GHANA: A SMOOTH TRANSFER OF POWER

Opposition leader Nana Akufo-Addo won Ghana’s presidential election on 9 December 2016 with 53.85% of the vote against incumbent President John Dramani Mahama who won 44.40% of the vote. The voter turnout was 68.62%. It was Akufo-Addo’s third time running for president in Ghana. In 2012, he lost against President Mahama by only 300,000 votes. Despite the traditionally close presidential election results in Ghana, Mahama conceded defeat and paved the way for another smooth transfer of power in that country. Ghana has confirmed its reputation as a model of democracy in West Africa. A large number of West African presidents attended the inauguration ceremony that was held on 7 January 2017 in Accra. However, accusations of plagiarism overshadowed the swearing-in ceremony. The president’s address used quotes from speeches by US presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, which created an outcry on social media about plagiarism. During the campaign, the economy and job creation were at the heart of the campaign discussions. “Ghana is open for business again,” was one of the newly elected president’s key messages. Indeed, President Akufo-Addo won the election with his promise of “Change: an Agenda for Jobs - Creating Prosperity & Equal Opportunity for All.” Despite good growth prospects that are estimated to be 8.7% in 2017 by the African Economic Outlook, Ghana is among the most indebted African countries (rank 7) and still fights against high inflation (10.2% in 2016 compared to 17.2% in 2015). Nana Akufo-Addo has become the 5th president of Ghana, a country that will celebrate 60 years of independence on 6 March 2017.

- Official website of President Nana Akufo-Addo: [http://nanaakufoaddo.org](http://nanaakufoaddo.org)
The 50th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government was held in Abuja on 17 December 2016 to take stock of West Africa's regional integration process. The security situation and the worrying political situation in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau topped the agenda. ECOWAS leaders agreed to uphold the 1 December 2016 Gambian election results and to guarantee the safety and protection of the President-elect Adama Barrow who is supposed to be sworn in on 19 January 2017. ECOWAS leaders also reviewed the institutional crisis in Guinea-Bissau and urged all parties to strictly comply with the provisions of the ECOWAS-brokered Conakry Accord of September 2016.

Due to financial constraints, ECOWAS will withdraw its military mission, ECOMIB, by June 2017. In reaction to the situation in Mali, ECOWAS noted that "in spite of progress made, there are still challenges to the full and effective implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement." Furthermore, ECOWAS leaders condemned the recent terrorist attacks on civilian populations, humanitarian workers, the Malian Defence and Security Forces, and MINUSMA. They also expressed concern about the "serious humanitarian situation occasioned by Boko Haram attacks in North-East Nigeria, affecting 14 million people, 7 million of which require humanitarian aid; the majority being children." Looking forward, after the many elections held in the region in 2016, there is, to date, only one major election scheduled in West Africa. Liberia is set to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in October 2017. ECOWAS heads of state also endorsed the candidature of Alpha Condé, President of Guinea, as the Chairman of the African Union. The next ECOWAS ordinary session is scheduled to take place in May in Monrovia, Liberia.


NEW ECOWAS REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL INVESTMENT PLAN

Following the specialised technical experts' meeting, ECOWAS ministers endorsed the new ECOWAS Regional Agricultural Investment Plan and Food and Nutrition Security (RAIPFNS) on 12 December 2016 in Abuja. They also adopted a strategic framework for 2016-20, including a results framework to measure the impact and progress made in its implementation. The new plan builds on an in-depth assessment of achievements and takes stock of the limits of the ECOWAS regional agricultural policy, known as ECOWAP. It also takes into account all major policies and global initiatives (SDGs, Paris Declaration, etc.) relevant to achieving food security, and ultimately food sovereignty in the region.

Despite some progress, West African agriculture remains largely under-funded. West African countries devote on average about 5% of their public budget to agriculture, only half of the 10% target fixed by the African Union's Malabo Declaration. The RAIPFNS aims to 1) contribute to increasing agro-forestry-pastoral and fisheries productivity and production through diversified and sustainable production systems, and to reducing post-production losses; 2) Promote contractual, inclusive and competitive agricultural and food value chains oriented towards regional and international demand, with a view to the regional market integration; 3) Improve access to food, nutrition and resilience for the vulnerable populations; and 4) Improve business environment, governance and funding mechanisms of the agricultural and food sector. Special emphasis will also be placed on strengthening inter-sectoral governance and closing the data gaps. "As of January 2017, we are ready for implementation. We count on our own forces; the implementation of PRIAFNS will be funded through community resources and member states that also finance the implementation of their national plans. At the same time, we will privilege a participatory, dynamic and productive approach, and work together with our partners", declared Alain Sy Traoré, the ECOWAS commission director in charge of agriculture. The regional plan will be complemented by National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs) that are currently being created and are set to be validated by June 2017.

▶ Listen to the Interview with Alain Sy Traoré:
https://youtu.be/FiQqVheIwII
EBOLA VACCINE OFFERS 100% PROTECTION

No Ebola cases were recorded 10 days or more after vaccination of nearly 6,000 people who received the new vaccine, called rVSV-ZEBOV. “Ebola left a devastating legacy in our country. We are proud that we have been able to contribute to developing a vaccine that will prevent other nations from enduring what we endured,” said Dr Sakoba Keïta, co-ordinator of the Ebola Response and the director of the National Agency for Health Security in Guinea. While the new vaccine is still waiting for official approval, some 300,000 doses have already been ordered to prevent any further outbreaks in the region.

▶ Read the scientific paper on the test results: http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)32621-6/fulltext

TIMELINE TO MONITOR THE SECURITY SITUATION

With the financial support of the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Group for Research and Information on Peace and Security (GRIP) just released an interactive timeline that allows the viewer to retrace and recall the region’s major peace and security events since 2011. It also includes a large number of GRIP publications. You can easily create your own journey and discover information by country (Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Senegal) or at the regional level. The project also draws on information produced within the quarterly monitoring of regional stability and peace in the Sahel region and West Africa, which ultimately aims to help “improve human security, conflict prevention and strengthening the rule of law in Sub-Saharan countries”.

▶ Discover the timeline: http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/687606/Monitoring-Afrique-de-lOuest

OPINION: HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN NIGERIA:
A COUNTRY THAT IS UNKNOWN, FEARED AND LEFT BEHIND

This article, which was published on the AFD Ideas-4-Development blog, offers an interesting analysis of the humanitarian crisis in north-eastern Nigeria which has passed largely unnoticed. Home to 177 million people - half of them Muslims - Africa’s most populous country is often feared even though it is also unknown on the international stage. “A large share of the population strongly distrusts the military and political elites in Nigeria. As a consequence, Boko Haram has a real base of support, which contributes to maintaining a certain degree of anarchy in the Lake Chad area,” explains anthropologist Maud Gauquelin.

▶ Read the article: http://ideas4development.org/crise-humanitaire-nigeria
WESt AfRIcAN fOOd SYStEmS ANd CHANgiNg CONSumEr dEmANdS

Published within the OECD West African paper series, this paper analyzes the demands facing the food system and the key drivers of change. It then looks at how different elements of the food system respond to evolving demands. It also examines the difficulties of creating more effective responses, and it considers the policy implications and makes key recommendations, particularly in the context of the ECOWAS-led efforts to develop and implement more effective regional agricultural policies.

WHO’S WHO?

NA NA A KUFO-ADD O, PRESIDENT OF GHANA

It is a lawyer in his seventies that the Ghanaian people have chosen to run their country for the next four years. Akufo-Addo ran for office three times (2008, 2012, 2016) before succeeding on 7 December 2016. It was a close race, as in 2012 when he lost by only 300,000 votes, but Akufo-Addo finally won with 53.85% of the vote, ahead of the 44.4% won by the outgoing president John Dramani Mahama. Nana Akufo-Addo is a regular on the political scene. He has distinguished himself during the last 25 years in these electoral jousts, with the New Patriotic Party (NPP). From political stock, this native of the eastern part of the country (Kyebi) gets it from his father, Edward Akufo-Addo who has also served as the President of Ghana (1969 to 1972) and was one of the architects of independence. Nana Akufo-Addo is familiar with the parliamentary administration and the inner workings of the Ghanaian state, having occupied some important positions. He has been elected several times to parliament and has served as the Attorney General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. A graduate of the Oxford University, he practiced law in England and France before returning to Ghana. President Akufo-Addo promised at his inauguration that, during his term of office, he would put the country on the path to progress and prosperity in a “new Ghana.” The current tenant of Flagstaff House (Ghana’s Presidency) received the support of his predecessor - who called on Ghanaians to gather behind the new head of state and to continue working for economic and social development. The transparent election of Akufo-Addo and the peaceful transition of power has strengthened Ghana’s image on the African scene. The country is often cited as one of the continent’s best examples of a successful democracy.

