mustapha Rajji

organization it has shown.

Kaydea said PTI's latest partnership with the LFA surpasses its contribution and association with football in Liberia.

"It is an honor for me to represent my company here today at this important signing ceremony. This is a very great milestone for my company, which has identified with Liberian football for a long time but not in this capacity.

Sponsorship agreement today for the LFA knockout cup is the biggest yet for us. When Petrol Trade first started to identify with Liberian football, we saw it as part of our corporate social responsibility", he said.

According to Mr. Kaydea, the corporation realizes that it had been involved in something far bigger,



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