The Gambia: A first peaceful transfer of power

The third attempt at mediation by ECOWAS, which was led by Guinean President Alpha Condé and other African leaders, was successful at last. Under the threat of immediate military action, President Yahya Jammeh, who lost the presidential election of 1 December 2016, finally stepped down after 22 years in power. After refusing several options in West Africa, Jammeh finally chose to go into exile in Equatorial Guinea. Although, officially, no general amnesty was granted, Jammeh will benefit from substantial guarantees of protection for him, his family, as well as for their assets and properties. A joint AU-ECOWAS-UN Declaration indicates that it is a “temporary departure” meant to “assist a peaceful and orderly transition and transfer of power and the establishment of a new government, […] without any prejudice to his [Jammeh’s] rights as a citizen, a former President and a Political Party Leader.” The statement further indicates that “no legislative measures” would be taken. The AU, ECOWAS and UN have also committed to work with the government of The Gambia to ensure that “it fully guarantees, assures and ensures the dignity, security, safety and rights of former President Jammeh’s immediate family, cabinet members, government officials, security officials and party supporters and loyalists.” ECOWAS troops are now securing the country in order to enable the rapid return of the new leader, President Adama Barrow, who was sworn in on 19 January 2017 at the Gambian Embassy in Dakar. “This is a victory of the Gambian nation. Our national flag will fly high among those of the most democratic nations of the world,” declared President Barrow on his Twitter account. This peaceful transfer of power, the first one in the small West African country’s history -- it became independent in 1965 -- can be seen as a diplomatic triumph for ECOWAS. It sets a precedent that will help strengthen democracy and the rule of law in the West Africa.

Read the UN-AU-ECOWAS declaration: https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/note-correspondents/2017-01-21/note-correspondents-joint-declaration-political-situation


Read the African Union press release: https://www.au.int/web/sites/default/files/pressreleases/31896-pr-pr_-_au_welcomes_bloodless_transition_in_the_gambia_director_km_edits.pdf

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“Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth” is the 2017 theme of the African Union and its 28th Summit that just started at the AU Commission headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Several hundred delegates are expected to participate in the annual gathering from 22-31 January. In her welcome speech, African Union Commission Chairperson Dlamini Zuma recalled the importance of youth for the continent’s development. “We must place our youth and young people at the centre of Africa’s Agenda 2063,” she declared. Promoting women’s rights and developing a people-centred approach were among Zuma’s key priorities during her five-year mandate, which ends in a few days.

On the side-lines of the AU Summit, the Gender Pre-Summit will be held from 22-27 January, providing an opportunity for young people to engage policymakers and share their concerns and opinions. By gathering input from young people, the AU Commission hopes to influence policies and decisions that will translate into more strategic investments in young people and, thereby, achieve the fourth pillar of Africa’s “Demographic Dividends” agenda on “human rights, governance and youth empowerment.” Participants will prepare a “call for action” for greater participation among young people, and, in particular, for young women’s equal participation in leadership and civic life. However, the AU Commission does not yet set a good example when it comes to youth participation. The average age of staff members at the AU Commission is about 50-years-old. The AU still has a long way to transform itself into a people-centred organisation. The AU Summit will elect a new chairperson for the Commission.

▶ Read Dlamini Zuma’s welcome statement: https://livestream.com/accounts/2466140/events/6913572/videos/147406954
▶ Read the media advisory on the Pre-Gender summit: https://www.au.int/web/sites/default/files/newsevents/mediaadvisories/31878-ma-31862-ma-media_advisory_-_gender.pdf
▶ Read the report: Transforming the AU: https://issafrica.org/pscreport/addis-insights/transforming-the-au-a-momentous-task
▶ Read the report: Dlamini Zuma’s legacy: https://issafrica.org/iss-today/28th-au-summit-promoting-womens-rights-the-highlight-of-dlamini-zumas-legacy

Nearly 1,000 data and statistics experts gathered from 15-18 January at the first UN World Data Forum in Cape Town, South Africa. The global event aimed to take a “new look at how to harness the data revolution for sustainable development.” It focused on how to use new approaches to spur innovation and increase synergy across data ecosystems. It also explored the use of open data sources, geo-spatial information, data visualisation and data journalism. The newly launched Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data identifies four key challenges: 1) innovation and modernisation of national statistical systems; 2) dissemination of data on sustainable development; 3) the building of partnerships; and 4) mobilisation of resources.

While West Africa was not very visible in the various panel debates, many of the debated issues are highly relevant for the region such as: how to use high-resolution satellite images to map poverty and measure soil fertility and crop yields; how to use open data and new technologies like remote sensing to improve the productivity of African agriculture; and how to improve gender data. According to UNIfeM, only 13% of countries worldwide dedicate a budget to gender statistics. A new five-year programme, “Making every woman and girl count,” with USD 65 million in funding, launched in September 2016 and aims to bridge the gender data gap. ECOWAS has launched various initiatives such as EcoLink and EcoAgris, etc. to improve public access to community data. The ECOWAS Commission is currently exploring opportunities for cooperation with the OECD, notably Paris 21, in order to develop and consolidate its statistical capacities. The next UN World Data Forum will be held in Dubai in late 2018 or early 2019.

▶ UN World Data Forum: http://undataforum.org
The annual ROPPA Peasant University was held from 5-9 January in Thies, Senegal, at the headquarters of the Senegalese Federation of Peasant NGOs (FONGS-Action paysanne). Representatives of agricultural producers from almost every ECOWAS country gathered to brainstorm about the future of the region’s agricultural sector and to discuss operational issues such as new production techniques, support for commercial transactions, training and other capacity-building activities for agricultural producers. The meeting comes at a timely moment as ECOWAS adopted in December 2016 a new regional plan for agricultural investment, food security and nutrition and ECOWAS member countries are currently defining their national investment priorities. In his opening statement, ROPPA President Djibo Bagna recalled that many agricultural producers’ concerns have been taken into account with this new policy. “We are now working to define some tools to make sure that national agricultural producer platforms will be actively involved in drafting the national agricultural investment plans,” he declared. Participants also discussed how to take the Global Food Security Committee’s recommendations into account in order to improve smallholder farmers’ access to markets, and how to better capitalise on West African experiences to increase civil society’s participation in policymaking.

▶ Watch Mamadou Cissokho’s statement: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqVzop2r_c

From 14 January to 5 February, the African continent will be gripped by soccer mania. The 31st edition of Africa’s biggest sport event, the African Cup of Nations (CAN), is currently taking place in Gabon. The CAN is followed by millions of people on the continent and in the diaspora. It is a unifying moment when political cleavages and other quarrels are set aside. There are seven West African countries competing among the 16 teams. Burkina Faso, Ghana and Senegal already qualified for the quarter-finals on 28 and 29 January. The final game will be played on 5 February in the Stadium of Friendship, built by the Chinese, in Libreville. West African teams won the two previous CAN editions (CAN2015 by Côte d’Ivoire and CAN2013 by Nigeria). Cameroon will host CAN2019 and the following two editions will be hosted by Côte d’Ivoire (CAN2021) and Guinea (CAN2023).


How can Nigeria improve fiscal governance at its subnational levels? With the exception of Lagos, all the other states of Nigeria rely heavily on transfers from the federal budget, which generates little or no incentive for state governments to manage their internally-generated revenues efficiently. It also contributes to the risk of political corruption. The current fiscal crisis in Nigeria provides an opportunity for the federal government to make stronger budget constraints for the subnational governments.

▶ Read the blog post: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2017/01/16/reducing-incentives-for-fiscal-indiscipline-at-nigerias-subnational-government-level/
Chapter 7. West African cross-border policy networks

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The analytical foundations for more effective place-based policies that can enhance cross-border co-operation

makers as to which border areas they consider as priorities for regional integration, the publication provides

of networks. The report then analyses a range of regional indicators of co-operation potential, visually

showing that borders have notable and diverse impacts on exchanges of information and the relative power

to visualise the formal and informal relationships between actors involved in cross-border policy networks,

integration process in West Africa. It uses a pioneering methodology, known as social network analysis,

This publication examines how policy actors involved in cross-border co-operation contribute to the regional

in West Africa

Cross-border Co-operation and Policy Networks

West African Studies

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influential Gambian businessman Momodou

education at the Muslim high school in

district, Barrow completed his secondary

Born in 1965 in a village in the eastern Jimara

district, Barrow completed his secondary

education at the Muslim High School in

Banjul. He began his career at the meat

wholesaler Alhagie Musa & Sons, led by the

influential Gambian businessman Momodou

Musa Njie, who is also the father-in-law of

former President Dawda Jawara who was

overthrown by Yahya Jammeh in the 1994
coup. After climbing up the ranks within that
group, Barrow did real estate training in the

United Kingdom, working at the same time

as a bodyguard. Back in The Gambia in 2006,
he founded Majum Real Estate, which he now
runs. Husband in a polygamous marriage
with two women and father of five children,
Barrow is a member of the United Democratic
Party, the main opposition party to Yahya
Jammeh’s regime. As a party treasurer, he was
nominated on 31 October as the opposition’s
candidate to face the outgoing president,
who had been in power since 1994. Barrow
won the first round of the 1 December 2016
presidential election with 45% of the vote.
Following lengthy negotiations and military
pressure from ECOWAS, Jammeh was finally
forced to step down, which paved the way for a
peaceful transition of power. The inauguration
ceremony of the new president took place
– as scheduled – on 19 January 2017, at the
Gambian embassy in Dakar. President Barrow
is still waiting to return to The Gambia. Despite
this difficult start, the new president says that
he is determined to achieve “greatness and
development” of his country. Indeed, the new
president faces many challenges, including
rebuilding the country’s political system,
restoring human rights, restoring its fragile
economy, and reintroducing the country on
the international scene. Barrow is the third
president of The Gambia since Independence.

Read the article: http://www.bbc.com/

news/world-africa-38185428