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President Nyusi warns third wave of Covid-19 has struck

President Filipe Nyusi, addressing the nation on 24 June, warned that the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic is now striking the country, and it could prove more violent and more severe than the first or second waves. He pointed out that in some countries faced with the third wave, the health system had collapsed due to a lack of beds for Covid-19 patients. However, he stressed that all efforts would be made to ensure that does not happen in Mozambique and to prevent the third wave from spreading across the entire country.

Of particular concern was the western province of Tete, second only to Maputo in terms of number of cases. Tete is where the health system is under most strain. “We don’t have many beds in Tete”, President Nyusi said, so the Ministry of Health wants to turn the new hospital that he inaugurated in the Chingodzi neighbourhood of Tete city in late May, into a Covid-19 treatment centre. But beds alone are not enough, and the President pointed out that “we don’t have many health staff in Tete either”.

Mozambique is made more vulnerable by the appearance of multiple strains of the coronavirus that causes Covid-19, including the Delta variant, and by the low level of vaccination. To date, less than two per cent of the target figure of 16 million adults have been vaccinated. There is a worldwide shortage of Covid-19 vaccines – particularly since the major supplier, the Serum Institute of India, has stopped exporting vaccines because of the Covid-19 disaster in India itself.

President Nyusi stressed that the government is working to acquire more vaccines. But while these efforts are underway, it is crucial that citizens strictly follow all the preventive measures against Covid-19 recommended by the health authorities.

The virus was now spreading rapidly because many people had neglected preventive measures. “We have forgotten the disaster that struck us in January and February (at the height of the second wave)”, President Nyusi said. When the government relaxed some of the Covid-19 restrictions in May, “many people thought this meant the end of the pandemic”, he added.

There had been a general neglect of preventive measures. Parties and other social events had been attended by hundreds of people in violation of government decrees on the pandemic. Similarly, the limitations on the number of people allowed to attend weddings, funerals and religious services had been ignored. Businesses had also ignored social distancing guidelines, with crowds outside banks or bakeries.

“We have avoided the collapse of the health system, we successfully reopened the schools, and we are

gradually reopening the economy”, he continued – but all these gains could be undone by the third wave unless citizens took prevention seriously.

President Nyusi had harsh words for the police and for other state bodies, such as the National Inspectorate of Economic Activities (INAE), who enforce the Covid-19 restrictive measures. He accused them of “falling asleep” because they had not implemented the government’s decisions. He added that he was not asking the police to beat up citizens, but he did expect them to hold offenders responsible for their actions.

President Nyusi announced that existing restrictive measures will remain in place, but in some areas will be tightened. Thus, the overnight curfew in force in most cities and towns will be extended by an hour. The curfew will start at 22.00 instead of 23.00, and last until 04.00.

The government once again shut the beaches. No sports, games or parties will be allowed on any beach, although citizens will be allowed to walk on the beaches.

The measures announced by President Nyusi once again close down theatres, cultural centres, and the like. Any exception to this rule must be authorised by the Ministry of Justice. The President said this measure was because, over the past month, large crowds had attended events in these places.

Attendance allowed at religious services or any other meeting has been cut to 40 in enclosed spaces and 80 in the open. Restaurants must close no later than 20.00, rather than the previous 21.00. Bottle stores must close by 15.00 rather than 17.00. Shopping centres may open from 09.00 to 18.00 on weekdays but must close by 15.00 on Sundays and public holidays.

President Nyusi said that to avoid queues, government offices will only attend to citizens, for such matters as issuing documents, if they book in advance. He also encouraged public and private institutions to allow their staff to work from home where possible.

“Let us adopt the new ways of living”, he declared. “Let us embrace technology to solve the problem of Covid-19”.

SADC approve support against terrorism

President Filipe Nyusi declared on 23 June that the conditions have now been met for Mozambique to accept the support that its partners in SADC (Southern African Development Community) may grant for the fight against terrorism, but he insisted that the main role in this struggle will be played by the Mozambican defence and security forces themselves.

President Nyusi was speaking at the end of an extraordinary SADC summit, called mainly to discuss the SADC response to the Islamist terrorist attacks in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

SADC initiatives, President Nyusi said, “will be important complements to the efforts which the country is undertaking to confront terrorism”. In the front line of this struggle, he continued, “are our defence and security forces who are selflessly determined to guarantee our sovereignty and territorial integrity and to protect our population”.

The final communique from the summit said the leaders “approved the Mandate for the SADC Standby Force Mission to the Republic of Mozambique, to be deployed under the SADC Standby Force in support of Mozambique to combat terrorism and acts of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado”.

The communique gave no details of the Standby Force Mission. However, in April a SADC Technical Mission recommended the immediate dispatch of an intervention force of almost 3,000 troops to Cabo Delgado. The detailed proposal was for three light infantry battalions of 630 troops each, two special forces squadrons of 70 troops each; two attack helicopters; two armed helicopters; two surface patrol ships; one submarine; one maritime surveillance aircraft as well as other logistical support.

Whether the SADC leaders have accepted this proposal is not yet clear. Nor is it yet known which SADC members will provide the troops, the ships, and the aircraft, or how the operation will be funded.

The communique also said the summit “urged the Member States in collaboration with Humanitarian Agencies to continue providing humanitarian support to the population affected by the terrorist attacks”. To date, over 700,000 people have been displaced from their homes by the jihadist raids, carried out by groups known locally as “Al Shabaab”, and who have aligned themselves with the international terrorist network known as “Islamic state”, or ISIS.

Among the leaders attending the Maputo summit was the new Tanzanian President, Samia Hassan. This was the first SADC summit she has attended. Tanzania is critical to the fight against terrorism, since it has a lengthy border with Cabo Delgado, and Tanzanian jihadists are known to be playing a leading role in the Cabo Delgado war.

The next summit of SADC will take place in Malawi in August when President Nyusi will hand over the rotating presidency of the organisation to his Malawian counterpart, Lazarus Chakwera.

President Nyusi confirms clashes near Palma

President Filipe Nyusi on 25 June announced that the defence and security forces have frustrated another terrorist attack in Palma district, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

Speaking at the launch of year-long celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the ruling Frelimo Party, on 25 June 1962, President Nyusi said the terrorists had tried “to make our festivities coincide with attacks around Palma”. They had been unsuccessful, he added, because “our young fighters said this morning ‘we are celebrating by striking the enemy hard’. Right now, the fighting is continuing”.

25 June also marks the 46th anniversary of Mozambican independence. Frelimo also re-inaugurated its national headquarters in central Maputo, after many months of building work.

President Nyusi urged all Frelimo members and sympathisers to become actively involved in the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the party and in the preparations for the Frelimo 12th congress, scheduled for September 2022, in the southern city of Matola. The dates chosen – 23-28 September – coincide with those of Frelimo’s first congress, held in Dar es Salaam in 1962.

The President said the 12th Congress will discuss political and ideological options and will decide on far-reaching questions about the life of the party and the country. The Congress, he added, will be “a moment of reflection and festivity, and of strengthening and consolidating the spirit of national unity, of peace and the promotion of development”.

Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario stressed the importance of defeating the terrorists in Cabo Delgado. He told reporters that all Mozambicans should be involved in the consolidation of peace, and in building a Mozambique of well-being. “We need our country to live in peace”, Rosario declared. “We are all called upon to consolidate peace”.

EU military mission to be considered in July

The European Union will next month consider sending military personnel to Mozambique to give support and training.

According to a report by the Reuters news agency, the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Augusto Santos Silva, on 23 June told a parliamentary committee in Lisbon that he hoped the mission would be approved at the next meeting of EU foreign ministers on 12 July. He stated, “we hope that...it will be formally approved so we can launch this European mission to support Mozambique in the fight against terrorism”.

The defence and security situation was discussed at a virtual meeting Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi held with the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, on 7 June at which the two leaders reviewed the findings of the visit by an EU technical team to Mozambique on 19 - 28 May.

Italy and ADB grant €990,000 for agro-processing

The African Development Bank (ADB) and the Italian Technical Cooperation Fund on 24 June announced that a grant of €990,000 has been awarded to help small agro-processing enterprises in Mozambique boost production and quality control.

The programme will be implemented by the Confederation of Mozambican Business Associations (CTA) and will help businesses enter into the national and continental markets and capitalise on the opportunities created by the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, CTA President Agostinho Vuma, explained that the programme will benefit about 300 businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises led by women and young people operating along the Nacala, Beira and Pemba-Lichinga development corridors.

The project will address one of the major problems faced by small scale producers and processors who wish to trade beyond their local markets – which is their lack of certification. According to the Italian ambassador to Mozambique, Gianni Bardini, it will act as a catalyst to extend the private sector which has “a huge and largely untapped potential”.

The project is also designed to tackle the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Pietro Toigo, the ADB representative in Mozambique, “we are pleased to partner with the CTA and the government of Italy to support Mozambican small and medium-sized enterprises recover from the Covid pandemic and scale up their competitiveness, as part of the ADB’s commitment to help industrialise Mozambique and Africa”.

Mozambique’s Minister of Industry and Trade, Carlos Mesquita, welcomed the initiative, stressing its “catalytic role in promoting Mozambique’s agricultural modernisation and the industrialisation of critical sectors of the economy”.

The project supports the goals of the African Development Bank’s Country Strategy Paper for Mozambique 2018-2022, which focuses on two strategic pillars: infrastructure investments that enable transformative inclusive growth and job creation; and agricultural transformation and value chain development.

The African Development Bank financed its first project in Mozambique in 1977 and since then has focused on supporting projects covering agriculture, transport, water and sanitation, energy, communications, mining, and finance.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service - for details contact pfauvet@live.com

President Nyusi meets Renamo leader to discuss demobilisation

President Filipe Nyusi met with the leader of the main opposition party, Renamo, Ossufo Momade, on 23 June, to discuss progress in implementing the peace agreement the two men signed in August 2019.

That agreement envisages the dismantling of all Renamo’s military bases, the demobilisation, and disarming of the Renamo militia, and the reintegration of its members into society (a process known as DDR).

A statement from President Nyusi’s office said that he and Momade “concluded that 2,307 former guerrillas have been disarmed and demobilised, and their reintegration into society is now beginning”.

“These men and women have chosen to live a life of peace and to contribute to the prosperity of our country”, the statement added.

This progress, despite the challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, “bears witness to the collective desire of the parties to achieve peace”.

The two leaders, the statement continued, “expressed their commitment to ensuring that the remaining fighters are completely disarmed and demobilised”.

At the same time, they pledged to ensure that the efforts made to date are sustainable “which will require a renewed commitment to support the reintegration of those who have been demobilised”.

President Nyusi and Momade recognised that the demobilised can make “unique contributions” to society and promised to work together so that they can realise their potential. They also agreed to start the integration of former Renamo guerrillas into the police force.

They took the opportunity to urge, once again, those who are still in the bush to join the demobilisation. This appeal was directed at the self-styled “Renamo Military Junta”, and its leader, Mariano Nhongo.

Crystal meth seized in Zambezia

The authorities on 22 June seized 309 kilos of the illicit drug methamphetamine (crystal meth) in Bive village, Mocuba district, in the central province of Zambezia, according to a report by the television station STV.

The drug was hidden in a container in a truck into which the traffickers had installed a false bottom. But the customs team that stopped the truck found the false bottom and asked the driver to open it.

Zambezia customs director, Manuel Eliseu, told STV, that the driver did open the container bottom – but then ran into the bush. The customs officers searched the container and found 309 kilos of crystal meth.

Obede Basilio, the Zambezia spokesperson for the Criminal Investigation Service (Sernic), said that Sernic laboratories will check the exact nature of the drug.

It is likely that the drug came from Asia and was landed on a beach in Nampula province before it was loaded into the container. The intended final destination was probably South Africa. Mocuba lies on the route from Nampula to Maputo, and on to South Africa.

Funding crisis hits aid for northern Mozambique

A lack of funds is hampering the efforts of aid agencies to provide life-saving assistance and protection to 1.1 million people in the northern Mozambican provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

In a report published on 15 June, OCHA points out that aid agencies have only received US\$22.3 million in funding which is just nine per cent of the \$254 million needed to respond to the violent conflict which has driven a massive displacement of people from their homes. It calculates that the number of people displaced due to terrorist attacks in Cabo Delgado increased from 172,000 in April 2020 to over 732,000 by the end of April 2021.

The United Nations agency laments that at least thirty per cent of those displaced have had to flee multiple times and warns that the repeated displacement and the destruction of livelihoods are “exhausting families’ scarce resources, leading to a severe hunger crisis amidst multiple health and protection emergencies”. It adds that “most people were left with no more than the clothes on their backs, and arrived at their destinations exhausted, traumatised, injured and in need of urgent medical attention and psychosocial support”.

OCHA warns that, as a result of the conflict, “more than 900,000 people are severely food insecure and displaced people and host communities are also in urgent need of shelter, protection and other services. Hunger is not only increasing in rural zones but also in urban centres, including Cabo Delgado’s capital, Pemba, which hosts the highest number of displaced people in the province (157,000) and where 40 per cent of people are facing high acute food insecurity”.

It adds that “the massive displacement is also straining meagre resources of host communities, as more than 80 per cent of people who fled the conflict are staying with family and friends”.

OCHA notes the findings of Save the Children that at least 51 children, most of them girls, were abducted by the terrorists over the past twelve months. It adds that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has found that women and girls have been “abducted, forced into marriage, and subjected to sexual violence”, while children are also being forcibly recruited into armed groups.

OCHA concludes that “while further funding is under discussion, more is needed immediately to ensure that humanitarian organisations can save lives and alleviate suffering. Without additional funding, humanitarian partners will be forced to stop essential programmes, and hundreds of thousands of people will not receive the assistance they need to survive”.

Parts of Cabo Delgado have been under attack from Islamist terrorists since October 2017, forcing people

from their homes and destroying livelihoods. It is estimated that 350,000 children have been displaced, leaving them hungry and without education.

US provides \$30 million to address food insecurity

The United States government, via the US Agency for International Development (USAID), has granted US\$30 million to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) to address food insecurity in communities affected by terrorism in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado and those affected by natural disasters in the central provinces of Sofala and Manica.

According to a press release from the US embassy, on 15 June the US ambassador, Dennis Hearne met with WFP Executive Director David Beasley “to discuss the US-WFP partnership in addressing the needs of the nearly 800,000 internally displaced people in Mozambique and their host communities”.

“The humanitarian situation in northern Mozambique is concerning,” said Hearne. “The US Government remains committed to supporting the government of Mozambique and the Mozambican people to respond to this complex crisis. This includes assisting the many Mozambican families and communities that have been hosting their neighbours, displaced from their homes due to violence in Cabo Delgado”.

Beasley added “we are incredibly grateful for this generous contribution and the support of the United States here in Mozambique. Through WFP’s life-saving assistance for families affected by conflict, we are planting the seeds of peace”.

“But this is not enough,” Beasley continued. “We must work harder together to ensure the longer-term recovery and well-being of the people, helping them to move forward and giving them hope for a better future.”

WFP says it will use most of the \$30 million in new funding to provide emergency food assistance to 116,500 of the Mozambicans displaced by the violence in Cabo Delgado, offer nutritional support to displaced children, and provide 7,600 refugees with food donations and food vouchers.

The funding will also cover critical logistics, coordination, and information management support for the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) and provide emergency food assistance to more than 30,000 Mozambicans affected by natural disasters in Manica and Sofala.

USAID is also granting \$5.5 million to Mozambique to provide critical food and nutrition assistance, protection for women and children, as well as water, sanitation, and hygiene services to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and water-borne diseases. This is part of a grant of over \$91 million to 11 African countries to address urgent humanitarian needs arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

World Bank supports resilience project

The World Bank on 18 June approved a US\$150 million credit to support the Mozambican government's Northern Mozambique Rural Resilience Fund, with the funds being made available through the Bank's International Development Association (IDA).

The project will benefit 619,000 people in 300 communities by improving livelihoods for rural communities affected by Islamist terrorism in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. The humanitarian crisis in Cabo Delgado continues to grow and a recent report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that over 732,000 people have been displaced from their homes.

A press release from the World Bank explained that "the project will provide support to districts and communities to stabilise the living conditions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities; generate livelihood opportunities in sustainable agriculture and fisheries; invest in local infrastructure to improve economic activity; promote inclusive and participatory development and decision making for improved social integration".

It added that "the project will also invest in improved management of natural resources, including forestry, fisheries, biodiversity and soil, and will adopt community-driven and climate-sensitive approaches to improved management of natural resources on which rural livelihoods depend".

According to Ann-Sofie Jespersen of the World Bank, "by deliberately adopting a community-driven approach, the project is investing in dialogue, participation, consensus building, and good governance, which will ultimately contribute to restoring the social fabric and trust lost through conflicts".

The project is run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Land and Environment, and the Ministry of Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries, and it is in line with the country's priorities outlined in the government's five-year plan. It is being coordinated by the government's National Sustainable Development Fund (FNDS), with the Blue Economy Development Fund (ProAzul) leading on fisheries interventions, and the non-profit organisation BioFund leading on some activities inside Conservation Areas.

The World Bank's International Development Association helps the world's poorest countries by providing grants and low to zero-interest loans for projects and programs that boost economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve poor people's lives.

Vodafone Foundation and UNHCR expand education for refugees

The British charity, the Vodafone Foundation, and the United Nations Refugee Agency, the UNHCR, have opened two Instant Network Schools in northern Mozambique to help with the education of nine thousand children who are missing their schooling due

to the Covid-19 pandemic and the effects of conflict in many parts of Africa.

One of the schools will serve the Maratane Refugee Settlement, a camp hosting a third of the country's refugees, and another is the biggest secondary public school in Nampula city. They will cover grades 7 – 12 and 200 teachers will receive specialised training.

The Maratane Refugee Settlement is located about 35 kilometres from Nampula city. It was set up in February 2001 and is the national centre for registering and settling asylum seekers. It currently hosts over nine thousand refugees mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, and Somalia.

The camp is run by the government's National Refugee Support Institute (INAR) and there is a primary and secondary school serving both refugees and local children. However, it is estimated that over half of the children in the camp do not have access to education.

Vodafone's Andrew Dunnett pointed out that "Covid-19's onslaught of school closures, health needs, and loss of family livelihoods has exacerbated the risks of refugee children – and secondary school-age refugee girls in particular – not returning to school. Refugee students in Mozambique – where Maratane used to be called the forgotten camp – have faced particularly dire conditions and consequences for their continued safety, wellbeing, and learning".

The Instant Network Schools scheme converts existing classrooms into multimedia hubs with internet connectivity and provides educational content in line with the country's curriculum. The scheme provides a 'school in a box' composed of 25 tablets for students, a laptop for the teacher, a projector, speaker, 3G internet connectivity, solar charging, and a library of digital educational resources.

The UNHCR representative in Mozambique, Samuel Chakwera, pointed out that "fostering quality learning in refugee settlements and camps remains a constant challenge as most of the time educational resources are not available in those settings. Through the Instant Network Schools programme in secondary schools in Maratane and Nampula, an innovation hub will be created in the classroom, bringing together education, innovation, and protection. I am incredibly proud to see the programme expand into Mozambique where I hope it will have the same success that we've experienced in other countries".

The addition of the two schools in Mozambique brings the total number of Instant Network Schools to 38, helping over 94,000 pupils and a thousand teachers. The other schools are located in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Sudan.

The programme was established by Vodafone Foundation and UNHCR in 2013 to give young refugees, host community members and their teachers access to digital devices, resources and tools, including the internet which assists in improving the quality of education in some of the most marginalised communities in Africa. The partnership intends to expand the programme to benefit 500,000 young refugees and their communities by 2025.

Commission investigating sexual exploitation of prisoners

A former Attorney-General, Sinai Nhatitima, has been appointed to head the ten-member Commission of Inquiry investigating allegations of sexual exploitation of inmates of the Ndlavela Women's Prison, in the southern municipality of Matola.

Four members of the Commission were appointed by the Justice Ministry – namely Justino Tonela (General Director of the Legal Aid Institute, IPAJ), Elisa Boerrkamp (Director of the Legal and Judicial Training Centre), Jorge Ferreira (IPAJ Maputo Provincial Delegate) and Jose Cumbane.

Also sitting on the Commission are Raul Afonso, of the National Criminal Investigation Service (Sernic), Rosa White of the National Human Rights Commission, Firoza Zacarias of the Mozambican Bar Association (OAM), Eularia Ofumane, of the Association of Women Jurists, and Maria Sabata, representing the Anglican Church.

The Commission, which has 15 clear days to complete its investigation, held its first meeting on 17 June.

Speaking at a press conference after the meeting, Nhatitima said that the commission is starting from the presumption of innocence, and it hopes for cooperation from everyone who has knowledge of the matter or who has accompanied the case. "We hope that we can all collaborate to bring to the surface all the truth that interests society", he declared.

In order to meet the deadline for completing the investigation, Nhatitima asked for a pragmatic attitude from the members of the Commission. He admitted that, during the investigations, new elements might arise which could force an extension of the deadline.

Members of the Commission would not be paid for their work, he said. Participation was "the free and spontaneous will of each of us, bearing in mind the nature of the matter and its impact on society. Each of us understood that we ought to cooperate".

The anti-corruption organisation, the Centre for Public Integrity (CIP), brought the scandal to light. Over a period of five months, CIP investigators, pretending to be clients interested in buying prisoners for sex, infiltrated the clandestine network operated by prison guards. The material gathered by CIP includes videos of aspects of the prostitution racket, interviews with several of the victims, and mobile phone messages between prison guards and supposed clients.

In addition to setting up the Commission of Inquiry, Justice Minister Helena Kida has suspended the entire prison management.

Illegal export of logs foiled

The customs authorities in the northern port of Nacala have foiled an attempt to illegally export four containers of unprocessed logs destined for China, according to a report in the newsheet "Carta de Mocambique".

Under Mozambican legislation, it is illegal to export

wood that has not been processed.

The logs, belonging to an exporter named Bajone, were from trees that had been felled in the central province of Zambezia. Officials in the Zambezia Forestry Services collaborated in the exporter's criminal activity, giving the go-ahead to exporting the containers and issuing documents stating that the wood had been processed. But when customs officers in Nacala opened the containers they found this was a straightforward lie, and that the wood had undergone no form of processing at all. The paper's sources said that the Zambezia officials have been detained but declined to name them.

This is the second time this month that illegal exports of timber have been foiled in Nacala. On 11 June, five containers of logs were seized before they could be exported.

"Carta de Mocambique" also reports that in Sofala province police have seized three trucks laden with logs. The trees had been cut down illegally in the neighbouring province of Manica.

Access to drinking water expanded

Over 465,000 residents of 15 neighbourhoods in the Greater Maputo Metropolitan Area will enjoy a better water supply service, following the inauguration on 17 June of the distribution centres in Mathemele and Guava neighbourhoods.

The centres, budgeted at over 500 million meticaís (about US\$8 million), funded by the Dutch Facility for Infrastructure Development (ORIO) will mitigate the water shortage in Greater Maputo, and increase the system's storage capacity to about 15,000 cubic metres.

Inaugurating the centres, the Minister of Public Works, Joao Machatine, said they reflect government efforts to improve water supply for domestic, agricultural, and industrial consumers

"The government's commitment is to take drinking water to as many consumers as possible," said the minister, pointing out the need to commit further investments in modern technologies to ensure an efficient water supply service and increased reliability.

Machatine stated that there has been a significant reduction in commercial losses due to the new technologies adopted by the government's Water Supply Investment and Assets Fund (FIPAG) but added there is a great need to strengthen the current outcomes and ensure the success of the investment. "The mounting of new floodgates at the Corumana dam reservoir and the operational equipment at the two distribution centres reflect the efforts underway," he emphasised.

The distribution centres, built between June 2018 and March 2021, are part of the Greater Maputo Water Supply System which includes the Water Treatment Plant in the Moamba district, recently inaugurated by President Filipe Nyusi. Under the project, a 113-kilometre pipeline (from the Corumana dam to Machava and Guava) has been concluded, as well as 360 kilometres of the domestic distribution network.

Government improving forestry management

Mozambique has launched a programme to improve forestry management in the face of illegal logging and other malpractices which are costing the country incalculable amounts.

The World Bank has made over US\$5 million available for Mozambique to develop its inspection capacity under a programme implemented by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

The National Forestry Inventory of 2018 indicated that 267,000 hectares of forest were lost every year in the period between 2003 and 2013. This meant that, on average, the country was losing 0.76 per cent of its forest cover every year. Nonetheless, there are still 34 million hectares of native forest in Mozambique, covering 43 per cent of the country.

Faced with the reality of deforestation and forest degradation, representing a high cost for local communities and the national economy, regional training for forest wardens has begun in the northern city of Nampula. The training will take place in three northern provinces (Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula) to provide forest wardens and associated staff with the skills to identify tree species.

Alima Taquidir, from the Ministry of Land and Environment, said that through improving forestry management, the country could benefit from the enormous potential it possesses. "Our goal is to improve the monitoring of tree species throughout the country", said Taquidir. "We need to do this because one tree trunk that has been logged can easily be confused with another. If our staff and wardens were better trained, they could correctly identify all the species that pass through the monitoring posts".

ENI confirms it will launch LNG project in 2022

The Italian energy company ENI has confirmed that it will start production of liquefied natural gas at the Coral South gas field off the coast of the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado in 2022.

The floating liquefied natural gas (FLNG) facility is currently being constructed in South Korea and it is expected that this will be shipped to Mozambique with an arrival date of December 2021.

The project has not been affected by the Islamist terrorism that has affected Cabo Delgado because the entire process of extracting and liquefying the gas will take place offshore. Speaking to S&P Global Platts news outlet, an ENI spokesperson confirmed that "so far the violence in the north of Mozambique has not affected the Coral South project timeline and we confirm start-up in 2022 as per schedule".

Earlier in June, eleven Mozambican engineers travelled to South Korea for a six-month training programme where they will familiarise themselves with the FLNG plant.

The FLNG platform can produce 3.4 million tonnes of LNG a year and the entire production over twenty years has been sold to BP.

Falling prices of renewables undercut fossil fuels

A report by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has found that almost two-thirds of renewable power generation brought online around the world last year, accounting for 162 gigawatts of power, had lower costs than the cheapest fossil fuel options.

The cost of renewable energy technology has continued to drop, with concentrating solar power (CSP) – where mirrors or lenses are used to concentrate sunlight – falling by sixteen per cent over the previous year. The cost of onshore wind power fell by thirteen per cent, with offshore wind dropping by nine per cent. The cost of photovoltaic solar power generation fell by seven per cent.

With the start-up costs of renewables dropping and lower running costs, switching to renewables is becoming ever more attractive. According to IRENA, "with costs at low levels, renewables increasingly undercut coal's existing operational costs too". The report adds that low-cost renewables "give developed and developing countries a strong business case to power past coal in pursuit of a net-zero carbon economy". In addition, it estimates that the renewable projects that came online in 2020 will save emerging economies up to US\$156 billion over their lifespan.

This point was stressed by the Director-General of IRENA, Francesco La Camera, who noted that "renewables present countries tied to coal with an economically attractive phase-out agenda that ensures they meet growing energy demand while saving costs, adding jobs, boosting growth and meeting climate ambition".

Over the last decade, the cost of generating electricity from utility-scale solar PV fell by 85 per cent, that of CSP by 68 per cent, onshore wind by 56 per cent and 48 per cent for offshore wind.

As a result, IRENA estimates that retiring the coal-powered electricity plants that cannot compete with renewables and replacing them would generate 800 gigawatts of clean power and save over \$32 billion in generating costs annually. This would stop about three gigatons of carbon dioxide per year being released into the atmosphere – which IRENA calculates represents a fifth of the emissions reduction needed by 2030 to keep global warming from going beyond the 1.5 degrees centigrade target set by the Paris Agreement of 2015.

Currently, about three-quarters of Mozambique's electricity is generated by hydroelectric power stations, with about one per cent coming from solar power. And the country has a huge potential for further renewable energy generation – according to the government's Renewable Energies Auction Programme (Proler), the country's solar potential is 23,000 gigawatts, wind potential 4.5 gigawatts, hydroelectricity 19 gigawatts, and two gigawatts of bioenergy potential.

Several new solar plants are either under construction or at the planning stage. A solar power plant is currently being built at Cuamba in the northern province of Niassa which will have the capacity to produce 19 megawatts.

When it is completed next year, it will be the country's second large scale solar power plant, joining the 40-megawatt plant in Mocuba in the central province of Zambezia. A third plant providing 41 megawatts is being constructed at Ancuabe in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

In addition, last September the government put out to tender to independent operators the rights to build 40-megawatt solar power plants in Dondo (Sofala province), Lichinga (Niassa), and Manje (Tete), along with a 40-megawatt wind power plant in Inhambane.

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is based in Abu Dhabi and is an intergovernmental organisation that supports countries in their transition to renewable energy.

DP World launches Maputo-Harare rail service

DP World, the company that holds the concession to operate the container terminal at Maputo Port, has launched a rail service between the port and Harare, reducing the transit time for containers travelling between Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

On 11 June, the port handled containers for the first of the fortnightly train services between the two capitals, and DP World is working with its partners to make this a weekly provision. According to DP World, "this new offering presents a multitude of new business opportunities for customers in Zimbabwe and Mozambique".

The company pointed out that "in the past, transit goods on their way to Harare would often have to be transported far greater distances by sea and road, but this route will give customers a new, direct, and faster option for delivery".

The chief executive of DP World-Maputo, Christian Roeder, explained that "this rail service between Maputo and Harare is key to reopening the route between these markets to drive more efficient logistics in the region. Through this service, which we will facilitate and handle all port and border documentation, we can cut down transit times, give our customers better service and improve the connections between cities".

DP World is growing the container terminal's position as a regional transit point. The company has recently launched a dry port facility at Komatipoort in South Africa where containers transported from Maputo under bond will undergo South African customs clearance.

DP World holds a 30-year concession to operate the container terminal at Maputo Port until 2033, with an option to extend for a further 10 years.

Seahorse smuggler charged with environmental crimes

The Public Prosecutor's Office has charged a Chinese national with environmental crimes that carry a prison sentence of between 12 and 16 years, reports the television station, STV. The Chinese citizen, whose name was not given in the STV report, was caught in possession of nine kilos of dried seahorses. All species of seahorse are protected in Mozambique, and fishing for them is prohibited.

The accused intended to take the seahorses to China for use in "Chinese traditional medicine". He would have sold them for US\$1,800 a kilo. He says he purchased them from local fishermen for between 30 and 50 meticaís (between 47 and 79 US cents a kilo).

The demand from the Asian market, including not only China but also Indonesia, the Philippines and Korea, may be driving the 46 species of seahorse towards extinction. It is feared that around 20 million of these small fish are caught every year.

The Mozambican authorities suspect that the seahorses were acquired as the result of illegal fishing in the Bazaruto Archipelago National Park, off the coast of the Inhambane districts of Vilankulo and Inhassoro.

The seizure of the dried seahorses was possible because the police received a tip-off from people living near the Vilankulo house used by the Chinese citizen.

In addition to the prison term, the Public Prosecutor is proposing that the accused should be fined 250 times the monthly minimum wage. This works out at about 1.2 million meticaís (around US\$18,000). The property registered in the accused's name in Vilankulo should be seized by the Mozambican state, the prosecution argues.

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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