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AIM Reports

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Calm returns to Mocimboa da Praia

Peace has returned to the town of Mocimboa da Praia, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado following an attack by armed Islamic extremists on police units on 5 October. According to the police, in those clashes two policemen and 14 of the raiders died and the extremists murdered a local community leader. In the wake of the incident, police have made 52 arrests.

The provincial governor, Celmira da Silva, on 15 October made her second visit to the district within the space of a week, and urged the population to remain calm and vigilant in the face of any act that might disturb public order and tranquillity.

According to Radio Mozambique, she was speaking at a meeting with members of the district government, neighbourhood secretaries from Mocimboa town, and other representatives of the local authorities.

There was a further clash on 12 October, on the main road between Mocimboa da Praia town and Palma, when a police unit was ambushed. At least four people (one member of the riot police and three of the attacking group) are said to have been killed.

Celmira da Silva declared she was pleased that normality had returned to Mocimboa da Praia. “We have been informed that the situation in the district is calm”, she said. “Investigations are continuing and some results are beginning to emerge that allow the police to continue their work to discover what really happened here – who these groups are, and how we can continue working so that evils of this nature do not occur again”.

In Mocimboa, the extremist group is referred to as “Al-Shabaab”, although there is no evidence that it has any formal ties with the Somali terrorist group of that name.

According to the news sheet “Mediafax”, the group is more properly called “Al-Sunna” or “Suahili-Sunna”. The ideology espoused by the group seems much the same as that of Islamism extremists across the globe – according to Mocimboa da Praia residents, they want to impose Sharia law, ban the sale of alcohol, and remove secular monuments and Christian crosses.

Orthodox Mozambican Islamic organisations have denounced the group. More than 30 Muslim organisations condemned the Mocimboa attacks, and the leaders of Mocimboa da Praia Muslims say they repeatedly warned the authorities about the extremist group, but no action was taken.

There is no tradition of fundamentalism, let alone terrorism, among Mozambican Islamic communities, and a long tradition of cohabitation between Muslims and Christians.

Malaria remains major public health problem

Malaria remains one of the main public health problems in Mozambique, with between four and six million cases notified a year, according to Health Minister Nazira Abdula.

Speaking on 16 October in Chimoio, capital of the central province of Manica, where she was launching a national anti-malaria communication campaign, Abdula said that so far this year, 5,591,391 cases of the disease have been diagnosed, with 754 deaths.

In 2016, 4,612,514 people were diagnosed with the diseases and 900 of them died.

The current campaign, Abdula said, intends to raise awareness of the disease and preventative measures. The main problem, she argued, is that people are used to living alongside malaria-carrying mosquitoes and take the fatalistic view that malaria is just part of their lives, that it is normal to catch the disease, and that with treatment it will be cured.

She stressed the importance of sleeping under insecticide-treated mosquito nets. But in many cases, people claim they feel “lack of air” when they sleep under netting. In other cases, the priority in using mosquito nets goes, not to the people most at risk (children and pregnant women), but to the male head of the household.

The national campaign to distribute mosquito nets was launched in 2016 with a target to distribute 16 million bed nets. To date, 12 million nets have been distributed in the central and northern provinces, and as from next month the campaign will move to the south.

Abdula pointed out that each net costs 210 meticaís (about US\$3.5), with total investment in the campaign about 3.36 billion meticaís.

Using the nets should go alongside complementary measures such as eliminating pools of stagnant water where mosquitoes can breed, and blocking holes or cracks through which mosquitoes can enter houses.

The nets must not be used for fishing, Abdula insisted. When mosquito nets are transformed into fishing nets, not only are they failing to prevent malaria, but they are also devastating the marine environment.

She called on community and religious leaders, teachers, journalists, civil servants and the public at large to become involved in the communication campaign to defeat malaria. Abdula wanted to see information on malaria included in the school curriculum, and regular radio programmes on the disease and how to prevent it.

Assurances given on pigeon pea exports

The director of the Mozambique Grain Institute (ICM), Joao Macaringue, and the Indian High Commissioner to Mozambique, Rudra Gaurev Shresth, on 18 October insisted that Mozambique can continue exporting pigeon peas to India, despite the restriction on imports of this crop announced by India in August.

Speaking alongside the High Commissioner at a Maputo press conference, Macaringue said that Mozambique is the only country in the world not affected by the restrictions, due to a memorandum of understanding between the two countries, signed when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Mozambique in 2016.

"This agreement envisages an annual quota of 125,000 tonnes", he said. "What remains to be exported this year is 78,000 tonnes".

This follows a recent complaint by Ana Tauacale, chairperson of the National Union of Peasants (UNAC), who said that peasant farmers had been "betrayed", since they had been encouraged to grow pigeon peas, but now found there was no market for the crop. She claimed that the promises from private traders and the government were such that some peasants prioritised pigeon peas over their normal food crops.

Part of the problem seems to be fraud. A recent delegation to India found that Mozambique was being cheated because some non-Mozambican exporters were selling pigeon peas to India using part of the Mozambican quota.

"A good part of the 125,000-tonne quota was used by operators who are not based in Mozambique but who have obtained Mozambican certificates of origin", Macaringue said. To avoid this problem in the future, all sales of pigeon peas to India must be coordinated by the ICM.

Macaringue added that India has promised to provide between five and ten million US dollars so that pigeon peas in excess of the quota can be conserved for later sales.

There is one Mozambican factory which processes pigeon peas in Beira – but Tauacale has complained that peasant farmers know nothing about it. Owned by the Export Trading Group (ETG), the Beira factory was inaugurated by President Filipe Nyusi in August 2016. It has the capacity to process 80 tonnes of pigeon peas a day, and planned to export 22,000 tonnes to India this year.

Known in India as dal, pigeon peas are a key component of Indian cuisine.

President Nyusi stresses need to defend the maritime environment

Preserving the marine and coastal environment is the duty of all Mozambicans, declared President Filipe Nyusi on 13 October. The President was speaking in Maputo at a ceremony to launch the government's "Policy and Strategy of the Sea" (POLMAR), aimed at strengthening state sovereignty over Mozambican waters, and developing a "blue, profitable and sustainable economy at sea".

The centrality of the sea for a country such as Mozambique, with almost 3,000 kilometres of coastline, is the reason why the government felt it necessary to establish a framework for the use of marine resources in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved by the United Nations.

POLMAR, the President said, was an instrument to support a strengthening of the state's capacity in maritime governance, including the defence of the environment, the preservation of territorial integrity and the defence of national sovereignty.

Voter mobilisation initiative announced

Seven Mozambican civil society organisations on 17 October announced the establishment of an initiative entitled "Votar Mocambique" (Vote Mozambique) with the purpose of involving citizens in the entire process surrounding the municipal elections scheduled for 2018 and the presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections of 2019.

The bodies behind the initiative are the Centre for Public Integrity (CIP), the Community Radio Forum (FORCOM), the Institute of Economic and Social Studies (IESE), the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (IMD), the Civil Society Training Centre (CESC), the Mozambican branch of Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) and the Civil Society Support Mechanism (MASC).

Addressing a Maputo press conference, the director of the initiative, Adriano Nuvunga, said "Votar Mocambique" would have a network of 350 reporters scattered across the country to carry out "journalistic electoral observation".

This work will be carried out in collaboration with the London-based "Mozambique Political Process Bulletin". Similar reporting was undertaken for the 2014 general elections, but the network of reporters had only 190 reporters.

The initiative also has a conflict management component. Previous elections, Nuvunga said, have been marked by conflicts. FORCOM and the IND in particular will work on this issue, monitoring incidents in real time. They intend to set up a "conflict room", where the National Elections Commission (CNE), the political parties, and religious bodies will be represented.

"Votar Mocambique" also intends to mobilise citizens, particularly young citizens, to take part in the elections. Nuvunga noted that in recent elections there have been worryingly high levels of abstention, and the initiative will seek to persuade citizens that it is worth registering as voters and casting their ballots.

Partnership with Akon Lighting Africa

The American singer, Aliaune Thiam Damala, better known as Akon, in partnership with the Mozambican association Machel Fidus, has agreed to inject US\$50 million into a project to electrify rural areas in the central provinces of Manica and Sofala through solar power.

Machel Fidus describes itself as "a Mozambican non-profit organization, led by a strong-willed, sharp-minded, motivated and dynamic young team of entrepreneurs, which aims to promote and implement long lasting sustainable social development projects in Mozambique". Its founder and chairperson is Malenga Machel, the youngest son of the country's first President, Samora Machel.

Mozambique is the first southern African country to establish a partnership with Akon in the continent-wide project known as Akon Lighting Africa.

The Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Leticia Klemens, launched the project in Maputo on 12 October. She stressed, "health, education and water supply systems need electricity, if they are to function, and the lack of electricity brings a low level of development".

Akon himself, who is of Senegalese origin, told the launch ceremony that Mozambique, like other African countries, needs a system of renewable energies, particularly in the countryside, which can create opportunities for young people.

Akon Lighting Africa is already being implemented in 11 countries, including Kenta, Senegal, Mali, Gabon and Guinea-Conakry.

Josina Machel sets up NGO to assist victims of violence

Josina Machel, the daughter of Mozambique's first President, Samora Machel, on 16 October in Maputo launched the Kuhluka Association, a movement that seeks to provide support for women who are the victims of violence.

At the launch ceremony, Josina said Kuhluka will seek to eradicate gender-based violence, and will set up shelters to provide support for the survivors of domestic violence.

The Centres will be established, in a pilot phase, as from 2018 in Maputo city and province. They will provide victims of domestic violence with care free of charge including psychological counselling and therapy, medical services, police protection, and care for any dependent children.

Josina told AIM that the initiative is a way of providing immediate care for the victims of violence. She said that many cases of violence are only discussed inside the home, which does not help eliminate the problem. "We want women to know that they can go to a place where they will be received with care and tenderness, and attended to by doctors and members of the police", she added.

Josina explained that Kuhluka is inspired by a similar movement in the United States, particularly in the city of Phoenix, Arizona. "We have formed partnerships with some refuges and shelters in the United States which have models of how this should work, and how the women should be treated", she said.

Josina herself is a survivor of domestic violence. She was savagely beaten by her boyfriend, businessman Rufino Licuco, in October 2015, and as a result lost her right eye.

In February, a Maputo court found Licuco guilty of the assault and gave him a suspended prison sentence of three years and four months, and ordered him to pay Josina damages of US\$2.8 million. This sentence was widely regarded as lenient: the Machel family had been hoping for a custodial sentence. Recalling the night of the assault, Josina recalled "It was 01.30. I cried out for help. Nobody heard me. Nobody did anything. If someone had appeared, they would have helped me and perhaps saved my sight".

Former IPEX general director on trial

The trial began in Maputo on 12 October of the former general director of the Export Promotion Institute (IPEX), Cecilia Candrinho, charged with abusing her office by awarding the organisation of the Maputo International Trade Fair (FACIM) to a private company without any public tender.

The private company is Santos & Rey – Estruturas e Eventos (SR). It ran FACIM between 2012 and 2015, and for its work over this period it received 127 million meticais (about US\$3.2 million, at the exchange rate of the time).

The matter came to the notice of the Administrative Tribunal, the body that inspects the legality of public expenditure. In its opinion on the General State Account for 2014, the Tribunal said, "there was no explanation of the criteria adopted to select the company Santos & Rey". Payment was made to the company, the Tribunal noted, without a contract and simply under a memorandum of understanding.

The excuse for this procedure, the Tribunal said, was that otherwise it would have been impossible to hold FACIM. But the Tribunal found IPEX was unable to indicate "how this company was selected, and reports on the activities it undertook were not presented".

Mozambique "can meet zero hunger target"

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is focusing its support for Mozambique on resilience to climate change and on long-term social protection in order to meet the target of "Zero Hunger" by 2030, the WFP national director for Mozambique, Karine Manente, told a Maputo press conference on 16 October.

She said the WFP is helping the government draw up policies to confront problems of food and nutritional insecurity.

"The plan intends to ensure that people have access to nutritional foodstuffs and help them become more resilient to the climate shocks to which Mozambique is ever more prone", she added.

Speaking at the same press conference, held to mark World Food Day, the representative in Mozambique of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Castro Camarada, said that at least 24 per cent of the population – or about 6.5 million people – are still in a situation of food insecurity.

Manente was optimistic that Mozambique is well placed to reach the "Zero Hunger" goal by 2030. She stated that Mozambique had met the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which was to cut by half the number of people suffering from hunger between 1990 and 2015.

"It was about 56 per cent, and now it's 24 per cent", she said. "There's an improvement. And with the investment policies that exist, the prospect is that Mozambique can reach zero by 2030. That's the great effort the country is making with the support of the United Nations and other partners".

Camarada urged that actions be directed towards young people in the countryside so that they would become interested in agricultural and livestock activities, including agro-business including marketing and small-scale processing.

European Union investing in renewable energy

The European Union, through the EU Trust Fund for Africa, plans to invest four million euros (about US\$4.7 million) in a project to promote renewable energies in Mozambique.

The financial close of the project is expected this month. It is named the "Project to Promote Auctions for Renewable Energies" (PROLER), and will be implemented by the Mozambique Development Agency (AFD), in partnership with Mozambique's publicly owned electricity company, EDM.

Launching the project in Maputo on 9 October, the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Leticia Klemens, said the initiative covers several actions that should prove determinant for integrating renewable sources into the electricity grid.

EDM chairperson Mateus Magala explained that PROLER will end the direct awarding by the Ministry of concessions for electrification through solar panels. From now on the process will be handled by EDM through public tenders.

With the support of the EU and the AFD, EDM will identify an area that could be electrified through renewable sources of power, and will order studies and hire contractors, by resorting to whoever presents the best technical and financial bids in the tenders.

Magala added that the first power station based on solar power, built in Mocuba district, in the central province of Zambezia, should begin commercial operations in August 2018. It will generate 40 megawatts, and is expected to improve the quality of electricity provided in Mocuba and other parts of Zambezia.

Two detained over mayor's murder

Police have begun criminal proceedings against two suspects in the case of the assassination of Mahamudo Amurane, the mayor of the northern city of Nampula.

According to the spokesperson for the General Command of the police, Inacio Dina, the two men had been detained but were then conditionally released. He did not name them, and said they are regarded as suspects.

The Nampula electronic news sheet "Wamphula Fax" contains more details, but the Nampula police command has yet to confirm or deny any of them.

According to the paper, at least 14 people have been detained. It says they include "a councillor who was the right-hand man of Amurane", and a contractor who was working on installing a restaurant on an upper floor of Amurane's residence.

The two allegedly met with Amurane on the day of the shooting (4 October) to discuss the building work. When they were leaving the house, a man appeared and fired the three fatal shots at Amurane. The contractor went to Amurane's aid, and drove him to Nampula Central Hospital, but he was dead on arrival.

The police initially took the two men in for questioning, since they were witnesses, but then concluded there were suspicions that they might have been involved in the crime.

A third detention was of a member of the opposition Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), who had allegedly made death threats against the mayor.

Amurane was elected mayor in the 2013 municipal elections on the MDM ticket, but this year there has been a bitter dispute between Amurane and the MDM leadership. Although he never formally resigned from the MDM, Amurane announced his intention to run for a second term of office next year, but not as an MDM candidate. In this dispute both sides swapped insults and used intemperate language.

Zambezi Delta seismic study launched

Work to collect 3D seismic data in the Zambezi Delta, in central Mozambique, will start in mid-October, under an agreement between the National Petroleum Institute (INP) and the French Compagnie Generale de Geophysique (CGG).

The two sides formally launched the seismic study at a ceremony in Maputo on 5 October.

The study will cover an area of 40,000 square kilometres and the data will allow greater knowledge of the hydrocarbon potential of the Zambezi Delta, providing oil and gas companies with the information they need to pursue their activities.

The work arises from the second public tender for the acquisition of geophysical and geological data, launched by the INP in 2016. It will provide the INP with a better geological view of the region which will be used in future licensing of oil and gas operators. It will also guarantee the transfer of technical knowledge to the INP and other Mozambican institutions.

The Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Leticia Klemens, told the ceremony that the acquisition of seismic data reflects the government's commitment to promoting geological knowledge of the country, in order to allow better management and use of mineral resources and to attract investment to the sector.

She mentioned that Mozambique has known reserves estimated at 200 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in the Rovuma Basin, off the coast of the northern province of Cabo Delgado. These discoveries are attracting foreign investment to explore in other parts of the country. The hydrocarbon potential of the Zambezi Delta is so far largely unknown.

Tax authority seeks 23 per cent increase in revenue

The Mozambican tax authority (AT) hopes to collect 23 per cent more revenue in 2018 than the target for this year set in the state budget.

Speaking in Maputo on 13 October, at the close of an AT national planning meeting, the chairperson of the AT, Amelia Nakhare, declared that next year minimum revenue of 222.8 billion meticaís (about US\$3.65 billion, at current exchange rates) should be collected. This year's revenue target is 186.33 billion meticaís.

Since the forecast for economic growth next year is just 5.3 per cent, and since the government has ruled out increasing tax rates, the only methods by which the AT can increase revenue by such a large sum are dramatic reductions in tax evasion, and bringing more people into the tax net.

The informal sector accounts for a large slice of the Mozambican economy and is largely untaxed. Promises to expand the tax base are made regularly, so far with little effect.

Nakhare urged all tax officials to fight a relentless battle against corruption. Mozambique's borders, she said, "should not be a stage for corruption and illicit acts which call into question national stability".

"Tax justice and transparency mean that we must be implacable in compliance with the law", she said. "We must reduce as far as possible the discretionary power of each functionary of our institution".

Nakhare called for increased inspection of those companies which enjoy special tax regimes, rationalisation of fiscal benefits, and greater control mechanisms through the use of fiscal stamps on alcoholic drinks and tobacco products, and a marker system for fuel.

To combat contraband in liquid fuels, she added, negotiations were underway with the company that won the tender for importing fuels, in order to ensure effective marking of fuel as from early 2018.

The adding of markers to fuel, which cannot be imitated or removed, makes it possible to detect not only smuggling, but also dilution and adulteration of fuel.

"Attaining the targets we are proposing will be a great challenge for us", admitted Nakhare, "and I am exhorting all of us to surpass the targets, because the development of the country depends on the commitment of each of us".

Mozambique News Agency, c/o 26 Withdean Crescent, Brighton BN1 6WH, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 7941890630 - mozambique-news@geo2.poptel.org.uk

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