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UEMOA REFLECTS ON THE FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE & GOODS

Following the 25th anniversary celebration ceremony on 10 January, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) organised a second major event on 7-8 October in Ouagadougou to commemorate 25 years of integration among its eight member countries. Bringing together some 300 political leaders, intellectuals and civil society representatives, the scientific forum’s theme was “25 Years of UEMOA: Addressing together the challenges related to the free movement of people and goods within a secure community.” Four discussion panels focused on: 1) acceleration of community reforms on the free movement of people and the right of establishment; 2) innovative measures to ensure the effective implementation of those rights; 3) creation of conditions for effective regulations and community legislation on intra-regional trade; and 4) recommendations of new approaches to increase intra-regional trade. The UEMOA area is generally applauded for its great achievements in furthering regional integration. Among the key achievements, UEMOA Commission President Abdallah Bouréima highlighted the unique visa policy (adopted since 2009), the guidelines for the free establishment of professions such as doctors, dentists, pharmacists, etc., as well as the guidelines enabling students from all member countries to enroll in any public university within the UEMOA area. However, there is a huge gap between theory and practice. Participants flagged the large number of border controls, delays and illegally-imposed levies, the distortion of competition, and difficulties some companies have in gaining access to markets within the Union. Intra-community trade remains low (passing from 9.6% in 1996 to 16.1% in 2018). “Our community is experiencing an expanding, multifaceted insecurity problem, which constitutes a major challenge for the process of consolidating and deepening regional integration,” Bouréima stressed. The conference addressed questions about how the principle of the free movement of people and goods can be reconciled with security imperatives. Drawing on UEMOA’s key achievements, the UEMOA Commission is currently preparing the launch of a new TV programme entitled “Impact 8,” which will raise awareness about the Union’s citizens and highlight key UEMOA achievements that make a difference in the everyday lives of its people.
“What’s the role of international institutions in supporting African smart cities?” SWAC Secretariat Director Laurent Bossard presented the Africapolis database as a concrete example of how international organisations can help promote more understanding about the dynamics that shape Africa’s fast growing cities. He was a keynote speaker at the Afric’Up Startup Africa Summit, which gathered some 3,000 entrepreneurs, investors and innovators from 24-25 September 2019 in Tunis. The theme was, “Smart cities & open innovation in Africa: What opportunities for startups?” The event was organised by the Tunisian Government, Smart Africa Alliance, GIZ & Make IT. It is part of the African Union’s Transform Africa agenda aimed at promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and the talents of African youth worldwide. According to 2017 UN estimates, the African population will increase from 1.2 billion (17% of the world’s population) to 4.4 billion by 2050 (40% of the world’s population). Cities will absorb most of the population growth; 60% of African people will live in urban settings. Urban planning and management are therefore major development issues. Bossard highlighted in his presentation some counter intuitive facts about urbanisation in the West African region. For example, there is a lack of “rural to urban migration.” As pull factors (i.e. employment opportunities) from cities remain relatively weak, many rural dwellers stay in their current environment, which leads to a densification of rural areas and thus to the emergence of new secondary cities. In Niger, for example, six new agglomerations - with more than 10,000 inhabitants - appear each year. “These cities have the advantage of being nascent. Perhaps they can become faster and more easily “smart cities” than already well-established bigger cities,” Bossard suggested. Other urban areas expand quickly due to the fusion of many smaller and medium-sized agglomerations. The lack of joint planning is striking. Bossard highlighted the urgent need for a massive collective effort to produce more and better data and analysis of urbanisation dynamics while also taking part in inclusive dialogue and sharing knowledge.

Livestock experts from across 17 countries of the ECOWAS-UEMOA-CILSS area gathered from 7-10 October 2019 in Accra at the 6th high-level meeting on the theme, “Peaceful transhumance and livestock mobility in the Sahel and West African coastal countries.” Civil society organisations approved a joint position statement with key recommendations on how to develop the livestock sector and pastoralism in the context of rising insecurity in the region. The fodder production outlook for 2020 is good overall. However, there are deficit production areas, notably in western Mali, western Mauritania and northern Senegal. There are also persistent difficulties in accessing natural pasture areas due to insecurity in parts of Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. This situation could affect the livelihoods in those regions and lead to early departures of livestock and pastoralists to areas of transhumance, with consequences in both transit and host areas. On a positive note, awareness raising and dialogue between farmers and pastoralists, as well as closer collaboration between local, national and regional authorities, is helping to prevent conflict and reduce the number of casualties related to intra-regional livestock mobility. National transhumance committees were successfully supported in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The introduction of taxes as livestock entered markets created significant financial resources for local authorities in coastal countries, enabling them to invest in socio-educational and health infrastructure. Civil society organisations recommend: better synchronization of transhumance calendars in different countries; the acceleration of the establishment of national transhumance committees in Sahelian countries; and the assessment of the socio-economic and environmental impacts of pastoralism. They stressed that more analysis is needed about the consequences of insecurity on the early migration of pastoralists and on cattle concentration. They also recommend strengthening capacities of farmers’ organisations in coastal countries by raising awareness of pastoralist issues and developing knowledge-sharing tools. On the sidelines of the event, a media workshop was organised to train journalists on livestock, transhumance and trade issues.
UNG A 2 019: B UILDING R ESILIENCE IN THE S AHEL

CILSS Executive Secretary Djimé Adoum was a key speaker at an ODI side event at the 74th UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 25 September 2019 in New York. He talked about building resilience in the Sahel. The session highlighted Sahelian perspectives and focused on the role communities could play in building their own resilience to climate change, as well as possible practical steps to support their actions. According to projections, the Sahel might face temperature increases 1.5 times higher than the global average. Djimé Adoum highlighted the importance of supporting smallholder farmers and helping them cope with the consequences of climate change while also bringing more African perspectives into the global debate.

Many good initiatives are already underway: ECOWAS launched the “West African Initiative for Climate Smart Agriculture,” and CILSS is coordinating the implementation of the AfDB-funded “Programme to Build Resilience to Food and Nutrition Insecurity in the Sahel” (P2RS) and the “Sahel Irrigation Initiative Support Project” (SIIP). Practical solutions promoting sustainable ecosystems exist, but they need to be scaled up.

MUST READ

DOMESTIC RESOURCE MOBILISATION: FIGHTING AGAINST CORRUPTION AND ILLICIT FINANCIAL FLOWS

The AU Commission’s report provides an in-depth analysis of issues related to domestic resource mobilization and illicit financial flows in Africa. The first part addresses key questions such as: how governments can respond to illicit financial flows in Africa; what lessons can be learned from Asia; and what role south-south co-operation might play in combating illicit financial flows. The second part presents specific actions that are being taken by AU member states, to mobilise domestic resources and fight against corruption and illicit financial flows.

The report aims to encourage peer learning among member states and development partners. Tackling trade invoice irregularities, tax evasion, abusive transfer pricing, criminal financial flows and corruption will help mobilise additional resources for the implementation of Agenda 2063 and reduce Africa’s reliance on external funding. The report is the result of a collaboration between the African Union Commission, AU member states, the OECD Development Centre and other international organisations.

OPINION

RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Ibrahim Mayaki, AUDA-NEPAD chief executive officer and SWAC honorary president, shared his vision about key issues that will drive the debate about Africa’s development at the conference “Re-thinking development in Africa,” held on 27 September 2019 at the Columbia University in New York. “Development means liberating potential and energies from the bottom up,” he tweeted to his 28.5K followers.

Following an explanation of major transitions (demographic, technological, natural systems, climate change, governance systems as well as human development transitions) that are currently taking place on the African continent, Mayaki focused on governance issues. “I am convinced of the fact that current African governments don’t have the power to change the societies. They believe that they have power. But in reality, they don’t have power to change anything,” Mayaki stated. Nearly 75% of the African population is under the age of 25. There is a natural disconnect and incapacity to respond adequately to the challenges the continent is facing.

“The best way to include youths in Africa’s development framework, Agenda 2063, is to let them be a part of its design and implementation,” he concluded. With respect to global uncertainty, he talked about the limits of multilateral co-operation systems. “Aid will disappear in the next 10 years. It is already disappearing and when it is not disappearing, it is transformed into military support, like in the Sahel region. Most of the ODA is linked to military objectives,” Mayaki stated. In his conclusion, Mayaki called for a paradigm shift to develop new forms of governance to “co-produce public policies,” while acknowledging the critical importance of having more youth participation. He also suggested that African governments replace aid with trade, develop regional solutions for national challenges, and strengthen regional and internal markets. “Rethinking development also means reflecting on what justice means,” Mayaki concluded.

IN THE SAHEL, STATES DO NOT EVEN PROVIDE BASIC SECURITY OR JUSTICE

Alain Antil, a researcher from the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), provides an interesting analysis of the root causes of insecurity in Sahelian countries. While the areas affected by violence in the Sahel continue to expand, socio-economic and demographic trends further exacerbate existing fragilities, especially in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. “Far from being able to deliver basic services or even the most rudimentary infrastructure, the states no longer even fulfil their sovereign functions: security, justice... Other actors have taken over and exercise a sort of shared governance,” Antil explains. Sahelian countries would need to invest heavily in sectors such as education. However, the already-insufficient education budget is now being stressed by the needs of a growing population. Sahelian countries are not catching up, he writes, but are, rather, losing ground compared to emerging economies in the Gulf of Guinea. “Once again, none of this is new. However, the military balances of power in countries like Niger, and more particularly in Mali and Burkina Faso, are less and less favourable to the central governments,” concludes Antil.
WHO’S WHO
ASMAA JAMES, WOMEN’S RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Asmaa James is a journalist and women’s rights activist in Sierra Leone. She launched the Black Tuesday campaign encouraging women to dress in black once per month in order to protest against the increase in the number of rapes and sexual violence against women. This movement prompted Sierra Leone’s president to reform policies to combat sexual violence. She is one of the 100 most inspiring and influential women in the world according to the BBC’s list of “100 Women” for 2019. James is a former Vice President of Sierra Leone’s Reporters Union, a member of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists and a 2016 Mandela Washington Fellow under the Young African Leaders Initiative.

In West Africa, Sahel and Mano River countries have lower income inequality than their coastal neighbours, indicating growing social and economic disparities between emerging economies (Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria) and less rapidly transforming rural economies. Moreover, many West African countries are faced with a north-south divide. In Nigeria, the socio-economic level of the conflict-affected northeastern states can hardly be compared with the wealth of the urban megalities in the south, home to many of the continent’s billionaires. Nigeria’s average national per capita income does not reflect these tremendous intra-country disparities. Inequality is a multifaceted issue by nature, so measuring it is not an easy task. It is often measured as a ratio of the incomes of the top quintile to the bottom quintile or via the Gini index to better reflect the wealth distribution within a country. Beyond income inequality, inequalities are strongly visible between urban and rural areas where access to basic services remains a key problem. Within cities, there are also major gaps between the rich and poor when it comes to access to education, water and sanitation, health services, etc. Inequality is generally higher in urban agglomerations than in rural settings. Large gender disparities persist throughout West Africa.

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