G5 Sahel leaders launch joint military force

Following the green light from the United Nations on 21 June, G5 Sahel leaders officially launched a joint military force (FC-G5S) during an extraordinary summit held on 2 July in Bamako. French President Emmanuel Macron participated in the event. He confirmed that the French would back the new force and called for its rapid and effective implementation.

In a joint press conference with Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, Macron announced EUR 8 million of funding for operational logistics support, mostly in material contributions (70 tactical vehicles, transmission equipment and protection equipment), technical support and advisory services. He also confirmed EUR 200 million development assistance over 5 years via the French Development Agency (AFD). The new force is supposed to be fully operational by October 2017, despite the fact that only a portion of the necessary funding has been secured. The European Union pledged about EUR 50 million. Each of the G5 Sahel members will contribute around EUR 10 million each. The total budget of the new force is, however, estimated at EUR 423 million, which means that, to date, a little bit less than 25% of the required financial resources have been covered. France is seeking additional funding partners — possibly Germany, the World Bank and UNDP — to support the Sahelian Alliance and will make this a priority during its UN Security Council presidency in October. Following negotiations between France and the United States, the UN approved Resolution 2359 (2017) on 21 June, which welcomes “the deployment of the FC-G5S throughout the territories of its contributing countries, with up to 5 000 military and police personnel, with a view to restoring peace and security in the Sahel region.” However, it does not include any international funding commitments. On the contrary, it “recalls that the G5 Sahel States have the responsibility to provide the FC-G5S with adequate resources,” and “urges the FC-G5S, MINUSMA
G20 CONSOLIDATES NEW « COMPACT WITH AFRICA »

On 12-13 June, the government of Germany organised an international conference on the topic of “G20-Africa Partnership - Investing in a Common Future.” The high-level conference gathered about 800 participants in Berlin, Germany, including presidents from Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Mali and Senegal. The debate focused on the three pillars of the G20-Africa Partnership: 1) to improve inclusive economic growth and employment; 2) to develop quality infrastructure, especially in the energy sector; and 3) to strengthen the framework for private finance and investment in Africa. The Compact with Africa is a central element of the new G20-Africa partnership that Germany initiated under its G20 presidency. Drawing on a partnership between African countries, international financial institutions and various development partners, it aims to develop comprehensive, co-ordinated and country-specific investment compacts to promote private investment. G20 Finance Track Reports have already been produced for Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal.

PUBLIC STATISTICS IN AFRICA: RENEWAL AND CHALLENGES

Over the last few years, several researchers have challenged African statistics. Among the many examples was the article written by World Bank economist Shantayanan Devarajan in 2013, “Africa’s Statistical Tragedy.” It painted a gloomy picture of African statistics as affected by the lack of capacity of statistical institutions, an unclear administration of responsibilities, a lack of stable state funding, and the destabilising effect of donor funding. This public questioning of public statistics in Africa provoked reactions. In addition to the outrages branding these speeches from the North as neo-colonialist, several concrete initiatives have been launched. In 2010, the Strategy for the Harmonisation of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) was established. More recently, at the beginning of 2017, a new version of that strategy was drafted (SHaSA II) at the same time as the Pan African Institute of Statistics (STATAFRIC) became operational – an institution intended to standardise statistics on the continent and to help the African Union Commission steer the African integration process. In a context characterised by increased reliance on statistics in the name of “evidence-based” or “results-based” paradigms, and the adoption by the United Nations in September 2015 of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) associated with 169 targets and 229 statistical indicators, these attempts to strengthen African statistics are already a central issue guiding public policies related to development. African statistics, however, cannot be reduced to this dimension alone. In fact, in Europe, statistics have historically constituted a tool to strengthen states by helping them create communities and by allowing them to effectively manage their populations. Likewise, they are an essential tool for holding administrations accountable, illustrating progress and denying tenacious rumours. In this respect, statistics are among the major challenges faced by African countries in building public authorities, in designing their work, and in maintaining their legitimacy.
7 June marked African Border Day. This celebration promotes the African Union Border Program (AUBP), created in January 2007 by the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. It aims to prevent structural conflicts by promoting regional and continental integration. In his statement, Smaïl Chergui, AU Peace and Security Commissioner, reiterated that the AUBP contributes to implementing the African Union's Agenda 2063, which aims for “a continent of seamless borders and management of cross-border resources through dialogue.” He also noted the important role that increased border co-operation could play in coping with and managing the harmful effects of climate change, forced displacement, food crises and humanitarian disasters. In line with this year’s theme dedicated to “the role of the youth in conflict prevention and cross-border co-operation,” the commissioner urged member states to invest in stable border areas that could be used to develop income-generating and skill-building opportunities for youth, thus leading to people-centred development. He called upon member states to ratify the Niamey Convention on Cross-border Co-operation, which offers a legal framework for member states to develop and implement cross-border co-operation initiatives. Based on joint activities between neighbouring countries, the convention also aims to ensure peaceful resolutions of border disputes. It is an important instrument that contributes to transforming border areas into catalysts for growth and to increasing socio-economic and political integration across Africa. West Africa is the most advanced region in terms of regional integration. To date, eight West African countries have signed the Niamey Convention and Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali have also already ratified the text.

PUBLICATIONS

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION NETWORKS

The effective functioning of cross-border co-operation still remains largely unknown across West Africa. Capitalising on key finding from the Sahel and West Africa Club’s most recent flagship publication, “Cross-border Co-operation and Policy Networks in West Africa,” the most recent issue of the West African Paper series provides an analysis of the social structure and the geography of West African governance networks. Policy recommendations encourage the implementation of policies that are more place-based, more attentive to relations between actors and more specifically adapted to the West Africa’s constraints and opportunities.

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL INTEGRATION

This report presents key findings from the Strengthening Regional Agricultural Integration (SRAI) program conducted from 2009 and 2017, with support from the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (SFSA) and implemented by Michigan State University (MSU). While West African governments were able to reduce the transmission of global price shocks and have progressively adapted to changing food consumption patterns, they face many new challenges within the context of strong population growth and urbanisation. Greater regional integration is crucial to addressing many of the challenges facing West African agriculture. Drawing on a large number of field experiences, the authors make a series of recommendations to improve policy design. However, they also recall “policy implementation is a greater challenge than policy design.”

WHAT MAKES URBAN FOOD POLICY HAPPEN?

As cities grow, urban food security will become an increasing challenge for West Africa’s food system. This report, produced by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food), does not focus on the West African context, but it draws on five case studies across the globe. It shares lessons that cities of all sizes and at all stages of food policy development can learn from as they work to improve their food systems. “Cities are rising as powerful agents in the world of food,” the report authors underscore.
Seven West African countries — Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo, are among the 20 most visa-open countries in Africa. Togo is the best-ranked West African country (position 3) on the 2016 Africa Visa Openness Index, produced by the African Development Bank. Ghana and Senegal have made the most progress in opening up their borders for other African travellers, and Benin recently announced a decision to remove visas on arrival for all African passport or national identity card holders visiting the country for a period up to 30 days. Visa openness facilitates trade and investments, fills skills gaps in the labour market, creates jobs and fosters tourism. Its implementation does not require any major investments. At the level of Africa’s regional economic communities, ECOWAS recorded the highest score (0.8) on the 2016 Africa Regional Integration Index. West Africa encourages intra-regional mobility via the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment (1979) and thus commits to 100% reciprocal open visa policies within the ECOWAS area. Central Africa remains overall the most closed region. Despite the many challenges, promoting more visa-free regional blocs not only facilitates intra-regional mobility, but also supports regional integration. Overall, South-South migration is rising faster than South-North migration. The African Union further encourages intra-regional mobility through its continent-wide campaign aimed at achieving the free movement of people and open visas across Africa. As a part of its Agenda 2063, the African Union urges the creation of an African passport and aims to end visa requirements for all African citizens by 2018.

**WHO’S WHO**

**DIDIER DACKO, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE**

On 7 June, Didier Dacko was appointed as the first commander of the new joint G5 Sahel military force, aimed at improving the co-ordination of development and security policies in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. Its mission is to fight terrorism and illicit trafficking, especially in communities along Mali’s borders and those of the other G5 Sahel states. Before his nomination, Dacko had been the Malian Defence Chief of Staff since June 2016. Born in 1967 in San, an urban commune in the Segou region of Mali, Dacko started his military training as part of the first class of cadets from the Kati Military School, now known as the Koulikoro Military School. After his training, Didier Dacko built his career by occupying several military positions including: deputy military commander (1991 to 1992), instructor at the Koulikoro Military School (1995 to 1996), United Nations observer in Sierra Leone (2003 to 2004) and commandant of the Gao military regiment (2010 to 2012). Didier Dacko is known for his hands-on attitude and military strategy finesse, which was important for his position as the commandant of Operation Badenko (2011 to 2013), the military expedition in northern Mali that led to the successful recapture of areas previously occupied by jihadists. Dacko is a recipient of numerous accolades including the United Nations Medal (2004), the Cross of Military Valour in Mali (2008), Grand Officer of the National Order of Mali and the National Defence Medal of France (2014).