

# Mozambique News Agency

## AIM Reports

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## Government appeals for humanitarian aid

The Mozambican government on 2 June reiterated its appeal to the international community to mobilise more humanitarian assistance for the victims of terrorism in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. At a meeting in Maputo with the diplomatic corps and with representatives of international organisations, Foreign Minister Veronica Macamo asked for help in obtaining more support in order to confront the humanitarian emergency in Cabo Delgado. She stressed that the number of people displaced from their homes by terrorist attacks has continued to rise and is now estimated at around 800,000.

The government, Macamo said, is making efforts to mitigate the effects of terrorist attacks, starting with humanitarian assistance to those who have lost everything they possessed. The forced migration of large numbers of people had led to problems of resettlement, and a great increase in health and medical requirements, particularly for women, children, and the elderly.

The displaced, Macamo added, had been forced to abandon their fields, their harvests, and their livestock, as they fled to seek shelter in safer areas. Faced with this situation, the government had adopted a “holistic approach” to the security situation in Cabo Delgado.

“We are speaking of the need to provide humanitarian aid to the displaced, and also the need to step up military efforts to combat and eliminate the terrorists”, she said.

Development projects were also required in northern Mozambique, she added, to create more jobs, provide opportunities for self-employment, and alleviate poverty.

Despite the efforts undertaken by the government, and by the defence and security forces, Macamo stressed the need for support from the country’s friends and cooperation partners “to lessen the suffering of the population, and to staunch this evil which has international ramifications”.

The minister also took advantage of the meeting to ask the diplomats to support Mozambique’s bid to become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. This election will take place next year, “I want to assure you that we shall honour your invaluable support, with our vision for seeking peace, stability and security in the world, and with our efforts to protect human rights, eradicate hunger and extreme poverty, and all forms of discrimination”, she said.

### President Nyusi holds meeting with Charles Michel

President Filipe Nyusi on 7 June held a virtual meeting with the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, at which the two men discussed the defence and security situation in Mozambique, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

A statement from President Nyusi’s office said that the meeting was an opportunity for the Mozambican leader to share information on the evolution of the security situation in Mozambique, particularly the government’s efforts to confront the terrorist attacks in parts of the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

President Nyusi thanked Michel for the willingness to support Mozambique shown by the European Union. The release added that he also “shared information about other partners who are expressing an interest in complementing the efforts of the Mozambican government in the struggle against this scourge”.

The two men also spoke of the visit by an EU technical team to Mozambique on 19-28 May, which they regarded as highly successful.

Michel said the EU is preparing to make a decision on the specific support to be granted to Mozambique in an integrated approach which includes aspects of security, development, and humanitarian action.

President Nyusi also shared with Michel the Mozambican government’s efforts to mitigate the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Michel expressed the EU’s solidarity, and its willingness to help Mozambique and other African countries to obtain Covid-19 vaccines.

The Ministry of Health has warned that Mozambique is on the verge of running out of vaccines, with just enough left to provide the second dose to those who have already received their first dose.

## Government tackles vulnerability to climate change

The Mozambican government is focused on optimising plans and strategies to reduce the country's vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change, declared the Minister of Land and Environment, Ivete Maibase.

Speaking on 9 June at the opening of the First National Conference on Climate Change, Maibase said the government prioritises the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, particularly in rural communities. She noted that, due to its geographical location, the country "is in a situation of extreme vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. This demands from us the adoption of strategies that will allow future generations to live with this phenomenon".

Maibase said her ministry has been undertaking actions to strengthen the sustainable management of natural resources, with the strategic goal of reducing the vulnerability of communities, of the economy and of infrastructures to climate risks and natural disasters.

Mozambique, she added, is making every effort to honour its commitments under the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, and under the subsequent Paris agreement. To implement these commitments, between 2020 and 2030, a budget of US\$11 billion is required.

For the government, climate change is not only a threat to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, and to poverty reduction in Mozambique, Maibase said, but also has the potential to destroy the gains the county has already made in implementing its development agenda.

Climate change, she added, could lead to mass migration and the destruction of livelihoods, compromising development, and exacerbating the inequalities between men and women.

The response to climate change, Maibase continued, "requires the participation of all development actors, and all cooperation partners, including the private sector". All must be involved in the measures to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

For her part, the resident coordinator in Mozambique of the United Nations system, Myrta Kaulard, guaranteed that the UN will always be willing to support Mozambique in the sustainable use of natural resources, the protection of biodiversity, climate resilience and the consolidation of the green and blue economy. She transmitted the message from UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, on the occasion of World Environment Day, celebrated on 5 June, in which he warned that the degradation of the natural world is compromising the welfare of 3.2 billion people – 40 per cent of humanity. "We are rapidly approaching a point of no return for the planet", said Guterres. "We face a triple environmental emergency from the loss of biodiversity, climate disruption and growing pollution. For a long time, humanity has cut down the world's forests, polluted its rivers and oceans, and ploughed its fields to exhaustion. We are devastating the very ecosystems that support our societies".

## Armed forces deny using land mines

The Mozambican defence and security forces have categorically denied reports in some foreign media that they have used land mines in the conflict with Islamist terrorists in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

Speaking at a Maputo press conference on 11 June, spokesperson for the Defence Ministry. Colonel Omar Saranga stressed that the defence forces are committed to acting in accordance with all the treaties and conventions that Mozambique has signed and ratified. This includes the Ottawa Treaty on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Mozambique signed this treaty in December 1997 and ratified it the following year.

Mozambique had been one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, but a major demining effort, begun after the 1992 peace agreement between the government and the Renamo rebels, led to the country being declared free of land mines on 1 December 2015. Under the Ottawa Treaty, the armed forces (FADM) destroyed their stocks of land mines.

According to the Halo Trust, one of the charities that led the demining effort, about 171,000 mines were removed and destroyed. Mozambique became the first heavily mine contaminated country to be declared free of this scourge.

Saranga insisted that Mozambique remains faithful to the principles of the Ottawa treaty. He stressed that the anti-terrorist operations in Cabo Delgado are intended to "guarantee the safety of the population, and of public and private property, and to restore normality". He added that the defence and security forces are strengthening their relations with human rights and humanitarian aid bodies.

Saranga said that the good name and image of Mozambique should be built by all sectors of society and particularly by the media. He urged journalists and editors "to contribute with their knowledge and advice, by acting with rigour and impartiality, and informing society of the consequences of violent extremism.

## Covid-19 remains under control

The Mozambican health authorities on 11 June announced that, in the previous 24 hours, a further 76 people were diagnosed with the Covid-19 respiratory disease. 73 of the cases were Mozambican citizens, one was a foreigner and in two cases nationality had not yet been confirmed.

According to a Health Ministry press release, since the start of the pandemic 71,355 people have been diagnosed with Covid-19 out of 565,793 tested.

The Ministry release reported that 16 people remain in Covid-19 treatment centres, 12 in Maputo, two in Nampula, one was in Tete, and one was in Matola.

For the second consecutive day, no deaths from Covid-19 were reported. Thus, the total Covid-19 death toll in Mozambique remains 840.

## President Nyusi inaugurates district hospital

President Filipe Nyusi on 10 June inaugurated a new hospital in Jangamo district, in the southern province of Inhambane, as part of the presidential initiative “One district, one hospital”, to ensure that each of Mozambique’s 154 districts has a reference hospital.

“The idea is to guarantee that, in a short space of time, Mozambique expands the coverage of good quality health services to all regions of the country, and particularly the rural areas”, President Nyusi stressed at the inauguration ceremony.

Building the Jangamo hospital, he said, was not merely complying with the government’s own health agenda – it was also in line with the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals “which seek to ensure access to quality health care and promote the well-being of all”.

President Nyusi pointed out that the Jangamo hospital will benefit more than 150,000 people. In the past, to obtain hospital care, the residents of Jangamo district had to travel long distances, often on foot, to reach the cities of Inhambane or Maxixe. “Pregnant women about to give birth will no longer have to make their way across long distances to obtain specialist treatment”, President Nyusi added. He stated that the new district hospital will also encourage tourism, which, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, was regarded as the key economic area for Inhambane province. “Tourists need a guarantee of security and medical treatment in the event of any health emergency”, he said.

President Nyusi was pleased to note that construction of the new hospital included houses for the doctors, boreholes for water supply and an electricity generator. “This is fundamental”, he declared.

The President said that, from 2019 to 2020, the national health service had expanded from 1,674 to 1,721 health units, a growth of 2.8 per cent. But most of these are health posts, and health centres, rather than hospitals. “The challenge still remains”, said President Nyusi, “since only 47 of the country’s 154 districts have a district hospital”.

The Jangamo hospital has a 55-bed capacity, and was financed by the Islamic Development Bank, which provided US\$11 million. Work on the hospital began in February 2018, and, although it has only now been officially inaugurated, ended in March 2020. The facilities include an operating theatre, emergency services, a blood bank, a maternity ward, a waiting house where pregnant women can stay before they give birth, a pharmacy, and a morgue.

“As you can see, our philosophy is not simply to proclaim the district as a pole of development, but to take development to the district”, said President Nyusi. “We are taking hospitals, banks, electricity, water, markets and much more to the districts”.

The President also urged the managers and doctors at the hospital to respect the patients, and to avoid illicit charges for services “because this damages the image of the health professionals and destroys the efforts of the government”.

## President Nyusi to miss Olympic Games

President Filipe Nyusi has announced that he will not attend the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Japan, to show solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attacks in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

The games are scheduled to begin on 23 July in Tokyo. They should have happened in 2020 but were postponed a year because of the Covid-19 pandemic..

Secretary of State for Sport, Gilberto Mendes, broke the news that President Nyusi will not be going to Tokyo in an interview on 9 June on Radio Mozambique. He made it clear that, for President Nyusi, the crisis in Cabo Delgado takes priority over any sporting event. Mendes said that initially President Nyusi had accepted the Japanese government’s invitation to attend the opening ceremony but had changed his mind in the light of the Cabo Delgado drama.

Parts of Cabo Delgado have been under attack from Islamist terrorists since October 2017. The jihadist group has declared its loyalty to the international terrorist network calling itself “Islamic State”.

At least 2,500 people have died in the conflict, and over 700,000 people have been displaced from their homes, forced to seek refuge in parts of Cabo Delgado still regarded as safe, or in other provinces.

## Former mayor to appeal against sentence

Raimundo Chambe, the lawyer for the former Mayor of Maputo, David Simango, has announced that his client is appealing against the 18-month jail sentence, converted into a fine, that he received from the KaMpfumo municipal district court on 9 June.

The court found Simango guilty of illicitly accepting an offer or promise and abuse of his office. According to the Central Office for the Fight against Corruption (GCCC), which brought the case against the former mayor, the company Epsilon Investments gave Simango a flat in central Maputo, in exchange for the rights to a plot of land where it wanted to build a condominium.

Chambe, cited in the daily newspaper “O Pais”, argued that Epsilon Investments had signed a contract with Simango’s wife, Celestina Gonzaga, under which it sold the flat in question and she agreed to pay for it in instalments.

The GCCC claimed that Gonzaga had not paid anything for the flat and believed that the contract was just a device to hide the true nature of the arrangement – which was that Epsilon gave the flat to the then mayor, in exchange for title to the land it wanted.

But Chambe claimed that Epsilon’s deal with Gonzaga about the flat long predated the election of Simango as Mayor. There was correspondence about the building dating from the time when the city was led, successively, by Joao Baptista Cosme, Artur Canana and Eneas Comiche (in his first term of office).

Chambe found it odd that the GCCC had prosecuted Simango, but not Epsilon Investments. Thus, the man who had allegedly taken the bribe was in the dock, but not the company that offered it.

## World Bank grant for sustainable rural economy

The World Bank on 10 June approved a grant of US\$150 million from the International Development Association (IDA) in support of the first phase of Mozambique's Sustainable Rural Economy Programme. According to the World Bank, this programme will "improve the incomes and resilience of communities in rural areas".

The Bank states that the project "will provide support to small agriculture producers and fisheries to increase their productivity and access to markets and help Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises improve their sales, while promoting the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices".

According to Diego Carballo, Lead Agriculture Economist, and the operation's task team leader, "it is evident that economic expansion in agriculture yields the highest impact on poverty reduction in Mozambique. However, the sector's potential continues to be challenged by low productivity, mostly due to low technology adoption, limited provision of agricultural services, coupled with high seasonality in production, as well as increasing climate vulnerability. This project seeks to address some of these challenges".

The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and is in line with the country's priorities outlined in the government's five-year plan, the Bank's partnership framework with Mozambique for 2017-21, as well as the new conflict-prevention and resilience-building focus of World Bank activities in Mozambique.

The IDA is that part of the World Bank which provides grants and soft loans to projects and programmes in the world's poorest countries intended to boost economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve living standards.

## World Bank grant for Covid-19 vaccinations

The World Bank on 4 June approved a US\$100 million grant from the IDA and a US\$15 million grant from the Global Financing Facility (GFF) in support of Mozambique's efforts to expand its COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

According to the World Bank, the funds will be used "to acquire, manage, and deploy COVID-19 vaccines and to strengthen the national health system's preparedness and capacities, as well as to ensure continuity of essential health services, particularly for women, children, and adolescents".

The project will fund the acquisition of COVID-19 vaccines and supplies needed for vaccine delivery and distribution, including dilutants, syringes, and other medical supplies, the release added. It will also support vaccine logistics, including cold chain inputs, storage, and transportation as well as training community health workers in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine campaign.

According to Miguel Angel San Joaquin Polo, Senior Health Economist, and the operation's task team leader, "this operation will enable the purchase of

approximately seven million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, the single largest contribution for Mozambique's vaccination efforts thus far. This will provide coverage for approximately twenty percent of the eligible population".

The GFF is described as a multi-stakeholder partnership hosted at the World Bank that supports countries with the world's highest maternal and child mortality burden and financial needs.

## Construction of Cuamba solar power station begins

The Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Max Tonela, on 10 June reiterated the government's determination to diversify the country's energy matrix through further investment in clean and renewable sources of power. He was speaking in the town of Cuamba, in the northern province of Niassa, at the ceremony to lay the first stone in the construction of a solar power station in the locality of Tereane, intended to meet the growing demand for power.

The solar power station, budgeted at US\$32 million, will cover 47 hectares, with a complex of 35,000 photovoltaic panels. Initially it is expected to produce about 41,000 megawatt-hours of electricity a year.

The project also envisages a transmission line running for 450 metres between the solar power station and the Cuamba substation, on the national grid. Work will be done to strengthen the substation and install a 16 MVA transformer.

After the conclusion of the project, scheduled for June 2022, an improvement is expected in the quality of power supplied, not only to consumers in Niassa, but also to the northern districts of the neighbouring province of Nampula. The project will create 100 jobs (90 of them for Mozambicans) during the construction phase, but only ten in the operational phase.

The project management has pledged to allocate one per cent of the revenue from the project (expected to be two million meticais – about US\$32,200 – a year) for community development in Cuamba municipality and district, including building schools and drilling boreholes for water supply.

Tonela said that the Tereane station will be the third solar powered station in the country. The first was set up in Mocuba, in Zambezia province, and has been in operation since 2019. The second, at Metoro, in Cabo Delgado, is still under construction, and should be concluded later this year. "We are paying particular attention to renewable sources", said Tonela, "since they allow us to put power stations at various points scattered across the country, helping us to create alternatives that improve security and quality of supply, and also make our climate agenda viable".

Among the partners in the Cuamba station are the publicly-owned electricity company, EDM, the London-based independent power producer Globelec, and Source Energia, which specialises in the development of electricity projects in Portuguese speaking African countries.

## Six sentenced for facilitating illegal ruby mining

The Montepuez district court, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado has sentenced seven people to 18 months imprisonment for facilitating the illegal mining of rubies in the concession granted to the company Montepuez Ruby Mining (MRM).

Only six were in court to hear the verdict and sentence. The whereabouts of the seventh accused are unknown, and he was tried in absentia.

According to an MRM press release, because the six who attended the trial were first offenders, the court converted the prison terms into fines at the rate of 300 meticaís (about five US dollars at current exchange rates) a day. The total fine each of them must pay is thus 164,100 meticaís. In addition, the six must pay MRM compensation of 300,000 meticaís.

The accused are three agents of the Mozambican police force (Celestino Jussa, Joaquim Alberto and Malimo Afonso), three workers for the private security company GardaWorld (Daniel Almeida, Armando Semenha and Feliciano Januario), and an MRM official, Ahmade Francisco, who was supposed to deal with security matters.

The court found that the group had worked together to facilitate illegal mining in the MRM concession, and the artisanal miners who invaded the concession paid them for their assistance.

The Cabo Delgado provincial police command has initiated disciplinary proceedings against the three police agents, and GardaWorld and MRM itself are taking similar action against their employees involved in the crime.

MRM says it will donate the compensation of 300,000 meticaís to assist the people displaced by terrorist attacks in other parts of the province.

## High Commissioner presents credentials to UK monarch

Mozambique's new High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Albertina MacDonald, on 8 June presented her credentials to Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace in London. Speaking afterwards at a *vin d'honneur*, the High Commissioner lauded the long-standing bonds of cooperation, friendship, and mutual understanding between Mozambique and the United Kingdom. She noted that since Mozambican independence in 1975, "Mozambique has benefited greatly from the cooperation with the United Kingdom, both bilaterally and multilaterally, as well as in the context of the Commonwealth".

MacDonald added that "our bilateral cooperation involves several important social and economic areas with great impact on the lives of the Mozambican people, of which I can highlight agriculture and rural development; water and sanitation; health and food security, and clean energy. We are growing our trade and investment relations. We share good governance

values and we cooperate on defence and security matters that are also of common interest".

She stressed that "cooperation with the United Kingdom has highlighted the importance of harnessing the capacities of our youth and girls, the role of vocational training in job creation, the impact of improved access to financing mechanisms for self-employment, as well as the effectiveness of measures to address gender-based violence".

She concluded, "our mission in the UK will continue to seek to strengthen the political, economic and cultural relations forged in these 46 years of friendship between Mozambique and the UK, driven by a high-level partnership to benefit both countries and peoples".

In his reply, the Queen's representative, the Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps, Alistair Harrison, stressed the importance attached to UK-Mozambique relations which he described as full, rich, and excellent.

Harrison pointed out that he has been and admirer of Mozambique since 1966 when, as a child, he watched the 1966 World Cup finals on television where he was enchanted by the skills of the Mozambican born soccer star Eusebio. He added that he had the privilege of seeing in person Eusebio play for Benfica against Newcastle United in 1971.

The United Kingdom has taken several steps to further strengthen relations with Mozambique. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has appointed Katherine Fletcher MP as his Special Envoy to Mozambique, and there are plans to hold a "Mozambique Week" in the UK.

## UNICEF to increase support for victims of terrorism

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has promised to increase its support for child victims of terrorism in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado from US\$51 to US\$90 million.

This promise was made by the UNICEF Regional Director for Southern and Eastern Africa, Mohamed Malick Fall, who is on a visit to Mozambique to learn about the impact of terrorist attacks on the situation of children.

On 7 June, after a meeting with Foreign Minister Veronica Macamo, Fall, cited by the daily newspaper "O Pais", said "I shall go to Cabo Delgado to verify the situation on the ground. We have heard about the many dramatic situations related with the protection of children and of women, because of the crisis the country is facing in that area".

It is not just UNICEF that is concerned with the situation in Cabo Delgado, but also other UN agencies and the international community in general, added Fall, who are backing an appeal for a humanitarian recovery programme for the province.

He reiterated UNICEF's commitment to continue working with the government to draw up a new national programme for UNICEF's cooperation with Mozambique, covering the 2022-2026 period.

## Mangrove forest to be restored

The Mozambican government intends to restore mangrove forests over an area of 5,000 hectares across the country, by 2022, according to the national director of maritime and fishery policy, Felismina Antia. She was speaking on 8 June on a Radio Mozambique programme on World Oceans Day, celebrated this year under the theme “Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean”.

The mangrove forests have been devastated over decades by the logging of mangrove trees largely for construction purposes. This leaves coastlines exposed to erosion, and damages fisheries production, since mangroves often serve as a nursery for juvenile fish and larval shellfish.

Antia said that, under the implementation of its sustainable development policies, the government was committed to restoring damaged areas of mangrove forest. “We have the commitment to restore about 5,000 hectares of mangrove. There is a high awareness across the country of the need to replant this marine ecosystem”, she added.

Attempts will also be made to restore damaged coral reefs and sea grass meadows. “We have a strategy, being undertaken with our partners to restore all these ecosystems”, said Antia.

“We feel that there is a positive rise in awareness among coastal communities and administrations along the coast”, she stressed.

A further priority for the Ministry of the Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries was to draw up a plan for organising the national maritime space. “This plan is one of the commitments made by the government to achieve the goals of conservation and sustainable intervention in the oceans”, said Antia. Drawing up the plan is intended to strike a balance between the various uses of the sea, and a balance between economic benefits and the well-being of the marine environment.

A draft of the plan has been published on the Ministry’s website, she said, and public consultation is under way, which will last until 16 June.

## Forests being lost to produce wood fuel

The southern province of Inhambane is losing about a thousand hectares of forest a year, mostly for the production of wood fuel, according to a report in the daily newspaper “O Pais”.

According to Zacarias Cadre, the Inhambane Provincial Director of Territorial Development and of the Environment, the province’s forestry resources are under pressure because of the insatiable demand for firewood and charcoal from Maputo city.

Areas close to Maputo have already been stripped of much of their tree cover, and wood fuel has become scarce in Gaza province too. So, the sellers of firewood and charcoal have moved further north and are cutting down trees at an alarming rate in Inhambane.

Despite all the talk about switching from wood fuel to gas, a very large number of Maputo households continue to depend on charcoal for cooking – a situation that was

worsened by the sudden disappearance of bottles of cooking gas from the Maputo market in recent days. Many commercial establishments, such as bakeries and restaurants, are also dependent on wood fuel.

Indiscriminate logging to produce wood fuel is also worsening erosion in Inhambane’s coastal districts, notably Massinga, Morrumbene, Inhassoro and Zavala.

Speaking on 5 June, the Inhambane provincial governor, Daniel Chapo, stressed that all citizens should be involved in protecting the environment. It was crucial to prevent erosion, he said, not only along the coast, but also in the interior, where uncontrolled bush fires are taking a heavy toll on the vegetation.

## China donates vaccines to armed forces

The Chinese armed forces on 3 June gave the Mozambican defence forces (FADM) 60,000 doses of vaccine against the Covid-19 respiratory disease. Signing the delivery note were the National Director of Military Health in the Mozambican Defence Ministry, Agueda Duarte, and the military attaché at the Chinese embassy, Zhou Zhe.

The ceremony was witnessed by the Defence and Health Ministers, Jaime Neto and Armindo Tiago, and by the Chinese ambassador, Wang Hejun.

Speaking immediately after the signing, Neto said the Chinese support will meet the vaccination needs of the FADM. “The vaccines we have just received”, he declared, “will guarantee the effective immunisation of the Mozambican armed forces, thus allowing our troops to comply to the full of the missions attributed to them”.

The vaccines will be delivered to the Health Ministry because 60,000 doses are more than the FADM requires and the Ministry will ensure that the surplus is distributed to other groups that require vaccination.

For his part, Wang said the Chinese armed forces had decided to offer the vaccines, because they understood that the needs of the FADM are urgent. He hoped that the vaccines “will create a shield of protection for members of the FADM, in complying with their noble mission of maintaining the security and stability of the nation”.

This is the second donation of Chinese vaccines to Mozambique. In February, Mozambique received 200,000 doses of the vaccine produced by the Chinese company Sinopharm. The first people to receive this vaccine were Mozambican health professionals.

Wang said this was the fruit of “the deep friendship between the presidents (Filipe Nyusi and Xi Jinping) and between the two peoples”.

In early March, the country received 484,000 doses of the Astra-Zeneca vaccine, produced in India under the name Covishield. 384,000 doses were obtained through the Covax initiative, coordinated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), and 100,000 were donated by the Indian government.

As of 24 May, according to Health Minister Armindo Tiago, 323,097 people had received at least one dose of vaccine against Covid-19, which is only two per cent of the target figure of 16 million.

## New water treatment station eases restrictions

President Filipe Nyusi on 2 June inaugurated a new water treatment plant in Moamba district, about 60 kilometres northwest of the capital, which will reduce restrictions on the water supply to the Greater Maputo Metropolitan Area. The system will supply about 650,000 consumers with access to drinking water.

The water system, which cost US\$173 million funded by the World Bank, includes a 95 kilometre pipeline from the reservoir behind the Corumana dam to Machava, in the city of Matola, plus an 18 kilometre extension to distribution centres in Mathlemele and Guava. With a capacity to produce 60,000 cubic metres of water a day, which will double when the second phase is concluded by September, the system will enable 360 kilometres of extensions to the distribution network and 100,000 new domestic connections of which 66,000 have already been concluded.

The infrastructure will alleviate drinking water shortages in the Greater Maputo area, and expand water supply to other residential areas in Maputo province, including Corumana, Sabie, Pessene and Moamba town.

Addressing the ceremony, President Nyusi said that, with the new infrastructure, the Greater Maputo area will have drinking water throughout the year, reducing the need for restrictions on supply. These restrictions were necessary due to the low level of water in the Pequenos Libombos reservoir, which provides the water that flows through the pumping and treatment station on the Umbeluzi River. This was the main source of water for Maputo, but it had proved increasingly unable to cope with the growth in Maputo's population and the demand from industry.

President Nyusi stressed that "this is an important investment which will improve the living standards of the population, but we will keep on developing alternative sources of water, including the expansion of boreholes in some neighbourhoods in Greater Maputo".

## Drug traffickers jailed

The Cabo Delgado provincial court in northern Mozambique, sitting in the provincial capital, Pemba, on 1 June sentenced 11 Pakistani nationals to between ten and 19 years imprisonment for drug trafficking.

A wooden dhow, that had set sail from the Pakistan laden with illicit drugs, was intercepted in the Bay of Pemba in a joint operation between the Mozambican navy and the National Criminal Investigation Service (SERNIC) on 23 December last year.

When they realised they were being pursued, the traffickers tried to sink their boat and destroy the evidence. They damaged the boat but SERNIC was able

to seize some of the drugs and arrest all 13 people on board. From the wreckage of the boat, SERNIC salvaged 126 kilos of heroin and 299 kilos of amphetamines (crystal meth).

For many years, Mozambique has been used as a corridor by drug traffickers. Heroin, and now crystal meth, is shipped from Asia and landed on the Mozambican coast. The drugs are then driven overland to South Africa, and from there some of them are believed to reach Europe.

The prosecuting attorney, Angelo Sueta, welcomed the lengthy prison sentences, which he described as "a victory for the Public Prosecutor's Office in this struggle against crime, and particularly against drug trafficking".

## Crystal meth seized in Nampula

SERNIC on 31 May in the northern city of Nampula, presented to reporters a 45 year old man who had been arrested on the main north-south highway driving a truck in which 55 kilos of crystal meth had been concealed. Enina Tsinine, the SERNIC spokesperson in Nampula, told journalists that since January 561 kilos of drugs had been seized in Nampula, mostly in transit from the Nampula coast to other parts of the country. "It is a vast coastline", she said. Drug seizures were most frequent on beaches near the port of Nacala, and at Aiube, in Angoche district.

## High level of new HIV infections

Health Minister Armindo Tiago on 31 May revealed that the country ranks fourth on the list of countries with high rates of HIV infections, with a national average rate of new infections estimated at 364 cases a day.

Addressing in Maputo the launch of the Second Stigma Index Study in Mozambique, to be conducted in partnership with the UNAIDS agency, Tiago declared that the only countries with higher infection rates are South Africa, Nigeria, and Russia.

"The current situation poses a continuous and permanent challenge and also pushes us to take coordinated and decisive actions to reduce the number of new infections and improve the living standards of the infected and affected people," he said.

The UNAIDS country director, Eva Kiwango, said Mozambique has nearly 2.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS of whom about one million do not have access to treatment because of several factors, including stigma and discrimination.

The representative of people living with HIV, Julio Mujojo, stated that the study will support an assessment of the historical impact of stigma and discrimination, as well as of present and future interventions intended to mitigate stigma of people living with the disease.

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