Africa at the G7 Summit in Biarritz

TICAD 2019: Japan to scale up investments in Africa

World Water Week 2019 focuses on inclusiveness

Senegal: Advancing data planning and gender-sensitive data

Must read: Economic performance, gender and social networks in West African food systems

Opinion: The food economy can create more jobs for West African youth

Opinion: The Sahel expects more actions, fewer speeches

Maps & Facts: African plans for a trans-continental road network

Who’s who: DJ Arafat, King of coupé-décalé

AFRICA AT THE G7 SUMMIT IN BIARRITZ

The world’s leaders, including five African presidents, met at the G7 Summit in Biarritz in France from 24-26 August 2019, and placed the fight against inequality at the heart of their discussions. Beyond the major global challenges (survival of the Amazon; global trade; stability in Iran, Libya and Hong Kong and gender equality), the G7 agenda also included a strong focus on Africa, and the Sahel in particular. G7 leaders announced an USD 251 million package to support women entrepreneurs in Africa. France and Germany intend to launch the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel. Canada and Japan will join the Sahel Alliance as observers. Moving beyond business as usual, the G7 tried to change its image as a closed-door meeting. Several African heads of state and government, including the presidents of Burkina Faso and Senegal, Christian Marc Roch Kaboré (representing the G5 Sahel) and Macky Sall (representing NEPAD), participated in the discussions. Many partner countries, international organisations, civil society organisations, think tanks and other partners, including the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD), contributed to preparatory sessions. In the Biarritz Declaration for a G7 & Africa partnership, G7 leaders committed to supporting entrepreneurship and youth employment in Africa’s private sector. They pledged USD 251 million as a support package for the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA) initiative and its Women Entrepreneurs-Finance Initiative (We-Fi). Discussions also focused on Africa’s digital transformation, on transparency in public procurement and on the common fight against corruption. For the G7 Sahel Partnership Action Plan, G7 leaders committed to supporting a large number of existing initiatives. They called for the previous pledges that were announced at the International High-level Conference on the Sahel in February 2018 to be fulfilled. G7 leaders notably emphasized the “need for strong and co-ordinated support from the international community.” With Canada and Japan joining the Sahel Alliance as observers, all G7 countries will now be part of the multi-stakeholder alliance. The Sahel Alliance aims to implement over 500 projects between 2018-22 for a total amount of USD 6 billion. In a press conference on the Sahel, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Burkina Faso’s President Roch Kaboré, announced the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel. The partnership is open to other members, although the precise modalities have not been defined. This new initiative aims to provide a framework for strengthened military co-operation that will move beyond the geographic coverage of the G5 Sahel countries in order to fight the jihadist insurgency more efficiently and better respond to the needs African leaders identify. The partnership will officially launch at the end of 2019.
Twenty African heads of state participated in the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7), which was held in Yokohama on 28-30 August under the theme “Advancing Africa’s Development through People, Technology and Innovation.” The summit resulted in a three-year joint co-operation plan to move the Japan-Africa relationship from aid to business, and further increase Japanese private investment (estimated at USD 20 billion over the past three years). “We will do whatever it takes to assist the advancement of Japanese companies into Africa,” announced Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during the opening ceremony. Projects include: agricultural support to help Africa double its rice production by 2030; the construction of a Toyota car assembly plant in Côte d’Ivoire; and more vocational training and educational opportunities for young people, notably in the five Sahelian countries. On the side-lines of the summit, the African Union Commission and the OECD Development Centre organised a high-level policy dialogue during which the Centre’s director, Mario Pezzini, presented key findings from the second edition of the forthcoming report, “Africa’s Development Dynamics 2019: Achieving productive transformation.” The report’s action proposals aim to help firms transform their production structures, and harness opportunities such as the African Continental Free Trade Area Africa (AfCFTA). TICAD launched in 1993 to promote high-level policy dialogue between African leaders and development partners, and is the largest international conference held in Japan bringing together more than 4 500 participants. The next edition, TICAD 8, is scheduled to take place in 2022 and might be hosted by Benin.

More than 4 000 water experts from across the globe gathered from 25-30 August at the World Water Week in Stockholm. The annual appointment on global water issues focused this year on the theme, ”Water for Society: Including All.” A third of participants were under the age of 35 giving a strong voice to the young generation. Many sessions focused on water solutions related to challenges such as climate change and food scarcity. The final communiqué called upon governments, institutions and companies to start applying the water-based solutions that already exist – and include everyone in the process. The Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation and the Economist Intelligence Unit launched the Blue Peace Index, a benchmarking tool for transboundary freshwater basins aimed at promoting peace and highlighting the potential for improved water management, co-operation and investment. African Water Ministers and several NGOs launched a proposal for a Marshall Plan for Water in Africa 2020-30, to guarantee all Africans have clean water and safe sanitation by 2030. The plan foresees total investments worth USD 40 billion per year, to be 50% financed by African governments and consumers, and the other half by donors, banks and private companies, including climate adaptation funds. The OECD participated in several sessions and launched a report: Making Blended Finance Work for Water and Sanitation: Unlocking Commercial Finance for SDG 6. The report offers recommendations on how to scale up innovative blended financing approaches in order to strategically use development financing to mobilise the additional commercial financing needed to fill the current investment gaps.

The Senegal National Agency for Statistics and Demography (ANSD) and OECD-based Paris21 agency held a joint workshop on 12 August in Dakar to enhance data planning and discuss a new gender statistics project. Some 40 participants took part in a training session on the Advanced Data Planning Tool (ADAPT), a free cloud-based planning tool. Paris21 developed the tool to help national statistics offices and other data producers adapt their data production to from policymakers’ priority data needs. Participants also discussed how to integrate the gender dimension into Senegal’s third National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). The meeting provided an opportunity to promote co-operation and establish a current snapshot of the state of gender statistics in the country from the perspective of producers and users, including civil society organisations and the research community.
MUST READ

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE, GENDER AND SOCIAL NETWORKS IN WEST AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEMS

Gender profoundly affects livelihood prospects and generates many inequalities that limit West African women’s participation in the food system. Drawing on work conducted by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD), this article, published by Olivier Walther, Michel Tenikue and Marie Trémolières in the World Development magazine, measures the effects of income and gender on informal social networks in the rice value chain. It uses primary data collected on 490 entrepreneurs in Benin, Niger and Nigeria. The analysis shows that monthly profit of entrepreneurs is determined by their structural position within the rice value chain. Women are less central than men and their incomes are much lower - after controlling for age, experience, education, religion and matrimonial status. “These gender gaps justify public policies specifically targeted at women involved in production and marketing, in order to reduce the barriers that limit their access to markets, transportation, credit and education,” explain the authors. Moreover, network-based strategies could facilitate the dissemination of ideas and practices within each subgroup of actors and between communities, thus helping to close the gender gaps.

OPINION

THE FOOD ECONOMY CAN CREATE MORE JOBS FOR WEST AFRICAN YOUTH

The food economy has particularly strong potential to accelerate job creation, and should therefore attract greater policy attention. In order to unleash this potential, the food sector needs appropriate strategies, investments and policies. “This involves endorsing three key principles: 1) Moving beyond agriculture and rural areas; 2) Taking spatial factors into account; and 3) Dealing with informality, aiming for inclusiveness,” explain Léopold Ghins and Koffi Zougbédé from the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD) in an article published on the OECD Development Matters blog. “The food economy is also a powerful entry point to advance the broader structural transformation of the region. It is a promising terrain for policymakers seeking to address one of West Africa’s most pressing development challenges,” the authors conclude.

OPINION

THE SAHEL EXPECTS MORE ACTION, FEWER SPEECHES

African leaders’ presence at the G7 summit received mixed reactions. Was it a renewed model for the G7 based on an equal partnership with Africa, or were African countries simply decorative pieces meant to help G7 leaders clear their consciences? In this interview with Bakary Sambe from the Timbuktu Institute-African Centre for Peace Studies, published by Le Point Afrique, he notes that a large amount of the pledged development aid for the Sahel has not yet materialised and decries the lack of coherence. “The Sahel is a patient around whom there are many doctors. But nobody agrees on the diagnosis,” he states. More than USD 420 million have been pledged in support of the G5 Sahel but a large share of the promised financial support has still not been received. The G5 Sahel Joint Force struggles to operate. “There is a big difference between what is happening on the ground and the promises made at meetings. Today, as terrorist groups are co-ordinating themselves, the international community is just dispersing a little more,” said Sambe.
WHO’S WHO: DJ ARAFAT, KING OF COUPÉ-DÉCALÉ

The famous Ivorian singer, known for his “coupé-décalé” dance music, died in a traffic accident on 12 August at the age of 33. A video shared on social media showed him driving his motorbike and smashing into a car. Thousands of fans gathered in front of the hospital Abidjan’s Cocody suburb singing, “Arafat cannot die.” The bad news provoked a whirlwind of commemorations in Côte d’Ivoire, West Africa and beyond. A national funeral ceremony organised on 30-31 August at the Félix-Houphouët-Boigny stadium in Abidjan brought together more than 100 000 fans to pay tribute to the coupé-décalé star. “It is with great sadness that I learned of the death of Ange Didier Houon “DJ Arafat”, a youth icon and ambassador of Ivorian music and culture. I present my sincere condolences to his family and all his fans,” declared President Alassane Ouattara. Born in 1986 in Abidjan, Ange Didier grew up in a musical family. His mother was a well-known singer and his father was a sound engineer. He started his career as a DJ in Yopougon, an Abidjan district known for its nightlife. He developed the coupé-decalé style (meaning “cut and run”) emphasising that young people still wanted to have fun despite the conflict. The king of the coupé-decalé had a massive audience in French-speaking West and Central Africa. He was elected “Best Artist of the Year” at the Ivorian “Coupe-decalé” Awards in 2016 and 2017. He issued eleven albums with many hits receiving several millions of views on YouTube, and was known for his provocative talk.

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Maps & Facts

AFRICAN PLANS FOR A TRANS-CONTINENTAL ROAD NETWORK

In 2010, the trans-African master plan consisted of ten highways totalling a length of 57 300 km, from Cairo to Cape Town and from Dakar to Djibouti. The density of this ideal network, equivalent to 1.9 km of road per 1 000 km² is four times lower than that of the current American interstate highway network. In West Africa, the envisaged highways would link Dakar to N’Djaména via the Sahelian belt, Dakar to Lagos via the Gulf of Guinea and Lagos to the Central African Republic via Yaoundé in Cameroon. There are plans for three major trans-Saharan routes: one to link Mauritania to North Africa via the Moroccan coast, the second to connect Algiers to Nigeria via Agades and the third to link Tripoli with Chad via Fezzan. The maintenance done on existing road networks and progress on the trunks to be built varies significantly from country to country. While some missing links have been completed, for example, between Nouakchott and Nouadhibou and between Kayes and Bamako, other road segments have not yet been paved or are unlikely to be completed in the near future due to political instability, as is the case in southern Libya.

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