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G5 SAHEL: NIGER TRANSFERS PRESIDENCY TO BURKINA FASO

The five heads of state of the G5 Sahel countries - Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger - gathered at their 5th summit on 5 February in Ouagadougou, following a series of expert and ministerial meetings. The rotating presidency was officially transferred from Niger to Burkina Faso for a one-year mandate. Despite efforts to quickly scale-up the joint military force’s operations, the situation in the Sahel remains highly unstable. Beyond the frequent jihadist attacks, inter-communal violence has also destabilised a number of communities in the region and several hundred schools have had to close because of the conflicts. Sustainable funding for the joint military force remains a key challenge. The G5 Sahel countries are still struggling to develop ways to sustainably fund the joint force. G5 Sahel leaders called for “closer co-operation between the G5 Sahel and the United Nations,” including assistance for the joint force under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter.

Many bi-lateral pledges to support the joint force have been made; China announced a grant of USD 45 million to support the G5 Sahel joint force in January and Japan pledged USD 23 million to support G5 Sahel countries. According to the outgoing G5 Sahel chairman Mahamadou Issoufou, the resources available for the first year of its operation amounted to EUR 294 million, covering nearly 75% of what was necessary. However, the joint force has been slow to start its operations. In their final communiqué, G5 Sahel leaders committed to make the joint force fully operational as soon as possible. As regards funding for the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme (PIP) covering the first phase 2019-21, G5 Sahel leaders commended the pledges made during the partners and donors co-ordination conference in Nouakchott in December 2018, a sum of EUR 2.4 billion. They also acknowledged the importance of working with the Sahel Alliance whose 12 members participate in the development and stabilisation of the Sahel with projects worth EUR 1.3 billion. In their final communiqué, G5 Sahel leaders also committed to follow up on the donor pledges to implement the PIP. In addition, they announced the creation of a Sahelian Centre for Threat Analysis and Early Warning (CSAMAP) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and committed to setting up the Regional Police Academy in Koundoul, Chad soon. A feasibility study on the G5 Sahel railway project will be launched with funding from G5 Sahel countries. The 6th G5 Sahel summit is scheduled for February 2020 in Nouakchott, Mauritania.
UK’S NEW JOINT SAHEL DEPARTMENT

During her mission to South Africa in August 2018, UK Prime Minister Theresa May announced an intention to scale up development efforts in the Sahel region. “It will mean supporting countries and societies on the front line of instability in all of its forms. So we will invest more in countries like Mali, Chad and Niger that are waging a battle against terrorism in the Sahel – including by opening new embassies in Niger and Chad and having a much larger presence in Mali,” she declared. Following these commitments, the UK has built a new Joint Sahel Department, which is now operational. The Joint Sahel Department brings together the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID) and oversees UK diplomacy and development policy, relationships, funding and activity in the Sahel. Officials from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Home Office will also join the department. The Joint Sahel Department works closely with the UK’s embassies and offices in Bamako, N’Djamena, Niamey and Nouakchott. Over the next few years, it plans to increase its diplomatic and development efforts using an integrated approach that connects security, diplomatic, development and humanitarian work. The UK currently provides some GBP 85 million in bilateral aid to support stability, development and humanitarian needs. The country is also an active member of the Sahel envoys network and the Sahel Alliance.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AFRICA’S EMERGENCE

Dakar hosted, from 17-19 January, the third edition of the International Conference on the Emergence of Africa (ICEA), which focused on the theme, “Emergence, private sector and inclusiveness.” Organised by the Government of Senegal in collaboration with the African Development Bank, UNDP and the World Bank, the meeting brought together some 1000 African leaders, high-level personalities and experts. The conference shared best practices and took stock of the African countries’ progress towards emergence. “To win the challenge of emergence, we need a mind-set that is to believe in ourselves, to mobilise beneficial partnerships,” declared Senegal’s President Macky Sall during the opening ceremony. Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita recalled that his country invests 15% of its GDP in the agricultural sector. However, Mali processes only 2% of its massive cotton crop (0.7 million tonnes), a significant loss of value to the country. Industrialisation strategies in Africa face many challenges and bottlenecks. Mario Pezzini, director of the OECD Development Centre, participated in the panel, “What strategies, channels and markets for African national champions?” He recalled the importance of investing in existing national champions without compromising the chances of SME enterprises to further develop. Development involves a large set of different stakeholders in various sectors. “All economic sectors have a role to play for sustainable and inclusive growth in Africa. However, co-ordination is key and African countries will need a precise and co-ordinated programme to ensure effective implementation,” he declared.

GHANA: YEAR OF RETURN FOR AFRICAN DIASPORA

2019 marks the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first African slaves in Jamestown, Virginia, in what would become the USA. According to estimates, some 12 million Africans were taken to the Americas as a part of the slave trade between 1619 and 1860. At the beginning of 2019, Ghana celebrated the Full Circle Festival, which kicked off the “Year of Return” celebrations initiated by Ghana’s President Nana Akufo-Addo in a bid to become a destination for memorial tourism in West Africa. The “Year of return: Ghana 2019” is a year of celebration that aims to give fresh impetus to the quest to unite Africans on the continent with their brothers and sisters in the diaspora. The initiative mostly targets African-American people and invites them to discover their African identity. Since President Barack Obama’s visit to the Cape Coast in 2009, many African-American personalities and prestigious African diaspora guests have come to Ghana to discover its culture through visits, meetings with locals and round tables. “As long as Africa is not respected, people of African descent will not be respected,” commented a girl from the African diaspora on her trip to Ghana.
**MUST READ**

**GOLD AT THE CROSSROADS**

Assessment of the supply chains of gold produced in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

The OECD has been working with the Liptako–Gourma Authority (LGA) to advocate the implementation of the OECD Guidance’s recommendations on responsible business practices in the gold sector of the three LGA member countries: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. While gold production is the main driver of exports in Burkina Faso and Mali, the extractive sector in Niger is dominated by oil production and uranium. None of the three countries can provide an overall estimate of the amount of gold produced by artisanal and small-scale miners. The vast majority of artisanal gold production is exported illicitly. It is estimated that about 1.5 million people could be directly employed in the artisanal mining sector in Burkina Faso (200 000), Mali (400 000) and Niger (450 000), exposing these countries to the risk of human rights violations as well as money laundering and tax evasion. Illicit trade in gold has also become a source of revenue for armed groups. This joint publication advocates for economic actors to be more responsible and for the gold ore supply chains to be traceable and transparent. It examines the current state of gold supply chains and proposes four sets of recommendations to gradually strengthen transparency and integrity in gold production and trade in these three countries.

**WHAT A WASTE 2.0**

The What a Waste 2.0 report provides a global snapshot of the current situation and future trends in solid waste management. By 2050, the world is expected to generate 3.4 billion tons of waste annually, up from the current level of 2 billion tons. Sub-Saharan Africa currently accounts for 9% of global waste (174 million tons) production, but its share is set to increase more rapidly than any other region given the high rate of urbanisation and population growth. Moreover, lower-income countries generally rely on open dumping; 93% of waste is dumped in low-income countries compared to only 2% in high-income countries. Setting up solid waste management practices will need to become a key priority for local authorities. However, they already spend, on average, nearly 20% of their local budgets on waste management. Their resources are limited and they lack capacity on planning, contract management and operational monitoring activities. Most low- and middle-income countries are struggling to address the ever-growing waste management challenges. The report provides estimates for waste generation for many African countries for which country-level data are not available. The report also includes information on waste management costs, revenues and tariffs; special wastes; regulations; public communication; administrative and operational models and the informal sector.

**OPINION**

**THE WAR AGAINST SCHOOLS IN THE SAHEL**

The French RFI radio programme “7 milliards de voisins” (7 billion neighbours) dedicated a special edition to the “The war against schools in the Sahel.” Several hundred schools in conflict-affected areas of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have been closed due to the permanent threat of jihadist attacks. How can communities prevent armed groups from breaking into schools? How can ensure that children in these conflict-affected areas going to school? How can international partners help rebuild educational services? Ibrahim Ag Assarid, founding director and teacher of the “École du sable” (School of Sand), delivered some first-hand experiences about the many challenges he faced when re-opening a school near Mopti in central Mali where the large majority of teachers had left. In his contribution, SWAC Secretariat Director Laurent Bossard noted that the epicentre of the conflict has moved from northern Mali to a smaller cross-border area shared by Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali. However, this area is much more populous and population growth could undermine efforts to stabilise the areas in the long term. “The population in these areas will double within the next 20 years. The education of girls must remain a top priority in order to reverse this demographic trend,” Mr Bossard explained. Beyond Boko Haram’s ideology against Western education, current education challenges have many underlying root causes, which must be analysed according to local context. Education will help empower girls and women in countries that don’t protect the basic human rights of its women and girls.
During its 7th Ordinary Convention in Banjul on 1-3 December 2018, the Network of Farmers’ and Agricultural Producers’ Organisations of West Africa (ROPPA) unanimously appointed its new president, Mr Ibrahim Coulibaly. An active farmer in the region of Koulikoro, Mali, Coulibaly has been a prominent figure of the peasant farmers’ movement since the early 2000s. He is the founder of the National Coordination of Peasant Organisations (CNOP) in Mali, which he has chaired since 2005. He has been member of the ROPPA board of directors since 2000 and became ROPPA’s vice-president in 2014.

That same year, he was appointed UN Ambassador for the International Year of Family Farming. In a video interview about his new mandate as ROPPA president, Coulibaly identifies three key actions for the region: 1) Harmonise West Africa’s trade balance in order to become financially self-sufficient; 2) Tackle the problem of youth integration; and 3) Address the problem of food dependence with the support of family farming. “Young people haven’t received the attention they deserve,” he said. “Everybody talks about youth, but there are only few programmes designed to support the rural youth who are the majority. They are desperate because agriculture doesn’t provide them with enough income. […] He added, “We have one of the most scandalous food bills in the world, which means that we are working to enrich other countries while our youth are not working and could have fed us.”