Showdown in Togo

On 6 September, three weeks after the demonstrations in Lomé and Sokodé that killed at least two people, tens of thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of ten cities in Togo at the opposition’s request. Their demands: political change and the implementation of the constitutional reforms promised by the regime that would limit the number of terms the president can serve and introduce a two-round voting system. This demonstration of strength, described as “never-seen” by the longtime leader of the opposition and National Alliance for Change (ANC) representative Jean-Pierre Fabre, is part of an effort to continue to put pressure on the government following the Council of Ministers’ adoption of a “constitutional amendment” draft bill that would pave the way for parliamentary scrutiny. Far from calming down the political situation, the week of September 11 was marked by an intensification of opposition activity. After the extraordinary session devoted to examining the parliamentary budget was suspended the day before it was supposed to take place -- a budget that was rejected by the opposition in the name of constitutional reform -- the sessions on 13 and 14 September, did not resolve the crisis. The opposition denounced the lack of debate about constitutional reform and called for another extraordinary session to discuss the issue. ECOWAS Commission President Marcel Alain de Souza traveled to Lomé to try to resolve the crisis by calling on the opposition and the government “to continue the dialogue and carry out these reforms.” The opposition, for its part, intends to continue to fight the current battle with the sitting government, both in the streets and in the halls of Parliament. As for the consequences of this movement, as summarised on France 24 by Gilles Yabi from the think tank Wathì, “There is something moving in Togo, but it is still too early to know whether it is a historic turning point ... both in the capacity of the government to continue to resist and in the emergence of new opposition leaders.”
The 32nd CILSS Day was celebrated by the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) on 12 September and focused on the theme, “Land use and occupation: Atlas of Sahelian and West African landscapes, a planning and decision-making tool.” In his speech, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta of Mali, who is also current chairman of CILSS, stressed the importance of this theme, because of its impact on agro-sylvo-pastoral productivity, desertification and biodiversity and on local and interstate conflicts due to cross-border economic migration and transhumance. He recalled the appeal launched by African officials to the international community on 15 June calling for the creation of partnerships to rehabilitate 10 million hectares of degraded lands and create 10 million jobs for young people and women. On the occasion of this CILSS day, President Keïta presented a new atlas published by CILSS, entitled “Landscapes of West Africa: A window on a changing world.” This book, the result of extensive research, shows the degradation of natural habitats and biodiversity as well as soil erosion, all results of population growth and the twofold increase from 1975 to 2013 in land being used for agriculture. The atlas also highlights positive experiences with “increased biodiversity on agricultural land, regeneration of tree cover, and soil and water conservation techniques used to improve land,” noted President Keïta. The atlas was designed to be both a tool to raise awareness among the people of the region and a tool for decision-making and planning for West African officials. This book is “a reference, capitalisation and advocacy document that can raise awareness among decision-makers and citizens about the worrying changes underway and inform them about the behaviors to adopt.” [...] “We want this document to be a tool for policy-making in order to improve agricultural productivity, hence this outreach,” said Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, inviting African countries to appropriate the document and use it to take action to preserve the environment.

**ECOWAS-UEMOA STATUTORY MEETING**

Members of the commissions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) met at the 16th Meeting of the Joint Technical Secretariat, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to take stock of their partnerships and discuss future policies. The meeting was co-chaired by ECOWAS Commission President Marcel Alain de Souza and UEMOA Commission President Abdallah Boureima. Members discussed several issues including: trade and fair competition, land, animal health, air transport, the Abidjan-Lagos corridor project, and the implementation of the Common External Tariff (CET) and the Community Code on Customs. They also discussed the latest conclusions of the ECOWAS Summit on Morocco’s accession to ECOWAS and the association agreement with Mauritania. The commissions have signed several co-operation agreements, in particular with CILSS, and have thanked the member countries for their efforts in building the common market. They also reaffirmed their solidarity with Burkina Faso and their joint fight against terrorism.

**ENABLE: THE BELGIAN’S DEVELOPMENT AGENCY IS CHANGING**

As of 1 January 2018, the Belgian Technical Cooperation (CBT) will change its name to become ENABLE, a nod to the English expression “enable” -- which means to allow or to make possible. In 2016, CBT was involved in 170 projects in 21 countries, and through its activities distributed EUR 217 million – two-thirds in North Africa and West Africa and one-third in Central Africa. Following the endorsement by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, international institutions have recommended that Belgium adapt its model of co-operation to allow better links between the administration that conducts the co-operation policy and the agency that implements it. The structure of the agency will thus be profoundly modified and its mandate broadened. The agency will become an integrated service in embassies and diplomatic offices in partner countries in order to integrate co-operation into Belgium’s foreign policy. It will henceforth be responsible for all sustainable development objectives, including the search for funding from other partners, whether public or private. Its resources will remain the same, 0.47% of the gross domestic product, below the 0.7% recommended by countries of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC).
The 7th African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) was held from 4 to 8 September in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. Established in 2010, the forum brings together international and African experts on African agricultural issues to exchange ideas and design new action plans for the Green Revolution in Africa. This year’s theme was: Accelerating the path to prosperity: Growing inclusive economies and jobs through agriculture. The forum was chaired by the President of Côte d’Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, and was organised in co-operation with the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and the AGRF Partners Group. It brought together some 1,300 government representatives and over 300 stakeholders. Discussions were based on AGRA’s 2017 African agriculture status report entitled, “The business of smallholder agriculture,” which emphasised the importance of market liberalisation and the need to replace imports with value-added food commodities produced in Africa for a market that is expected to reach USD 1 trillion by 2030. The forum assessed the use of the USD 30 billion pledged during AGRF 2016 and the progress that has been made. Participants were able to join six thematic groups related to youth, women, inputs, markets, mechanisation and finance. Many partnership agreements were signed with the private sector, notably between Côte d’Ivoire and AGRA concerning the establishment of an AGRA headquarters in that country to assist Francophone countries in West Africa achieving their agricultural transformation goals.

According to this study, a recruit’s typical profile is someone who has been marginalised and neglected since infancy, who comes from a border area or peripheral region that has been marginalised for generations, and who is economically frustrated and in urgent need of employment. Resentment towards government and the state is also a major factor; for 71% of respondents, government action was the trigger that made them join an extremist group. The study also notes that the religious driver is not a main factor and that on the contrary, a high level of religious studies reduces the probability of an individual enrolling in an extremist group. According to UNDP estimates, some 33,300 people in Africa lost their lives because of acts of extremist violence between 2011 and early 2016. A book and a photographic exhibition were produced to accompany the study.

In an interview given to the Swiss Co-operation and published in the June 2017 edition of Africa Brief, Laurent Bossard, director of the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD), highlighted some key challenges of cross-border co-operation. He pointed out that half the population of West Africa lives within 100-km of a border, where nothing stops “except the policies.” Even if cross-border regional co-operation is regulated between states, local cross-border co-operation regarding services and infrastructure must be facilitated. “Cross-border co-operation must become a driver of integration.” According to Bossard, anything that can promote flows in the South is an asset for development and will help alleviate the pressure on people to migrate to the North. The challenge is to reconcile local co-operation procedures with national and regional public policies. Added to the challenges of co-operation and development are challenges related to security,” which also rely, to a very large extent, on transnational and cross-border dynamics.”
The demonstrations in Togo on 19 August calling for a limit to the number of presidential terms were repressed. That demonstration and the one on 6 September, which brought together more than 100,000 people in Lomé, revealed a new person at the head of the Togolese opposition, Tikpi Salifou Atchadam, and introduced him to an international audience. He is the leader of the Pan-African National Party (PNP) and has succeeded in unifying the opposition against the Gnassingbé dynasty by allying himself with longtime opposition leader Jean-Pierre Fabre to overcome the communal divides. Mr. Atchadam had never participated in a presidential poll until now and his party, PNP, created in 2014, has no representation in Parliament. He is not, however, new to Togolese political life. Tikpi Atchadam was born in 1967 in Kparatao, near Sokodé, in the Tchaoudjo region of northern Togo. He is a lawyer by training and holds a DEA in private law as well as a master’s degree in anthropology and African studies, with a focus on legal anthropology, from the University of Lomé. In 1995, he joined the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights where he would be employed until 2006. Between 2000 and 2002, he was a member of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), where he was secretary of the age division and rapporteur of the commission in charge of communication as a civil society representative. Close to the Pan-African Socialist Party in his youth, he subsequently took his voter card to the Democratic Party for Renewal (PDR). When this party joined the presidential majority in 2005, Tikpi Atchadam distanced himself from the Togolese political scene. He returned in November 2014 and created the PNP, which was a non-event in a country that has nearly 120 political parties. The PNP did not participate in the 2015 elections, but joined the “Front Tchoué” that gathered several parties together who wanted to reform the current regime. After that, Tikpi Atchadam worked more on the ground and built up both his popular base in his city, Sokodé and his financial and diplomatic base within the Togolese diaspora, which is particularly numerous in Germany. Although Tikpi Atchadam initially based his support on his native region and his native the Tem population, he is now positioning himself as a national opponent, having allied himself with Jean-Pierre Fabre who represents the country’s southern regions. With a party that has a large local presence and this massive popular mobilisation, Tikpi Atchadam is now getting ready for the 2018 parliamentary and local elections.