No. 288, 1-29 February 2020

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SWAC/OECD AT THE MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

At the invitation of the Munich Security Conference, the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD) launched its report, “The Geography of Conflict in North and West Africa,” during a side event on 14 February 2020. It is the first time that the SWAC Secretariat has taken part in the world’s leading forum for debating international security issues, an important step towards raising its profile and the visibility of its analytical work. In his opening statement, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría highlighted the increasing complexity of political violence in North and West Africa. As the geography of conflict is changing, military interventions struggle to create long-term stability. The SWAC report “is an essential contribution to better understand the current situation in North and West Africa, a global security hotspot and a region confronted by the resurgence of violent extremist activity,” Angel Gurría said. Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ghana and Special Representative of the UN Secretary General to the African Union - a panelist at the launch event, stressed the need for strengthening multilateral responses to regional or cross-border threats. She particularly emphasised the links between the Libyan crisis and the Sahelian and West African conflict dynamics. Indeed, a simple focus on one country alone, or even a smaller set of states, fails to grasp the essential nature of this shifting political violence. The report thus calls upon states in the region and the international community to promote regional initiatives to restore state legitimacy, increase investment in border regions and improve civilian protection. With its new spatial indicator of political violence designed to assess the long-term evolution of conflicts, the SWAC/OECD Secretariat aims to enrich the global security agenda and provide informed qualitative and quantitative analyses.
AFRICA’S URBAN REALITIES

The SWAC Secretariat and AUDA-NEPAD launched the new SWAC/OECD flagship report, “Africa’s Urbanisation Dynamics 2020: Africapolis, Mapping a New Urban Geography,” on the sidelines of the 33rd African Union Summit on 9 February 2020 in Addis Ababa. In his opening statement, Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, CEO of AUDA NEPAD and SWAC Honorary President, highlighted the need for developing mindsets, tools and public policies that are able to quickly catch up with Africa’s urban revolution. The continent is projected to have the fastest urban growth rate in the world. By 2050, its cities will be home to an additional 950 million people. This urban transition is profoundly transforming the social, economic and political geography of the continent. Urban management is a key development challenge and policy agendas need to refocus on the opportunities and challenges that cities and urbanisation present. This was stressed by Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, who called for more accurate data to design better policies that can support transformative action. Covering the entire urban network — from small towns and secondary cities to large metropolitan regions — the Africapolis report contributes to filling this knowledge gap. The launch event brought together some 80 people, including mayors from Dori, Burkina Faso and Freetown, Sierra Leone, who shared first-hand experiences. The event is part of a broader effort to develop a network of stakeholders active in Africa’s urbanisation agenda. The SWAC Secretariat notably presented the Africapolis report at the 10th World Urban Forum on 10 February 2020 in Abu Dhabi. It will also participate in the 2020 Africa-France Summit on sustainable cities and regions, which will be held from 4-6 June 2020 in Bordeaux.

ECOWAS AIMS TO CO-ORDINATE FOOD SECURITY RESPONSES

Co-ordination was once again at the heart of the discussions at an ECOWAS high-level meeting, held on 17-18 February 2020 in Niamey, aimed at addressing the difficult food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa. The meeting brought together government representatives, the humanitarian community and development partners. By June-August 2020, 12.6 million people (5.1% of the analysed population) are projected to be in a crisis situation or worse, including 1 million people in an emergency situation (phase 4). Vulnerable populations are concentrated in the conflict affected areas in northeastern Nigeria as well as in the Liptako-Gourma region. In the spirit of the PREGEC Charter, participants discussed the needs with a view to defining response options and instruments within national response plans. They also assessed the response capacities at the country, regional and partner levels, and agreed on procedures to ensure effective co-ordination between national and regional authorities. Participants underlined that the programming should help strengthen national and regional capacities to prepare responses to emergency situations, and co-ordinate and implement interventions. They also insisted on the need to strengthen food crisis management mechanisms while better aligning partners’ interventions with national and regional policies. Moreover, ECOWAS plans to organise an international conference on the West African storage system, which is currently scheduled for 20-24 July 2020 in Niamey. The gathering aims to build a consensus on the food storage system, capitalise on lessons learned, identify new risks and vulnerabilities, and promote the West African success story. ECOWAS will also launch an assessment of its Regional Food Security Reserve.

OPINION: THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT AFRICA’S URBANISATION

In this viewpoint, published by Le Point Afrique, Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, CEO of AUDA NEPAD and SWAC Honorary President, calls for a paradigm change to support Africa’s urban transition. “In response to Africa’s urban realities, we must review the way we plan our programmes and provide appropriate institutional responses. This requires, for example, a new understanding of rural exodus and its role in triggering urbanisation,” Mayaki says. Rural villages are expanding and progressively transforming into new urban agglomerations. For example, Niger counted some 143 villages in 2015, with a population of 5 000 - 10 000 people. To date, nearly one-quarter of them have transformed into urban agglomerations, with populations of more than 10 000 people. Rural transformation (not rural exodus) has thus become a key driver of urbanisation. Moreover, Dr Mayaki insists on the importance of correcting some of the deep-rooted misconceptions about Africa’s vast areas. “Africa is already urban,” he reminds readers. The design of appropriate and efficient policy interventions depends on understanding more about these urban realities.
MUST READ

THE GEOGRAPHY OF CONFLICT IN NORTH AND WEST AFRICA

This SWAC/OECD study maps the evolution of violence across North and West Africa, with a particular focus on Mali, Lake Chad and Libya. In the regions experiencing the highest levels of political insecurity, it identifies whether and how conflicts tend to cluster or spread, potentially across national borders. The work is based on a new spatial indicator of political violence designed to assess the long-term evolution of conflicts and provide policy options. It uses granular data to assess the intensity and geographical distribution of violence in the region since 1997.

AFRICA’S URBANISATION DYNAMICS 2020: AFRICAPOLIS, MAPPING A NEW URBAN GEOGRAPHY

Produced by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD), “Africa’s Urbanisation Dynamics 2020: Africapolis, Mapping a New Urban Geography,” reveals the profound urban transformations occurring in Africa. Its goal is to help policy makers develop more inclusive and targeted policy options that are in line with African realities. It highlights the diverse and multifaceted nature of Africa’s contemporary urban transition — a diversity which is rarely captured in existing analyses and narratives.

For example, it shows that between 2000 and 2015, 2 500 new urban agglomerations emerged in Africa, revealing the existence of hundreds of urban agglomerations that had not been recorded in official statistics. These agglomerations are rooted in rural transformations that are giving rise to new and unique urban forms, increasingly blurring the lines between rural and urban. The report is based on Africapolis.org, a geo-spatial database covering 7 600 urban agglomerations in 50 countries.

GHANA, AN AGRICULTURAL EXCEPTION IN WEST AFRICA?

The Grain de Sel magazine produced by Inter-Réseaux développement rural is dedicated to Ghana’s experiences related to agricultural development. What can neighbouring countries learn from Ghana’s success story? Ghana’s agricultural sector is mainly driven by exports crops, notably cocoa, and a liberal government policy which proactively supports the private sector. Moreover, Ghana successfully cut both the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and the absolute number of undernourished people in half. However, it faces new challenges because of increasing inequality, low agricultural productivity and the degradation of natural resources. The magazine includes a series of thematic articles produced by members of Inter-Réseaux to explore lessons learned from various sectors and stakeholders.
WHO’S WHO

ANTOINETTE SAYEH, IMF DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR

Antoinette Sayeh, a Liberian national and World Bank “veteran,” has become the number two person at the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The appointment is among the first changes that Kristalina Georgieva, IMF Managing Director, is making to the leadership team, making it more gender inclusive and illustrating IMF’s increasing engagement with its African members. Sayeh is a well-known political figure in Liberia. She served under President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as Minister of Finance from January 2006 until June 2008. Prior to that appointment, she worked in various senior positions with the World Bank Group for 17 years, including as Country Director for Benin, Niger and Togo. She contributed to enhancing the IMF’s engagement with its sub-Saharan African members as director of the African department between July 2008 and August 2016. Before joining the Bank, Ms. Sayeh worked in various economic advisory positions in Liberia’s ministries of finance and planning. She holds a bachelor’s degree in economics from Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania and a PhD in international economic relations from the Fletcher School at Tufts University in Massachusetts. Sayeh is also a visiting fellow at the Centre for Global Development.

Border urban agglomerations are an important feature of the continent’s urban landscape. More than 42 million people or almost 8% of the total urban population live in these agglomerations. There are some 635 border agglomerations in Africa that are less than 40 km from another agglomeration in a neighbouring country, including 47 twin cities at less than 10 km from one another as in the case of Brazzaville and Kinshasa. Six of these have more than one million inhabitants, including Kinshasa, the continent’s fifth largest city with 7.3 million inhabitants. The others are Lomé (Togo), Brazzaville (Congo), N’Djaména (Chad), Gisenyi (Rwanda) and Bujumbura (Burundi). Africa also has ten national capitals that are located at a national border: Bangui, Brazzaville, Bujumbura, Gaborone, Kinshasa, Lomé, Maseru, Mbabane, N’Djaména, Porto Novo. However, this border dimension is very unequally distributed across Africa. North Africa for example only has 19 border agglomerations in total and large swatches of southern Africa have only a few smaller border agglomerations. In the Great Lakes region and in West Africa, border agglomerations are an important feature of the urban network. In Burundi, 27 out of all 33 agglomerations are close to the border. This is also the case for more than half of all agglomerations in Benin, Gambia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Togo.