

THE COURIER

N. I N.E. - JULY AUGUST 2007

THE MAGAZINE OF AFRICA - CARIBBEAN - PACIFIC & EUROPEAN UNION COOPERATION AND RELATIONS

REPORT

CONGO DRC

1st ACP Festival
(Africa Caribbean Pacific)

DOSSIER

European Development
Policy on the table





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THE COURIER

THE MAGAZINE OF AFRICA - CARIBBEAN - PACIFIC & EUROPEAN UNION COOPERATION AND RELATIONS

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Foreword: SIDE BY SIDE

**Sir John Kaputin,
ACP Secretary General**



› The Courier's importance

There is a strong historical association between 'The Courier' and the ACP Group. It is a viable showcase for ACP-EU cooperation, particularly its development dimension. As such, it constitutes a primary reference for a wider readership vis-à-vis the ACP Group. Therefore, it is essential that this instrument is re-launched due to its usefulness, and indeed the promotion of the visibility of the Group.

› The Courier's role

It is hoped that 'The Courier' will be a sounding board to establish interactive dialogue and structured exchanges with our readers. The magazine will relay to our readers ACP activities and positions with regard to various undertakings. Ideally, 'The Courier' should also become an interactive tool par excellence due to the online version which will be updated regularly and will include feedback from our readers.

› Public awareness of the ACP-EU partnership

It would be difficult to gauge this given the geographical size of the ACP-EU partnership and membership on both sides. But for a partnership that has existed for over three decades, it would be in honour of what this partnership stands for that the ACP and EU sides should endeavour to ensure that our goals and objectives are made known to our Member States more than ever before. The magazine may not become the panacea in this awareness drive, but at the very least, one may appreciate and understand the critical role that it would play.

In that vein, 'The Courier' has been designed to capture a wider readership. It is hoped that the appeal and wider circulation of the magazine would be boosted by the fact that the presentation would also be done in Spanish and Portuguese – in addition to French and English.

› Greater knowledge of the partnership and growth

One of the main innovations of the Cotonou Agreement is the direct involvement of civil society and the private sector, particularly in ACP States. When the social partners know the specificities of the EDF procedures and maintain good relations with National Authorising Officers and EC delegations, they can participate more actively in the develop-

ment efforts with ACP Governments. In a general sense, both the ACP and EU sides must continue to live up to the spirit of the Cotonou Agreement to jointly promote its objectives. If the ultimate goal is poverty alleviation, that can only be met successfully through the promotion of economic, social and cultural growth in ACP countries.

› The partnership and other groups

The ACP side at least is not oblivious to global changes that necessitate different configurations be that at regional levels or for specific political, economic and related interests. We live in a fast-changing world. Trends such as globalisation and security concerns are real and unavoidable. Hence, the way forward is to adapt and innovate ways to remain relevant and indispensable.

If we think along this line, it means that the ACP Group should be open-minded about the mandates of organisations and what they represent. In fact, we are moving in tandem with several organisations whom we have established relationships without mutual interests. Besides, the ACP Group really believes in its solidarity and is coerced to endure challenges by working towards common interests that are intricately woven to its association with the European Union.

› Priorities for this crucial year

The top priority on the ACP Group's agenda is the conclusion of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) negotiations by the end of 2007. There is also the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), to come into effect by January 1, 2008, and the programming that comes with it. However, that would only be so with ratification of the revised Cotonou Agreement by two-thirds of the ACP States and all the European States by the end of this year. The ACP Group is also monitoring developments on the WTO front especially in relation to the Doha Negotiations and certain commodity talks where the WTO negotiations have a direct bearing on their respective statuses.

The ACP Group is also focusing on several other essential matters, including the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and the nexus between migration and development. Finally, changes in the international order, including the EU, has caused the ACP Group to pursue an in-depth consideration of its future and how it can re-position itself beyond 2020 – the expiry year of the Cotonou Agreement. ■



**Stefano Manservigi
Director General for Development, European Commission**

› The Courier's importance

'The Courier' is a useful information instrument which talks about cooperation between the ACP and the EU on a day-to-day basis. It is the only magazine able to reach every country in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, to inform about the crucial role of our partnership in shaping a bold development policy and its contribution to promoting peace, good governance, stability and growth.

› The Courier's role

The magazine will explain our approach to development, highlight success stories and register the point of view of others on issues covered. It will also help us to adapt our approach in a rapidly changing world, to be ready for the task in hand. 'The Courier' is a real magazine, a true forum to engender free debate. It is not a propaganda instrument for us, or for others.

› Public awareness of the ACP-EU Partnership

I am afraid European public opinion is not fully aware of the partnership and what it stands for. This is why we need instruments like 'The Courier'. They can help improve this awareness. 'The Courier' is only part of the picture; it is not meant to take on the whole task of communicating development policies.

› Greater knowledge of the partnership and growth

Knowledge leads to growth and a free media is an expression of democracy. There is no scientific linkage between a wider knowledge of the ACP-EU partnership and steps forward in the social and economic environment. But people can be aware of what our governments are implementing to build a better economic and social environment for everybody in our countries; in fact, to build a better world.

› The partnership and other groups

There is no fear of the partnership being diluted by its members seeking closer relations with other bodies. The EU-ACP partnership is not exclusive to relations between Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Europe. Our partnership provides added value to the entire development policy; a policy to be implemented in agreement with other regional institutions such as the African Union which is a crucial body in promoting peace and stability on the continent.

› Priorities for this crucial year

Development policy is a fundamental priority of European external action because development means stability, peace, respect for human rights, preventing terrorism from taking root and promoting democracy. This has been demonstrated by the launch of the 'European Consensus on Development', the first ever common framework for development policy at a European level.

Under this framework, our overriding priorities are: bolstering good governance, because without stability and justice you cannot have any kind of sustained growth; fighting against poverty related diseases (as HIV/AIDS); improving access to social services, such as health and education and modernising transport, energy and telecommunication infrastructures needed to help trade boost the entire economy. ■

Editorial



The reasons for the return of 'The Courier' magazine are many and varied and everybody will have his or her own reason for welcoming it, whether sentimental or intellectual. However, if there must be a single reason, it is that since the last issue of the magazine, published three years ago, the world has seen significant changes. Of importance is not so much a political event itself – the major cataclysm was September 11, 2001 – as understanding of the event. Perception is largely a matter of politics; understanding largely a question of communication.

The much-vaunted 'end of history' paradigm following fall of the Berlin Wall lasted no more than a dozen or so years. The world's division into two blocs in 1917 was no more than a historical interlude.

The break-up of the Soviet bloc reawakened old animosities, rivalries and historical pacts, creating antagonisms between groups, tribes, peoples and nations. However, while much of the world seemed ever more unstable, one region managed to stay on course without any major jolts, despite the past and chequered histories of its members. The European Union (EU) has become a positive model thanks to its success in achieving extensive integration in an open and transparent way. Unlike the empires of the past – including the Soviet one – the EU has never sought to 'invade' sovereign States. It was left to the countries themselves to seek membership and make their own applications to join.

As part of this process, the EU implicitly guaranteed Member States that they would not be dictated to. This attitude is reflected by Czech-born writer Milan Kundera's analysis in his book, 'The Curtain': "Small nations are different from large ones, not just because of the size of their populations. It goes deeper: they do not regard their existence as a certainty but invariably as a question, a wager, a risk. They adopt a defensive attitude towards history... There are just as many Polish people as Spaniards, but Spain is an older power whose existence has never come under threat, while history has taught the Poles the meaning of non-existence. Bereft of their State, they lived for over a century on death row. Indeed, 'Poland is not yet lost', reads the first line of their plaintive national anthem".

A recent EU member, Poland today is now on its guard against a recurrence of losing statehood.

Europe's example should perhaps be seen against the background of another level of international cooperation, that of the United Nations. Although there have been certain changes for the better, the UN has not managed to replicate the EU's achievements. Here the Lomé-Cotonou process can hold up its EU-shaped model as an example. At every stage, developments have to be strictly approved by each Member State.

The report in the first issue of the new edition of 'The Courier' focuses on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In terms of geography, demographic make-up and resources, it is a large country. It recently avoided some of the major risks posed by History to small countries and its current resurgence is down due to the significant support of its key partner, the EU. But this backing can only make the right impact if it is perceived in the right way by the nation-state involved. If not treated carefully, nations, large and small alike, may quickly retreat into their "small or large provincial attitudes", to borrow from Kundera once more, suppressing their future prospects.

The second major change that has occurred over the past three years since 'The Courier' was last published, is the dominance of the Internet as a source of information. The French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut has described the Internet as "an intricate mixture of truths and falsehoods". This has heightened the need for accurate interpretations and trust in our information sources.

In aiming for a publication that is balanced in editorial content and above all independent and self-critical, the ACP Secretariat, who championed 'The Courier' project, and the European Commission, which agreed to finance it, are prioritising explanations over perception. The editorial team is ready to assume its duty to the ACP Secretariat and the Commission in this respect, and even more so, to its readers who can trust in it.

Hegel Goutier
Editor-in-chief

Hegel Goutier

Africa-Caribbean-Pacific / European Union A MODEL OF COOPERATION, NEVERTHELESS...

There are many questions put as to why there is continuing poverty (especially in Africa) in spite of decades of cooperation with the world's richest economic blocs. Cooperation between African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and the European Union (EU) has been more than a success – it is a model. Perhaps such questions are ill-conceived from the outset in that they assume that one country can offer development to another. This is of course an illusion. One can only develop oneself. Others simply help you to do so. The other frequently asked question is whether or not aid can be an obstacle to development. The answer is either 'yes' or 'no'. It is 'no' in the case of relations linking the two blocs that concern us. While EU aid has not developed Africa, in many countries it has contributed greatly to preventing the collapse of vital sectors such as education and health. At the same time, through the construction of major infrastructure, it has made local development initiatives possible. This cooperation is unique in more than one sense. Firstly, its use is defined by the recipient and not by the donor. The European Union

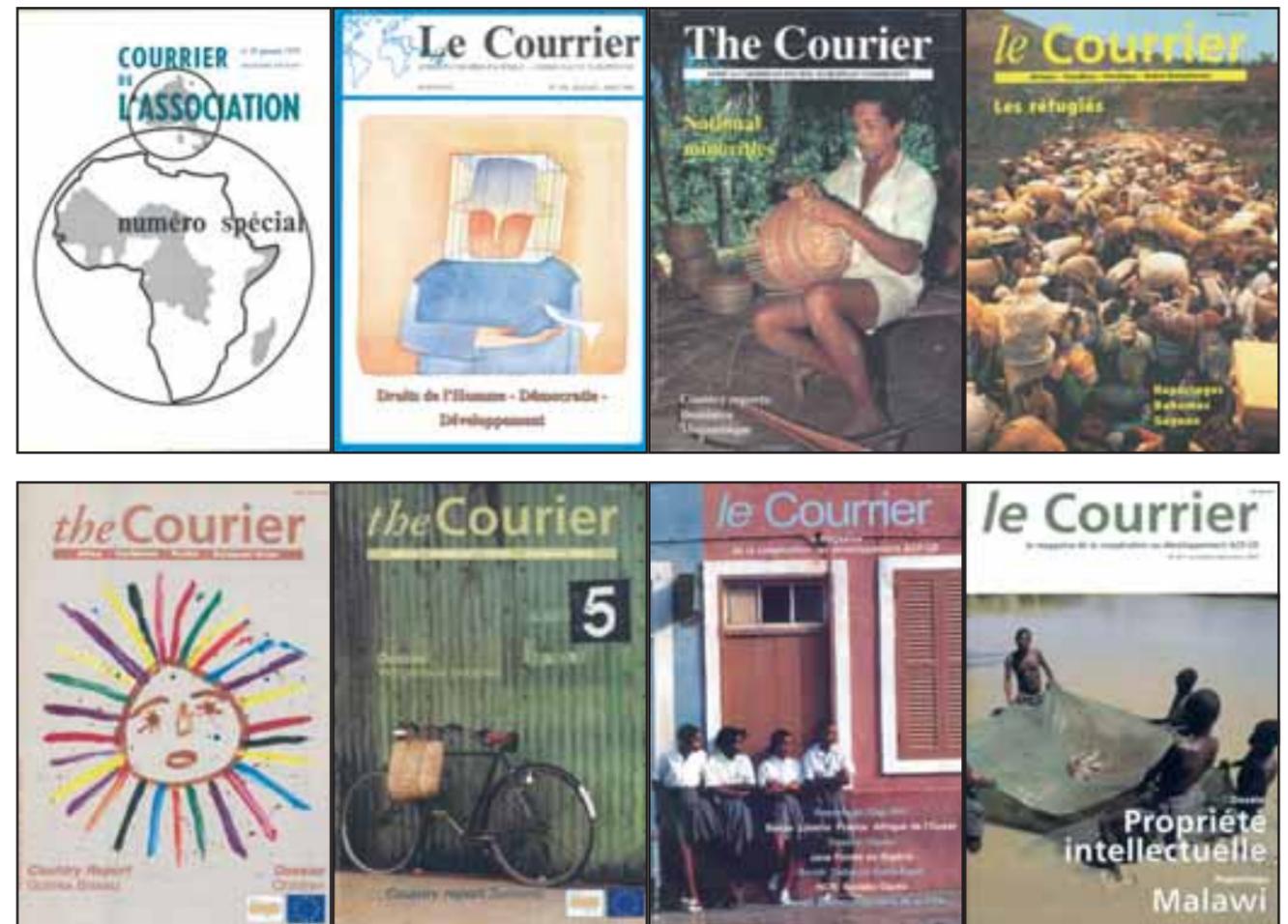
sets the amount of aid granted to each ACP country or region over a period of time, usually five years. The aid is the subject of a long-term contract with both sides given the possibility of modifying it. It puts into place specific joint institutions within which all the EU and ACP countries are represented. These institutions bring together ministers (Council), members of parliament (Joint Parliamentary Assembly), and ambassadors (Council of Ambassadors), etc. What is more, these relations do not only extend to officials, but also between members of civil society and other non-state bodies (such as the EU Economic and Social Committee and representatives of similar organisations from all the ACP regions). This is multilateral cooperation and as such, reduces the risks of fraud or *quid pro quo* arrangements, for example between a former colonising country and the country that was colonised. Therefore, it is aid with fewer strings attached rather than aid agreed in bi-lateral negotiations between a single country and a set of powerful donors, as is the case with international financial institutions. Compared with bilateral agreements between rich and poor countries,

A reintroduction

Just over three years after the last issue was published in November 2003, 'The Courier' is back with a new look. Renowned as the magazine of ACP-European Union cooperation, 'The Courier' was launched in 1970 – before the creation of the ACP – as the journal documenting relations between the then EEC (European Economic Community) and the 'Associated African and Malgache Countries' (EAMA), governed at the time by the Yaoundé II Convention. The Lomé Convention and the Cotonou Agreement marked the successive enlargements of the European Union and the ACP Group, without bringing too many changes to

the nature of the publication. While very specific on technical aspects of cooperation, 'The Courier' was quite vague when it came to the political realities in many ACP countries, due to enduring Cold War rivalries of that time. In the early 1990s, ACP-EU cooperation acquired a major new pillar in the form of 'political dialogue'. The magazine evolved to underscore these developments and the views of others could now be fully heard. In current institutional jargon, 'The Courier' is an 'all ACP project', implemented by the ACP Group Secretariat and financed by the European Development Fund. To bring it more into line with the new realities of global com-

munication, the ACP Secretariat and the Commission decided to outsource the publication and it is now managed by external experts. The official contract manager is EuropeAid (European Commission) while the 'Editorial Board' – that directs the Courier's editorial policy – is co-chaired by the Secretary General of the ACP Group and the European Commission's Director General for Development. The heart of 'The Courier' is an editorial team of four – balanced between men and women and between the EU and ACP –, an assistant editor and a webmaster. The editorial team is backed up by a small group of freelance associates, also made up of ACP and EU professionals. A network of journalists and experts based in most of the ACP countries and the EU also contribute to 'The Courier' as necessary. **H.G.** ■



A collection of covers of the first edition of The ACP-EU Courier.

it is aid of a more transparent nature. The companies involved in implementing it are selected on the basis of a call for tenders issued to potential contractors in all European Union, ACP countries, and even third countries. But there is a slight preference – given parity of quality – for consortia that include the ACP. The aid is also supposed to be free of the politics of national agendas. The cooperation is the subject of continuous negotiations about the content of aid. It has evolved since the 1st Yaoundé Convention (1963), six years after the Treaty of Rome and amid the wave of independence that swept across African countries. We have moved from aid projects to aid programmes and recently towards budgetary aid, especially in countries with acknowledged good governance. This has made it possible to channel resources directly into a national budget drawn up completely independently. Initially centred on rural development and infrastructure, cooperation has spread to a growing number of economic, political, cultural and security fields. No subject is taboo any longer. The fight against drugs, weapons of mass destruction, illegal immigration and security are now not only components of political dialogue, but also the subject of concrete projects. There has been development, too, on the European side. Whereas the Commission was traditionally the most involved party, the Council is now more involved, as in the elections in the DRC, for example. Members of Parliament also have more say when it comes to the budget and the implementation of cooperation. The most remarkable development in the field of cooperation is the

ongoing trade negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) that, in principle, from 2008 will bind the EU Member States to the various ACP regions. These agreements are intended to use trade as a development instrument while at the same time strengthening trade between ACP countries, ACP regions and the rest of the world. Although opinions have often been divided about their practicality, more recently, the views of the ACP and EU countries have converged and there is reason to believe that the agreements will be signed – the principal reservations now being limited to final deadlines. Within the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the EU and the ACP – while sometimes at odds with each other – project an image of a strong alliance that is unique between rich and poor nations in such bodies. Over the years, cooperation between the EU and the ACP countries has also been unique in another way: the evolving identity of countries and their people. Born of the Europe of six Member States and former French African colonies, ACP-EU cooperation has embraced former colonial powers such as the United Kingdom and Spain as well as their former African, Caribbean and Pacific colonies. It has also expanded to include countries with no colonial past with the ACP. The Lomé-Cotonou process was an opportunity to smooth relations between former colonisers and the colonised within a more balanced and friendly relationship. A parallel can be drawn here with the current revolution in the European Union today, where old enmities have been converted into opportunities for mutual cooperation and understanding. ■

NOMADS TURNED “SETTLED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION WARRIORS”

In an ironic twist of fate, the Mauritanian oasis of Tenadi, once reclaimed by sands, has come back to life thanks to a handful of nomads who have been forced to settle there by the inexorable advance of the desert. More than 200 families are there now, living from agriculture and cattle rearing around two wells, surrounded by 80 hectares of crops, which are their protection against the onward march of the dunes. It's a difficult venture, begun 20 years ago by a few families led there by Sidi El Moctar Ould Waled, recipient of the Sasakawa Prize from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2006.

Since 1973, the Sahel and Mauritania in particular, have experienced years of persistent drought, killing 90% of livestock and wiping out the hopes of the population, who have always lived by nomadic cattle rearing over extensive grazing lands, on which they were entirely dependent. The sanding-up of waterholes and the longer journeys that resulted forced the nomads to abandon their livestock farming and adopt a settled life.

The nomads of Tenadi banded together in a cooperative around the oasis of the same

name, 5 km north of the Road of Hope at the gateway to the desert.

The US\$200,000 prize will enable the Tenadi oasis to be consolidated and extended to accommodate new families. A new well and also a water retention pool will have to be sunk. An additional 100 hectares of dunes will be reclaimed by planting new crops, and a nursery of 200,000 plants will be set up. A proportion of them will be distributed to similar projects. Finally, those in charge of the cooperative intend to build a track between the oasis and the main road, which is a necessity in view of the growing population and the increase in its agricultural production at the oasis. ■

Right: Sidi El Moctar Ould Waled, from the Tenadi cooperative.

Below: Plantation of prosopis to halt the advancing desert.

Credit photos United Nations Programme for the Environment (UNEP).



SUGAR PROTOCOL UNDER “ATTACK”, SAY ACP MINISTERS

ACP States called for a joint review of the Sugar Protocol at their Brussels Ministerial Meeting, May 21–24, judging that the EU is about to “throw out the baby with the bathwater”, according to Arvin Boolell, Mauritian Minister for Fisheries and ACP Ministerial Spokesman on sugar.

He stressed that the Protocol continues to contribute to the overall economic development of ACP nations and the livelihoods of many people and was “a glowing example of North-South trade and a model to replicate”.

The Protocol, enshrined in successive Lomé and Cotonou Conventions, has traditionally guaranteed export quotas prices for 18 ACP sugar producers in the EU market.

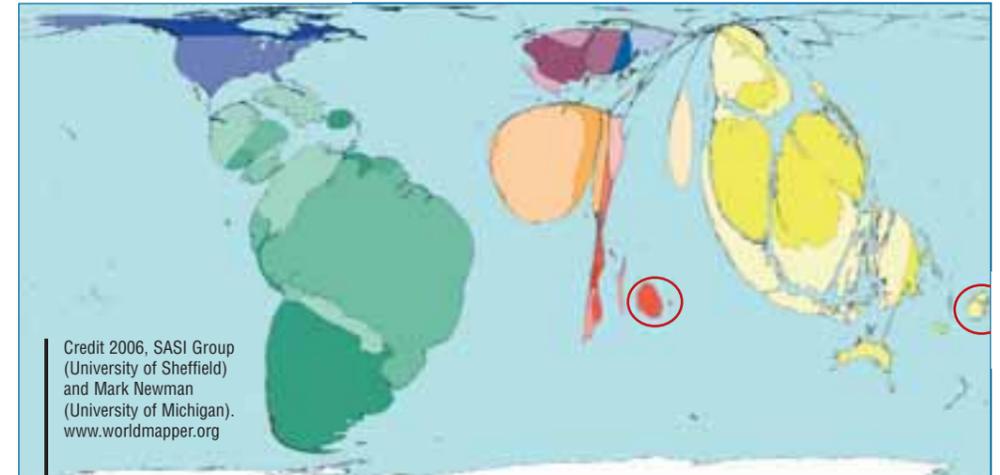
The thrust of the European Commission's latest offer on the table for the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), made at the beginning of April, is to phase out guaranteed prices from 2009 with a gradual opening to competitors.

A resolution from ACP Ministers read that this move was: “tantamount to a unilateral renunciation of this longstanding trade and development instrument and is totally unacceptable”.

For ACP States exporting under the Protocol, the EC's offer is a further blow for the industry. One year ago, EU Member States agreed a 36% cut in the price of sugar as part of a reform of the EU Sugar Regime over a four-year period, also affecting ACP States. George Bullen, Brussels Ambassador for the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) who currently presides the ACP Consultative Group on sugar, says that this cut compounds the losses of ACP sugar exporters who already face mounting freight and insurance costs.

To offset its price cut, the European Commission pledged €1.24 billion over 8 years (2006–2013) for ‘Multi-Annual Adaptation Strategies (MAAS)’ benefiting ACP Sugar Protocol nations. Under these to date, 13 out of 18 sugar Protocol nations have negotiated a raft of measures, on the one hand to make the domestic sugar industry more competitive, with other funds to help diversify into other industries and also to lessen the social impact of the dissolving of the local industry on sugar dependent communities.

ACP Ministers called on annual pledges under the plan to be upped at least to €250 million. Arvin Boolell said that the EU



Credit 2006, SASI Group (University of Sheffield) and Mark Newman (University of Michigan). www.worldmapper.org

World Net Grocery Exporters

Mauritius and Fiji, encircled above, two of the biggest beneficiaries of the Protocol, stand out on this world map. Mauritius currently tops the world net export ranking for grocery exports, the bulk being sugar exports, worth an annual US\$221 to every Mauritian with Fiji in third place, its exports in this category earning US\$152 for every Fijian.

By no coincidence, Mauritius is the biggest exporter under the Cotonou Convention's Sugar Protocol, with an annual export quota of 487,200 tonnes and, with a quota of 163,600 tonnes, Fiji is the second biggest exporter.

‘Net exports’ refer to exports minus imports. ‘Groceries’ referred to in this map include sugar, honey, coffee, tea, mate (a tea-like drink), cocoa, chocolate, spices, seeds for oils and cooking oils. ■

was compelled to address the special legal status of the Protocol, its contributions to social, environmental and rural development and recalled: “No ACP country should feel worse off, but better off as a result of the EPAs”. ■

Political dialogue: Fiji commits

The mid-April consultations between Fiji and the European Union (EU) under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement resulted in commitments by Fiji's interim government, stated European Commission officials. The Brussels talks follow the breach of the "essential elements" of the Cotonou agreement, flouted by the December 2006 military takeover in Fiji of Commodore Frank Bainimarama. ACP States then also strongly condemned the ousting of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase, democratically elected in May 2006. Commitments made are to be closely monitored by the EC and include parliamentary elections in less than twenty-four months and the lifting of Public Emergency Regulations in May 2007. New aid for Fiji will be linked to progress on the key commitments agreed by Fiji, stress EC officials. They add that the talks highlight the value of Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement to deal successfully with a post-coup situation in an ACP State. ACP Ministers, meeting in Brussels, May 21-24, welcomed the 13 commitments made by the Fiji government and said that they would be regularly reviewed by the ACP Council.

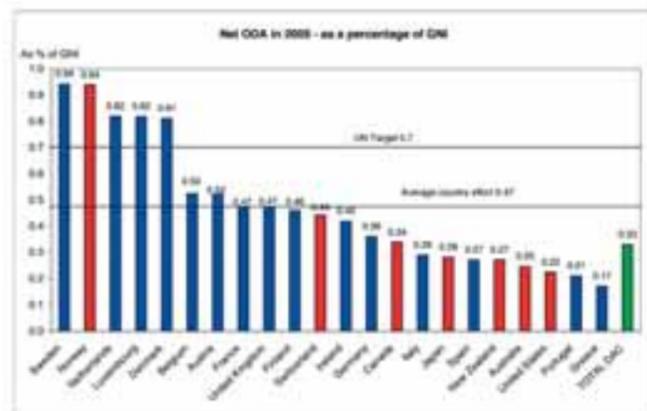
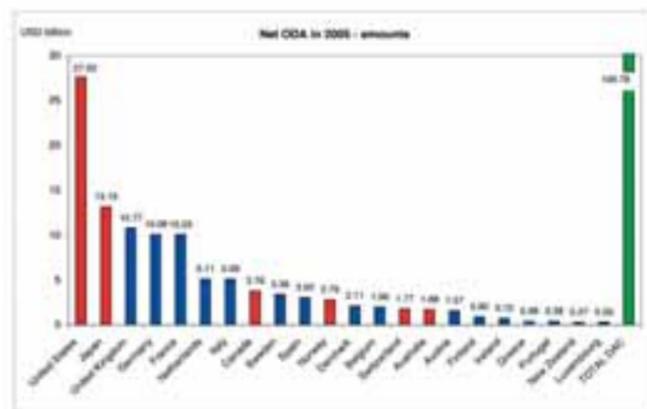
Africa PRESIDES

Africa, more efficient aid spending, a focus on 'fragile' States and a push to wind up the Economic Partnership Agreements with African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions, are the main features of the current and two subsequent European Union's (EU) Presidencies. The pooling of the aims of three Presidencies; Germany, January - June 2007, www.eu2007.de, Portugal taking over July - December 2007, followed by Slovenia, January to June 2008, is enabled by a 2006 change in EU rules on a streamlining of proposals for three consecutive presidencies. It will give a greater chance to follow through policies. On Africa, a joint Presidency paper calls for "broadened, deepened and strengthened political dialogue with African partners", moving ahead with EU "strategies" on governance, infrastructure and water. The trio of Presidencies agreed to press for an increase in Official Development Assistance (ODA) EU-wide. A German Presidency spokesperson said the aim was for the 27 States to jointly reach a target to earmark 0.56% of their Gross National Income (GNI) to development collectively by 2010 with the 'old' EU Member States achieving an average of 0.51% and the 'new' Member States, with less of a 'development tradition', pledging an average of 0.17% average by this date. This figure takes into account that some Member States already exceed this target, whereas others lag (see graph of Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD). Speeding up aid effectiveness targeting a "more efficient division of labour in the EU",

increased use of renewable energy, the effects of climate change on developing nations and better natural resource management are priorities too for all three countries, says the paper. Germany aims to address the drastic consequences of high energy prices on developing countries which threaten "achievements of the EU's development aid transparency and good governance", and also look at the "development aspects of the European Partnership Agreements". From July 2007, the Portuguese Presidency wants to focus, too, on "new complementary approaches in fragile States" and wants the EU to get to grips with "the prevention of State failure and fragility, encompassing existing instruments and policy areas such

as governance and security and development". Migration and development is another issue including "the overall effective management of migration flows, covering its multidimensional nature - international, regional and national - and to maximise the potential development benefits of migration". When Slovenia has its turn in the EU hot seat at the beginning of 2008, it wants the EU to be more attentive to the effects of armed conflict on children and women, calling for the protection of children and women affected by conflict to become part of EU development policy and programmes.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) targets. OECD Paris 2006. Report on Development Cooperation, statistics updated January 19th 2007.



Euro-African employment AGENCIES

To curb the arrival of illegal migrants, the European Commission is to finance centres to give information about immigration to Europe to potential migrants. The first centre opened in Mali at the beginning of 2007. Others are to be set up in Senegal, Mauritania and Gambia. Franco Frattini, European Commissioner for Immigration, said the centre was "something flexible, allowing supply and demand between Mali and the EU to be coordinated". It will post temporary EU jobs for migrants in sectors such as agriculture, construction and tourism.



El Loko, *Illusion men*, 2006, 300 x 400 x 200 cm, installation. Exhibition 'Afrique Europe: rêves croisés', 13/11 - 10/12/06, Brussels. Credit European Commission and artist. "Allegory of Africans dialoguing with Europeans but forgetting to speak to one another".

Fish seminar

How can ACP States make the most of their fisheries for the greatest number of people, arrest declining stocks and add value to exports? The importance of this asset to ACP States was reflected in the pool of participants from ACP governments, the Commonwealth Secretariat, EU aid agencies, the private sector, regional organisations, NGOs and experts, who put what's at stake for the industry at the ACP Secretariat in Brussels, January 22-24. The next step is to move up a political notch on the outcome of the Brussels meeting. Participants highlighted the sustainable development of fisheries in ACP States, protection of the aquatic environment, the scope for eco-labelling in the industry, food security in ACP States and the vital importance of maximising the benefits of small scale fisheries activities for communities. Here, it was agreed that what was needed was a definition of 'artisanal and small scale fisheries'. Also pressing are amended 'rules of origin' to make investment in ACP fish processing more attractive. Organised with the help of the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Secretariat, www.acpsec.org,

the Commonwealth Secretariat, www.commonwealth.org, and Deutsche Gesellschaft Fur Technische Zusammenarbeit, www.gtz.de.



"Need for definition of small and artisanal fisheries". Photo E. Barton, credit Europeaid.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION on a new Africa-Europe partnership

Hot on the heels of the Conference of Heads of States and Governments of the African Union (AU), held at the end of February in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the AU has launched a public consultation on a common strategy for a partnership with the EU. This should be adopted at the EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon, scheduled for the end of 2007. A public consultation on the strategy will "generate ideas and suggestions" on the content and form of this new partnership. At the same meeting, Ghanaian President John Kufuor was elected the AU's Acting President for a one-year term.

Dossier



José Manuel Barroso,
President of the European
Commission and
Amadou Toumani Touré,
President of Mali,
at the plenary
of Heads of State.
Credit European
Commission.

Hegel Goutier

HARD DEBATE ON DEVELOPMENT... WITH A FESTIVE SIDE

European Development Days

This is certainly one of the largest political and cultural events on cooperation with developing nations and specifically with African nations that the European Commission has ever organised in Brussels. A week of activities, from November 13 to 17 – preceded by several days of media hype about its development policy – where the Commission faced heckling from those with opposing views. The outcome was surprisingly positive – even the most sceptical observers, like Aminata Traoré, were won over, acknowledging that debates were open and lively. It was largely a success.

The setting: one of Heysel's exhibition halls in the Belgian capital, more used to hosting the annual automobile show and other commercial mega-exhibitions than political meetings. What is rare for an event with a serious agenda, fashion shows with alluring models, concerts, an African cinema festival, exhibitions of African comic strips and other arts staged not only the Heysel, but galleries, theatres and numerous prestigious cultural venues in and around the city. It all created a party atmosphere pleasing even the hardened political-phobics.

The entire event was publicised by giant posters on the main boulevards and metro stations; leaflets and flyers were distributed around the trendy places where young people go. All this was backed up by a daily happening on the 'Millennium Campaign' theme in Place de la Monnaie outside the opera house in the centre of town.

A large banner even covered the façade of the Berlaymont building – seat of the European Commissioners. The week began with the handing out of the Youth Development Awards to the winners of a graphic arts competition from the various Member States of the Union emphasising the importance of a development consciousness in young people.

› Taking development to the man and woman in the street

Even local cinemas participated, where in one of them – not directly involved in any way – an usherette was seen holding a flyer

for the European Development Days (EDD), www.eudevdays.eu, while chatting to regular cinemagoers. A quick glance revealed her source of supply: a display next to her counter, where the advert for the EDD had been placed alongside those for tango



"The Commission's development policy faced heckling by its detractors".
Louis Michel, European Commissioner
and Aminata Traoré, anti-globalisation activist.
Credit European Commission.

shows, rock concerts and other events. It clearly illustrated that the organisers had spared no effort in bringing development issues directly to the man and woman in the street.

In fact, the audience was much more varied than the usual suspects (civil servants, activists and other regular attendees) at these get-togethers, strolling around picking up information from the many stands in the Heysel's development 'village'. They came to find out about the new Latvian or Maltese development policy; the long-standing Finnish commitment to development; about pacifist movements such as Nonviolent Peaceforce or Pax Christi; or the involvement of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) in the African Partnership Forum.

This was just an appetiser! The main course, so to speak, was the opening ceremony of the EDD by then-Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, and the then-holder of the Presidency of the European Union, Finland, represented by its Secretary of State for Development, Marjatta Rasi. This was followed by a debate on the theme 'Perspectives on Governance' in which activist for an alternative globalism, and former Minister of Culture in Mali, Aminata Traoré, made a

robust challenge to the European Union's development policy and that of other large international institutions. Other participants in this debate were Saïd Djinnit (African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security), Mark Malloch Brown (United Nations' Deputy Secretary General), Paul Wolfowitz (then-President of the World Bank), Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, Donald Kaberuka (President of the African Development Bank) and Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development. In parallel, a few hundred metres away, the Forum of EU-Africa Affairs was going on. This brought together a group of business leaders whose companies are involved in developing countries.

► **Call to reflect**

Then there was the Governance Forum, concluding with the Plenary Session of African Heads of State. The Governance Forum was the real 'think tank' of the programme. Organisers wanted to get participants to think about development issues as an open dialogue. It was also an invitation from the Commission to reflect on its own progress. There was a crowd of rather frustrated listeners, who could not attend all of the multiple round table discussions happening simultaneously. It was difficult to choose between sessions in the afternoon: 'Building a culture of democracy', 'Accelerating the fight against corruption', the 'Avenues open to civil society', 'Inequalities and vulnerable groups' and 'Migration and development'. The Plenary Session of African Heads of State – a procession of the great and the good of the African continent – was attended by 14 Presidents (Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda), a Vice-President (Gambia), Prime Ministers (Ethiopia, Mauritius, Swaziland) and a handful of former Heads of State. It was an opportunity to get up to speed with progress made by the continent on good governance, and especially to show that while there are still real challenges in Africa, they should not take away from the progress underway.

However, it was a pity that the Heads of State generally settled for justifying the running of their respective States rather than tabling new ideas to evaluate and stimulate good governance among rich and poor nations, businesses and large international institutions. The only challenge to these

official statements was a small demonstration by a few opponents during the speech by the Ethiopian Prime Minister, which was quickly quelled by security people.

At the EDD's closing ceremony, popular figure of South African Nobel Peace Prize winner, Mgr Desmond Tutu, shared the platform with Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, Germany's Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Luis Amado, Portuguese Foreign Minister and Commissioner Louis Michel.

► **Creativity, quality and beauty: a sales edge for Africa**

All the festivities made the EDD a one-off in raising the economic opportunity and development potential of cultural creativity in African countries. Fashion shows by great designers like the dynamic Alphadi from Niger – a driving force in African fashion design – and Senegal's Claire Kane, paid tribute to the sophistication and elegance of African beauty. This ranged from allusions to the wonderful traditional dress of Berber women, to the up-to-date, 21st century sensuality of avant-garde metallic bustiers.

Other activities attracted similar attention including the comic strip exhibition at one of Brussels' prestigious locations – the Flagey centre.

This venue also hosted the African film festival, in association with Kinopolis, one of the largest multiscreen cinemas in Europe. Finally, the contemporary art exhibition, 'Afrique Europe: Rêves croisés' ('Africa, Europe: crossed dreams') allowed some of the most imaginative and best known of today's African artists to display their works.

All these activities came under the banner of 'Africa is going places', which the key figures behind the European Development Days, European Commissioner Louis Michel and the Commission's Director General for Development, Stefano Manservigi, wanted to emphasise at this event. Their intention was to move people away from the usual depressing clichés about the continent and change its image among investors and other partners.

Judging by the attendance at the EDD events and also the coverage in the national press about this great show featuring the African continent, it's a gamble that seems to have paid off.

Africa deserved this tribute... and put on a great show. ■

EU SECURITY: NOT SEEING THE WOOD FOR THE TREES?

Migration and good governance

Or, to take the meeting's line, it's a question of "good governance of the phenomenon of migration". There is general agreement that the type of good governance that should be at stake is not just about migrants' countries of origin, but all actors including host countries and international organisations. There's a coming together, too, of the fact that the phenomenon is on the rise in part because of globalisation, and that despite a downside, it does enrich host countries and develop regions from where migrants originate.

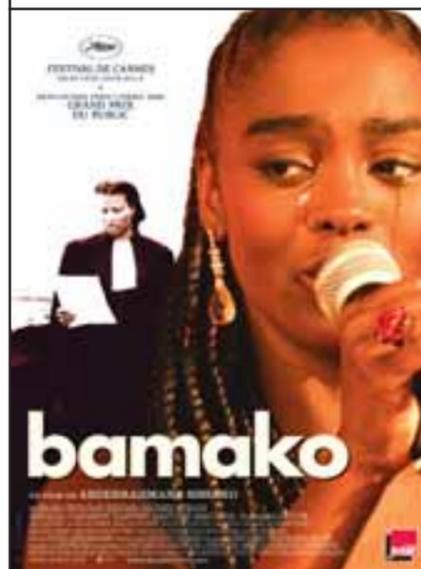
One issue causing debate was the role of migrants' countries of origin with official or private bodies who often benefit from illegal immigration. Another was the reported hypocrisy of host countries who lessen the contribution of migrants and home in on law and order issues. This, in turn, provokes the segregation of migrants.

► **The missing link**

Ndiro Ndiaye, Deputy Director General of IOM (International Organisation for Migration, www.iom.int) says that despite all the hullabaloo about migration, the proportion of migrants in the world remains stable: 3% of the world's population, of whom the big

majority are legal. What seems to have shocked people in Europe is the growth in the number of black African migrants spoken about in all the media – 2,700 in 2005 compared with 120,000 in 2006 – many heading for what has now become a symbolic destination: the Canary Islands. Of particular concern is African immigration, not least voiced by

"And, what is rare for an event with a serious agenda, fashion shows with alluring models, concerts, an African cinema festival..."
Poster of the movie 'Bamako', by Abderrahmane Sissako.
Credit European Commission.



African countries themselves. This is because migration has led to 'growth' without development. In a single year, 20,000 African health professionals left the continent. Ndiaye is outraged: "How is it possible to pay someone to study for seven years and offer them a mere US\$200 per month salary, forcing them to go elsewhere?" This question was put not only to countries of origin, but also to international donors who fund education in the countries concerned.

Development projects should take into account the added value of migrants' skills, how they fill the demands of local businesses and the contribution of diasporas to their countries of origin and funds they transfer there. These financial resources should be used to stem migration. Instead of taking advantage of such opportunities, host coun-

tries keep migration issues within the walls of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Justice, as is the case in France, without any input from development bodies. "Here's the missing link", analysed Ndiaye. The migration forum to be held in Europe in July 2007 will be an opportunity for European governments to adopt a well-rounded approach to the phenomenon.

As for Africa, "it has not been absolved". It should, according to Ndiaye, equip itself to dialogue on an equal footing with Europe, acquiring knowledge and skills in fields such as security issues relating to official papers and the running of transit terminals. Africa should assemble a body of academic experts to address such issues. The crime of ignorance or incompetence was just as reprehensible as that of indifference or demagoguery.



IngridMwangiRobertHutter, *Neger*, 1999, video, 4 min 15, 'Afrique Europe: rêves croisés'. Credit European Commission and artist.

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"What seems to have shocked people in Europe is the growth in the number of Black African migrants talked about in all the media". Babacar Niang, installation, *Embouteillages urbains*, 2005. 'Afrique Europe: rêves croisés'. Credit European Commission and artist.

> The global world, a second colonial system

Rita Sussmuth from the GCIM (Global Commission on International Migration, www.gcim.org), an independent organisation set up by the Secretary General of the United Nations and several countries to draw up a blueprint for a global approach to international migration, underlines the contrast between the open-mindedness of the EU, particularly the Commission, on the one hand, and EU Member States, who tersely defend their respective interests. This jeopardises any harmonisation. They are, she says, too busy defending their patch to share sovereignty and seek a win-win solution for both host countries and migrants' countries of origin.

Migrants from Africa, of whom roughly 50% are women, are the driving force for the continent's development. These women are pillars of their nations' economies. A second colonial system seems to be sanctioned in the global world; a 'brain drain', in addition to the pillage of natural resources. Good governance of international institutions should not be confined to managing internal affairs, but carve real cooperation for a globalised world.

Rita Sussmuth is just as scathing of African countries which, in her opinion, allegedly have various ways of making money out of their migrants.

> A market of predators

Aminata Traoré, former Minister of Culture in Mali and an international expert and figurehead of the alternative globalisation movement, questions the appropriateness of the focus of the symposium's main focus, 'development', and encourages Europe to "recognise that there are no more bad governance issues in Africa than elsewhere". At the same time, she underlines that when the continent is severely criticised, it's usually black Africa that takes the flak. In her view, "the mirror of corruption is held up to us whilst upstream; only market rules count. The smugglers are a part of the system". In the opinion of this activist for a different way forward, Europe's problem is its guilt and its refusal to recognise that its development policy is on the wrong footing. China should not be the scapegoat, because "China was not the one that started the pillaging". In the same vein, Aminata Traoré criticises the perversion of the G8 reducing debts which "trap African countries into agree-

ments harmful to their development", she said sums paid to leaders of countries of origin to offset them are akin to political corruption. The good governance of developed countries trying to control the civil society of poor countries should be questioned. Aminata Traoré also criticised the guarantees that are said to have been given to multinationals by multilateral financing organisations in their assistance programmes for developing countries. The international market has become "a market of predators". Finally, the disproportionate media coverage of African immigration to Spain was under-

Richard Lokiden Wani *Double à velos*. 'Another World. Bamako 2005'. Credit La Centrale Electrique and artist.



lined and likened to racism, whereas the number of African migrants in this country is tiny compared to those from Latin America or Eastern Europe.

> The African Diaspora, the biggest donor to Africa by a long way

Remittances: the jargon for financial assistance from migrants given to their country of origin. These sums of money are significant. Gibril Faal, Chairman of the Board of AFFORD (African Foundation for Development, www.afford-uk.org) advocates 'Remit Aid' – tax refunds on 'aid' sent by migrants to their countries; which is a scheme similar to refunds given by EU governments to those donating to charity organisations. Faal reminded symposium-goers of World Bank statistics for 2003

and 2005, respectively US\$200 billion and US\$250 billion going to Africa.

As far as African development cooperation goes, the African diaspora is far and away the leading donor, and not just any old donor. It is the most generous, least demanding and the most consistent donor. Remittances are growing and flow no matter what; when the economy is strong and when times are hard. Without any conditionality tied to good governance or commercial consideration, the diaspora sends its share to Africa. Depending on the country, such aid is 2 to 4 times bigger than all official development aid, and with a value 5 times higher than that of direct foreign investment.

Further, it is aid solely for beneficiaries, whereas a large proportion of State-to-State development aid stays in donor hands. And there is no need for government mediation or other intermediaries tapping into it. This is an example of good governance.

Over 90% of remittances are spent on consumer goods. 40% to 60% in a country like Ghana typically goes to the construction sector. Gibril Faal's conclusion: this type of aid is as of much importance as development aid. There were questions where no consensus was reached during the heated discussions rounding off the speakers' presentations, such as restrictions on freedom of movement, acknowledged as tighter in Europe for those coming from Black Africa, and the need to provide developing countries with the expertise of their migrants on a temporary or long-term basis, even if tapping international government aid to do so.

Jonathan Faull, from the European Commission, is opposed to more freedom of movement around EU countries for migrants. Such rights do not exist anywhere in the world since borders are still realities. He is also against the idea of placing Europe on trial for anti-black Africa racism. Only recently has attention been drawn to the grants from the continent. Before, those most affected had been Mediterranean populations and those from Eastern Europe.

The speeches and discussions barely dealt with home security issues for EU States and the frequently raised related problem of trouble hot spots in communities of foreign origin. Nor did they come to grips with the tensions between the 'homogenous' and non-native populations in areas where the number of migrants are especially high. Isn't the domestic security preoccupation of host countries a matter of not being able to see the wood for the trees?

H.G.

François Misser

FROM NASA TO THE SCHOOLS OF RWANDA

Information technology

The new boss of Microsoft Africa, Cheikh Diarra, is not to be confused with those "lazy intellectuals" who were attacked by the lamented President of Burkina-Faso, Thomas Sankara.

During, and in the wings of the 'business forum' organised at the European Development Days, this former director of NASA's Mars Exploration Programme, said he believed in the development potential of new information technologies; the situation of the most remote villages of his native Mali in mind.

Afrosceptics may argue that such faith would hardly be surprising from the 'African Ambassador' of Bill Gates' multinational company. That does not change the fact that Cheikh Diarra, also President of the Virtual University for Africa, has a vision. He gives Rwanda as an example. Who would have thought that in the aftermath of the Tutsi genocide, this devastated country would become Microsoft's laboratory in Africa? Nonetheless, Rwanda is today one of the countries on the continent where 'e-government' is at its most advanced, all the members of Parliament having their own laptops. At the same time, the government is working tirelessly to achieve its objective of linking over 300 schools in 2007. The Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST),

already has a graduate training scheme numbering 4,000 students.

> Satellites, unexplored potential

But how can this be replicated in Mali where vast areas are far away from fixed telephone networks and electricity?

There are solutions, argues Diarra, who recommends a hybrid system combining a service for coastal areas via bandwidths permitted by optic fibres and the installation of autonomous systems such as VSAT (Very Small Aperture Terminals) in internal areas: small antennae of between 1.5 and 2.5 metres in diameter, connected to satellites, whose price of approximately US\$12,000 is relatively affordable. UNESCO estimates that, in fact, 30% of the capacity of geostationary satellites above Africa is unused.

But access to new technologies is also hampered by the high price of computers and programme licences sold by Microsoft in particular. Diarra doesn't deny this.

But he says his company sells licences to African schools "for the paltry sum of five US dollars each".

This is how Microsoft came to create centres in Namibia and in Kenya which repair and recondition computers that are barely two years old and are no longer wanted by banks or large companies in the North. These machines are then distributed to schools.

> 'Office' in Zulu

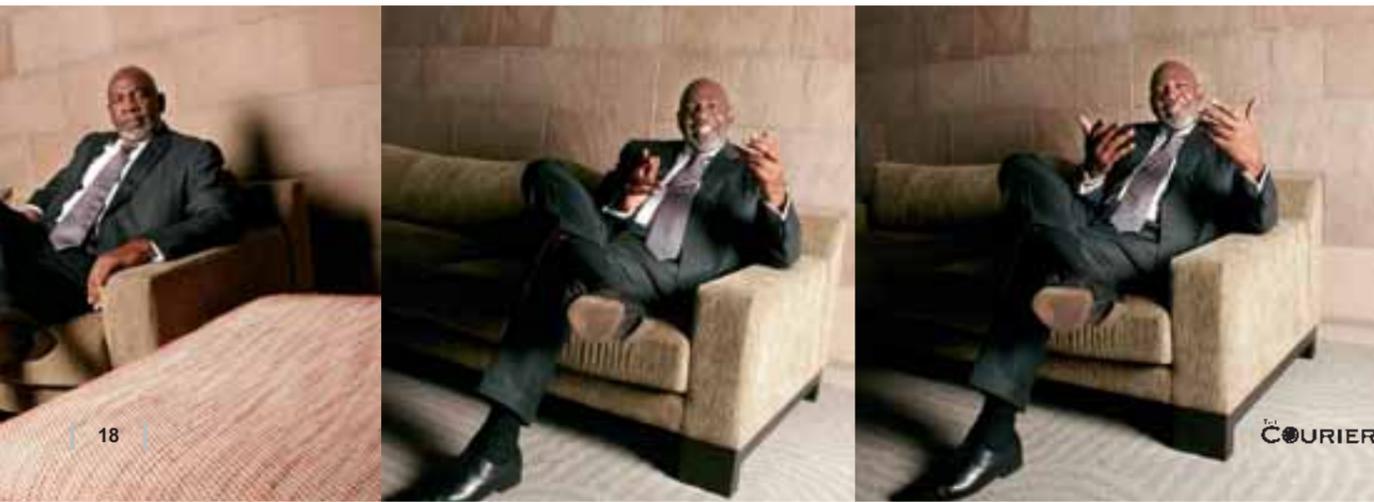
It is now possible to download interfaces offering the 'Windows' operating system and the 'Office' package in Swahili, Zulu and Afrikaans free of charge.

The Igbo, Hausa, Woloff, Bambara and Peul versions will follow. But you have to go further than that, Diarra emphasises.

Graphics and voices must also be used so that anyone who cannot read is able, by placing the cursor of the mouse over a word, to listen to the computer pronounce it in their language.

It is through this kind of interactivity that people can gradually benefit from this potential to improve their living conditions. The possibilities are tremendous. ■

Cheikh Diarra, the new boss of Microsoft Africa. Credit Microsoft.



FROM BENEFICIARY TO DONOR: AN EXTREMELY INFORMATIVE EXERCISE

Development aid

It is difficult for new Member States of the European Union (EU), still seen today as 'poor' of the EU and hence receiving special aid amounting to some €8.5 billion from the European Cohesion Fund, to become fully-fledged members of the EU, the leading donor worldwide, providing more than 50% of total Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Upon joining the EU on May 1, 2004, there were no tall orders made of the ten new Member States – Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus. They will only have to begin contributing to the European Development Fund (EDF) in 2008, at the start of the 10th edition of the EU aid budget for ACP States.

Even if the new Member States committed themselves in May 2005 to gradually increasing their aid contribution, they managed to ensure that this would happen at a slower pace than for their partners. Whilst

the UN fixed the level of official aid to be committed at 0.7% of GNI by 2015, the objective for the ten new Member States was fixed at 0.33% with an intermediate objective of 0.17% to be achieved by 2010 (0.51% for the EU-15).

This is a grace period that all of these countries are using to full advantage to build their cooperation and development policies. Twinning arrangements have been established to strengthen institutions; this is especially the case with France and Germany, fol-



António Ole, Remote connection: fragments of a diary, Luanda - Jerusalem 1996. Photo Carlo Pereira Marques, credit artist.

lowed by Spain and Great Britain. Large donors are following suit, United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) amongst them. But it is first and foremost Canada, which since 1989 has played a key role in building the capabilities of the Visegrad Countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia) and the three Baltic States via the Canadian International Development Agency (ACDI). The objective: to fund and run joint aid projects in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

> Neighbours first

For the new EU Member States, the bulk from the former Soviet Union, the first priority is stability in the Central and Eastern European region, "of vital necessity", emphasises the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs. So it is hardly a surprise that topping the list of beneficiaries of their government aid should be their nearest neighbours, namely the Balkan States, as well as a number of Eastern European nations. And what of the ACP countries? Until recently, only a handful of them received aid from the new EU donor countries. And although several countries have decided to extend their bilateral cooperation, the list remains short and is limited for now, to Africa. Four countries head the list: Angola – which features amongst the 'priority' countries of Czech and Polish cooperation agencies, as well as Kenya, Zambia and Sudan.

> Good governance and agriculture

"We have specific experience not shared by traditional donors", remarks an expert from the NGO platform for Slovak development, "and which is rooted in the transformation process we lived through after the fall of the Berlin Wall". It is not surprising then that aid for good governance and opening up to the market economy are priority sectors for assistance provided by the new Member States, especially for the countries close to them. As for Africa, aid is concentrated on more 'traditional' sectors such as agriculture, industrial development or the environment. ■

Debra Percival

LAYING A NEW PATH WITH AFRICAN PARTNERS

New and cross-cutting development issues, newcomers around the table and the need for better coordination between donors are among the subjects reshaping international donor-development 'paradigms', or blueprints for future policies.

The ways in which trade and aid tools can help donors with the big development issues of good governance, climate change, migration, security and biodiversity, were poured over by participants at the European Union Development Days conference. China was viewed by participants as both an opportunity for African exporters and at the same time a competitor in overseas markets. Its pledges to up aid to the continent were both welcomed and questioned in so far as what this might mean for aid attached to respect for human rights. One thing is defi-

nite, said Paul Wolfowitz, then World Bank President, "African countries lag behind in economic growth and business. It costs the African entrepreneur three times more to export the same distance". The conference's emphasis on promotion of good governance in African nations was acknowledged by the African Union's Commissioner for Peace and Security, Saïd Djinnit: "The greatest challenge is the challenge of governance", adding that his organisation favoured an "African charter for democracy and governance" built on, "shared common values."

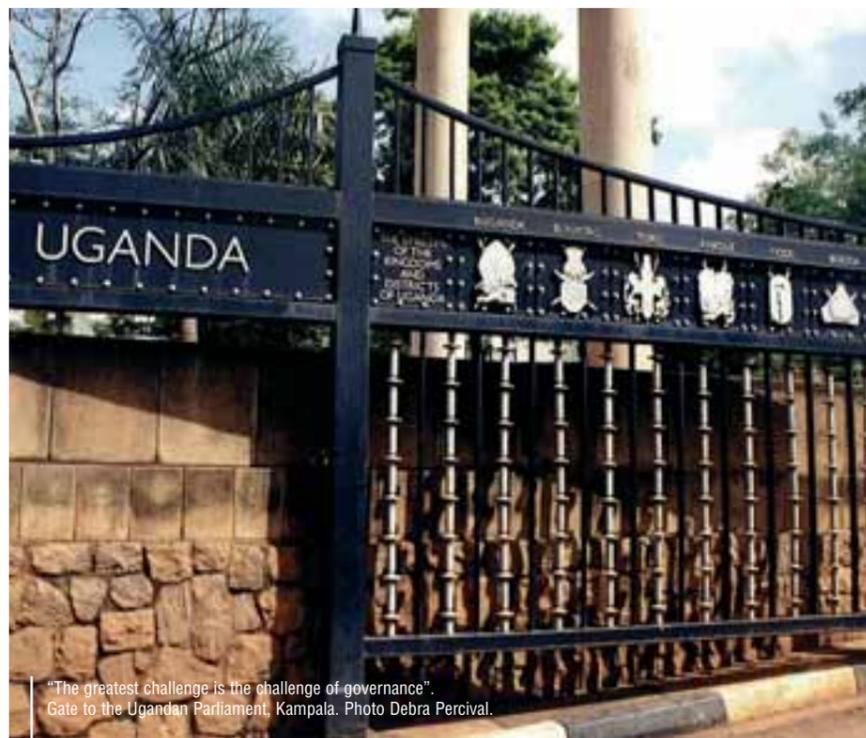
Many conference participants called on donors to consider all components of good governance in providing donor aid. For Botswana's President, Festus Mogae, this included a "legitimate constitution and rule of law, broad-based participation in the way governed, effective public institutions and gender equity". Sierra Leone's President, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, listed the cornerstones of good governance in his previously conflict-wrenched country: "Peacekeeping and building, reformed security forces, fighting corruption, public sector reform, justice and poverty reduction."

> Good governance needs infrastructure

Many echoed the view of Mark Malloch Brown, United Nations' Deputy Secretary General: "Democracy and good governance needs roads, hospitals, prosperity and jobs." Several African leaders called for more direct budget support so funds can quickly reach where they are most needed.

For Liberia's President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, whose country is emerging as a model for other post-conflict societies, good governance amounted to "the effective management of natural resources of the people, by the people, for the people".

"Wealth shared leads to the prevention of conflict. For me, continuing to export raw materials is part of bad governance", Uganda's President, Yoweri Museveni, told the event's concluding plenary session, which included 18 African Heads of State. Calling for more overseas investment in Uganda in medium to large industries of between US\$20-100 million, Museveni questioned: "How can you



"The greatest challenge is the challenge of governance". Gate to the Ugandan Parliament, Kampala. Photo Debra Percival.

Mustapha Dimé, *La petite danse*, 1995, 241 x 117 cm, wood, metal, wire, nails. 'Afrique Europe: rêves croisés'. Credit European Commission and artist.



have sustainable development for 45 years without transition? Continuing to export raw materials is bad governance." Uganda is ranked fourth biggest coffee producer in the world, selling beans for just one US dollar per kilo to the UK. The commodity fetches US\$15 per kilo in the UK for the European processing company doing the grinding and roasting.

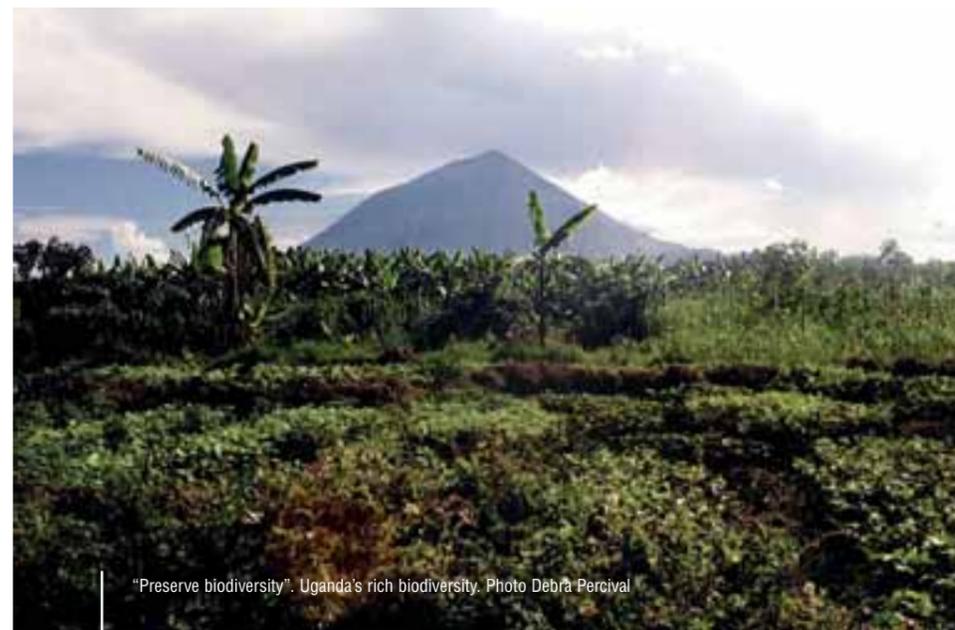
For Jean-Michel Séverino, Director General of France's government cooperation agency, Agence Française de Développement, too many actors were doing the same things, in the same spot, leading to what he called an "aid Disneyland". Other participants raised questions over the long-term effectiveness of foreign experts parachuting into a country for a short time to carry out projects.

Koos Richelle, Director General of EuropeAid, the body implementing European Commission aid projects, feared there was too much duplication by the international community. "In the social sector alone in Tanzania in 2006, there were 400 donor projects", indicated Richelle, a key speaker at the conference's workshop on 'new paradigms'. He said EuropeAid was "looking into ownership on the demand side and quick delivery".

Polish Director of Cooperation, Jerzy Pomianowski, drew attention to the importance of making aid more visible. He said his country felt its lack of visibility in international cooperation and had a lot of work to do to "educate our society on development". Many participants noted the enduring inconsistencies in EU aid and trade policies. Monoculture in Uganda, encouraged by importer countries dependent on supplies of a single commodity, was destroying his country's biodiversity, said Chebet Maikut, President of Uganda's National Farmers' Union.

Sally Nicholson, Brussels Officer with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), told participants at a 'side-event' of the conference that it was time for the EU to act on all its declarations about preserving biodiversity in developing nations. The 'Biodiversity in European Development Cooperation Conference' held in Paris, September 19-21, 2006 mounted by the 'World Conversation Programme', drew up a multi-pronged programme to reduce the ecological footprints of the EU in developing nations.

For the Geneva-based International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), "conflict sensitive" trade and aid policies were priorities. IISD Project Manager, Oli Brown, told another 'side event' that this involved exporters, "moving away from the export of one or two unpredictable commodities",



"Preserve biodiversity". Uganda's rich biodiversity. Photo Debra Percival



Building governance 'bottom-up' in Mauritania

"For the first time in Mauritania, project management is not in the administration's hands," says Zakaria Ould Amar, associate director of Mauritania's governance Centre (ADAGE) whose joint research and report with the Brussels development think-tank, the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), has laid the flag stones for a multi-dimensional programme to build civil society 'bottom up'.

The three-year EU funded €4.5 million 'Programme d'Appui a la Societe Civile et a la Bonne gouvernance' (PASOC – Support Programme for Civil Society and Good Governance), got off the ground in February 2007. It puts a legal framework for civil society in place, builds civil society networks and dialogue on national policies, enables civil society to create a culture of citizenship and human rights and allows local governance to gain expertise facilitating donors in managing their projects locally.

In the 'pre-project' phase, ECDPM and ADAGE worked side-by-side, October 2004 – June 2005, identifying what needed to be done to support civil society in Mauritania to lead to a "true democratic culture", explains Jean Bossuyt, ECDPM Project Officer. Identifying the nature of and numbering civil society groupings in Mauritania was the first step.

There was initial reticence: "We have regular general assemblies but we don't change Presidents", asserted one member of an

association in Hodh, South East, relates Amar. "We are elected by the people. As for the NGOs, they have no legitimacy. In whose name do they speak?" remarked a mayors' grouping from Adrar in the North of the country. PASOC was also stalled by a coup d'etat in Mauritania, in August 2005. Two years on, and there's a better understanding, the project gaining ground by its own momentum. A seminar organised under the project, May 2006, open to all civil society, drew up a 'who's who' of Mauritanian civil society. Going to press, the awaited legal framework for civil society was to be finalised. An autonomous technical facilitation and implementation unit will decide on eligibility of individual requests for funds from civil society.

A €100,000 ceiling is placed on projects to build human rights and other networks such as for the handicapped. Innovative applications for funding are expected in the budget line for capacity building of civil society bodies, such as putting over what 'citizenship' means with the use of comic strips. Given the vastness of the country, three out of Mauritania's 13 communes in the most populated areas are singled out to receive training in local governance for better management of locally based projects funded by donors. To ensure that funds are well spent, spreading the word with brochures and other material about PASOC's successes and failures is a vital part of the project, explains Amar. ■

building markets for "non conflict resources", as well as restricting exports of "conflict resources". He also wants businesses operating in "fragile States" to be more "conflict sensitive".

Commissioner Louis Michel agreed that the EU, in its half century history of development cooperation, had been "too paternalistic". He told journalists that the EDD event had set out to create a real partnership and not impose any new conditionality on African nations. "We are still behaving like schoolmasters", he added, calling for more political dialogue with African nations and "mutual respect between development partners".

"The meeting intends to lay a new path with African partners", stated Louis Michel at the start of the week's events. The Brussels meeting generated pointers for new 'paradigms.' It signposted priority issues and linkages between them, what is and what isn't working to make aid more effective and the need for more cooperation between donors to pool resources and avoid duplication. Portugal's Foreign Affairs Minister, Luis Amado, whose country will stage the next European Development Days in Lisbon scheduled in the second half of 2007, will run with the Brussels baton. ■

Left: Graffiti 'Liberia for everybody', Monrovia, Liberia.

Right: "ACP needs bigger investment". Barbers shop, Kampala, Uganda. Photos Debra Percival.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND THE MEDIA: FIRST OF ALL, RESPECT JOURNALISTS

How can the media contribute to good governance in Africa? You have to respect journalists, make their status clear and organise the audio-visual sector, Mactar Sylla tells 'The Courier', after taking part in an EDD round table on the subject. Currently the President of the Private Association of African producers and television stations ('Association privée des producteurs et télévisions d'Afrique', APPTA) and Managing Director of the channel 'Spectrum Television' (Cameroon), he was formerly the Director of Senegalese Radio-Television and a member of the TV5 news team.

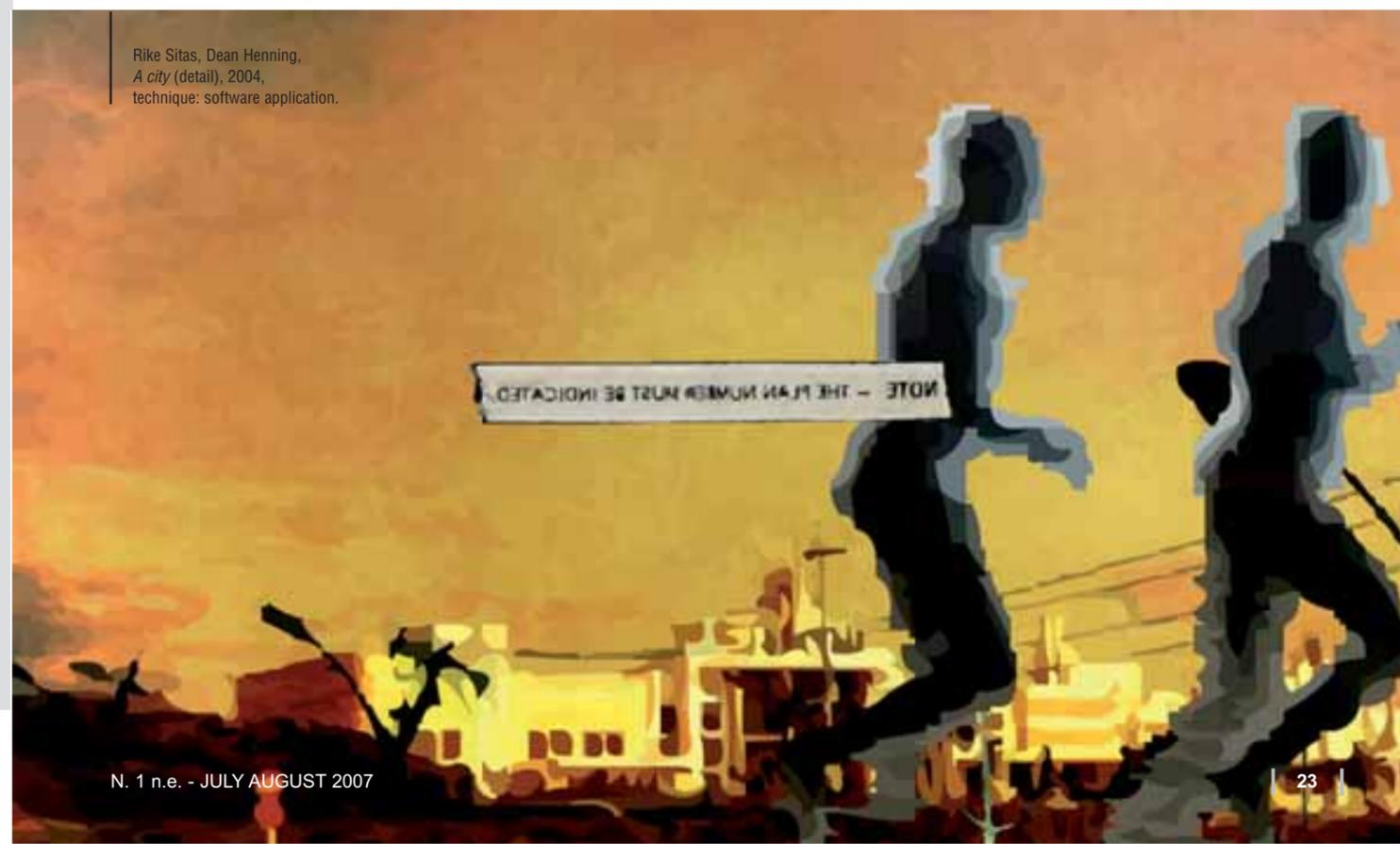
"Generally, the African media, whether in the public or private sector, must play their part informing and alerting the public. They must also make the public and government aware of development issues, not only cultural, but also social ones. They have to organise debates rather than sticking to the 'Ostrich' principle", emphasises Mactar Sylla. The degree of difficulty of this task depends on which country you're in.

Without going as far as backing the idea of a fourth estate, it's essential that the media, whether the written press, television or radio, are able to play the role of informing and guiding the public, relating the facts whatever they may be and whoever is responsible for them. When you see how they're used, there's a basic problem: the majority of public service bodies, 'State' media, come across more as their masters' voices, rather than tools to assist good governance.

"Organising the audio-visual sector"

François Misser: But for years now, in all countries on the continent, journalists have been fighting to get stories out in the open. It's all very well telling them: "you must inform the citizens", but isn't that what many of them are trying to do already? Shouldn't pressure also be put on governments so that journalists have more room to manoeuvre in their work?

Rike Sitas, Dean Henning, A city (detail), 2004, technique: software application.



Mactar Sylla: Things have to happen simultaneously. Both sides have a part to play. It's true that many journalists are getting along with their jobs, regardless of where they work and difficulties they have to overcome. But more progress is needed.

Regulation and a legal framework for the audio-visual sector have to be worked on. In countries where there is no legal framework to regulate the sector, no one knows exactly what the public mission is, what the requirements of the job are, what protection they have and what status journalists have. It's quite clear that when you have none of that, the fight is difficult, not to mention unequal.

“ It would be unthinkable to tell a surgeon how to operate.”

FM: To which countries does this apply?

MS: They know who they are. God recognises his own. My own country, Senegal, passes for

Mounir Fatmi, *Les connexions*, 2003-2004, books and cables, variable dimensions. Credit Mounir Fatmi.



a democracy. Where are the transparent and clear rules for the setting up private television in Senegal? No one has them. It's all a bit arbitrary! And the same goes for other countries. When assessing the status quo, there's a kind of regulatory vacuum. But resolving legal problems is not a panacea. You can't wave a magic wand. It's also about the importance placed on communication in my country. Is it an important sector? Does it contribute to development? This doesn't seem to be the case. Very often it's a tool for guiding and making the message of the people in power louder rather than a part of culture with a capital 'C'; a respected profession and dynamic sector. Where there is neither vision, nor strategy, nor policy, all manner of side-stepping goes on, making the task of professionals even harder.

But you mustn't give up. Journalists have to continue to play their part, whether in the public or private sector, whilst taking their constraints into account. There's no point taking unnecessary risks. But I think it will be increasingly difficult to prevent journalists from achieving this level of professionalism, freedom and independence. It's not a battle for the journalist per se, but a battle for the journalist in his professional role to give the public information about development. The journalist is not an enemy! When there's a coup d'état in Africa, after the airports and the

presidency of the republic, it's journalists who keep everything going: the radio, the television and the papers. We are not instigators of trouble, we are in favour of peace; we are agents of development but we must be respected in the way we do our work. Nobody would ever tell a surgeon how to operate on his or her patient. But with we journalists, people tell us how to do our job, what to write and what not to write.

FM: You imply there's a journalism full of griots or storytellers, puppets of the government out there, but the private press doesn't entirely come off clean. Some media butter up those who express xenophobic views, you say?

MS: You're right. Private status doesn't guarantee professionalism. Many media ventures are not professional. As the English say, sometimes there's a 'hidden agenda'. And many are part and parcel of it. Take the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, where there are plenty of papers and television channels, each group at the highest level of power with its own television channel and press following. This brings us back to the question of an overall institutional framework to lay down the rules of the game. These rules must be set up to prevail, regardless of who occupies the places at the very top.

F.M. ■



Hassan Khan, *The Hidden Location*, 2004, 52 min., video still. Credit Galerie Chantal Crousel (Paris) and artist. Photo Hassan Khan.

Aminata Niang

ACP-EU Parliamentarians protest unfair globalisation

ACP/EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Bridgetown

The uncertain future of trade, due to be liberalised between the EU and the ACP countries and the explosive political situation in the Horn of Africa dominated the most recent ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) meeting, November 20–23, 2006 in Bridgetown, the capital city of Barbados. This open forum of elected representatives of signatories of the Cotonou Agreement is currently presided by Glenys Kinnock, a British Labour MEP, and René Rademino Coniquet, President of the Gabon Senate. It also gives all representatives of European institutions, international organisations like the UN, as well as civil society a chance to have their say. The Bridgetown JPA goes on the record for the extent of its concerns and strength of criticisms brought up by the negotiation of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and the six sub-regions of the ACP group.* These agreements, negotiated under the Cotonou Agreement, are supposed to come into effect on January 1, 2008. Their aim is to create ACP regional markets using trade as a tool to promote development, and in the long-term prepare free trade areas with the EU that are compatible with the rules of multilateral commerce. These rules do not look favourably on customs duties. They are intended to gradually replace the non-reciprocal trading preferences that ACP countries have enjoyed for over 30 years for access for their goods to the European market. A waiver for these from WTO rules is due to expire at the beginning of 2008.

> No forcing the pace of negotiations

Just a year before the deadline, there is broad consensus among MEPs and ACP MPs, riled about the potentially disastrous effects of such agreements for countries that are economically and socially vulnerable. They issued a request for the EU not to force the pace of negotiations and rush into signing agreements at the end of 2007 which could run counter to ACP development interests (see box). The European Commission can give all the assurances it likes: the EU reportedly has no hidden agenda. Any opening of ACP markets will only be gradual, with very long transitional periods, and will be asymmetric in comparison with the opening up of the European

market. However, nothing could pacify defiant JPA members, not even a plea for measure issued by Louis Michel, Development Commissioner.

> Heated debate on East Africa, but common view lacking

There was no such coming together over the political situation in Sudan and Ethiopia. An emergency resolution on the situation in East Africa, and in particular the Horn of Africa, was not passed, the required majority lacking. This failure by the members of Parliament of the two parties to agree on an extremely important political question could seem like a serious setback for the ACP-EU partnership. According to Zacharie Pandet, Senator from Congo-Brazzaville, it showed the reluctance of certain ACP members of parliament to “use their freedom of speech to openly criticise ACP governments”.

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) is an institution of the ACP-EU partnership. Its mission is to debate and vote on resolutions prepared by its three standing committees (political affairs, economic development, finance and trade, social affairs and the environment), and emergency resolutions on topical issues. Although not binding, these resolutions have political impact. The meeting in Barbados was the 12th of the JPA. Each meeting is preceded by a session of ACP MPs, who meet in the ACP Parliamentary Assembly. In Barbados, that ACP Assembly completed the ratification of its Charter and adopted a declaration on Togo.

The majority of ACP MPs appeared to want to protect the Khartoum government, rather focussing their criticisms of the situation on the failure to respect the Abuja Peace Agreement.

“Should we please the Sudanese government by indicating that we are satisfied, whatever it does?” asked angrily French Green Party MEP, Marie-Hélène Aubert.

The Ethiopian Ambassador, Teshome Chanaka Toga, dismissed any criticism about his country’s detention of political prisoners, taking issue instead with “the continuing campaign against Ethiopia by some MEPs and their attempt at interference”.

The absence of a resolution also reflects the difficulty in finding common ground on a draft text scrutinising the situation in five countries: Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda. Add to this the JPA’s complex procedures allowing the ACP and European MPs to make use of the ‘separate voting college’ in the event of profound disagreement and you have a recipe for failure. This does not lessen the heated debate about the Horn of Africa, which MPs vowed to continue. Glenys Kinnock, Co-President for the EU, affirmed: “I would prefer there to be no voting by colleges, because we are a single assembly with common objectives. But when we talk about democracy and human rights, sometimes the viewpoints are different. However, the JPA must adopt a position on these subjects”, said Kinnock, pointing out that six months earlier in Vienna, a resolution on the armed conflict in Sudan had isolated the repre-

sentative of that country, and rallied MPs to vote jointly on a firm consensus-based text, pointing to Khartoum’s responsibility in the massacres and the unending humanitarian crisis of Darfur.

The JPA also voted on a resolution on water in developing countries, calling for fair and sustainable management of the resource to be made a political priority in ACP countries.

The resolution read that pressure should not be put on ACP States to impose privatisation and water management privatisation policies. It continued that the liberalisation of public services in these countries should guarantee water supplies and health services for all at affordable prices.

The adoption of a resolution on light weapons and small arms imports (mainly from Europe) which were denounced as a barrier to sustainable development in the ACP countries, was another achievement of this JPA. Likewise, there was a resolution on the impact of tourism on development in ACP countries, an essential source of income that should be encouraged in countries like Barbados, which derives 70% of its income from the sector.

► Civil Society’s role in programming the EDF

Also under scrutiny was the programming of 10th European Development Fund monies of €22.68 billion to finance ACP-EU partnership programmes and projects, from 2008–2013.

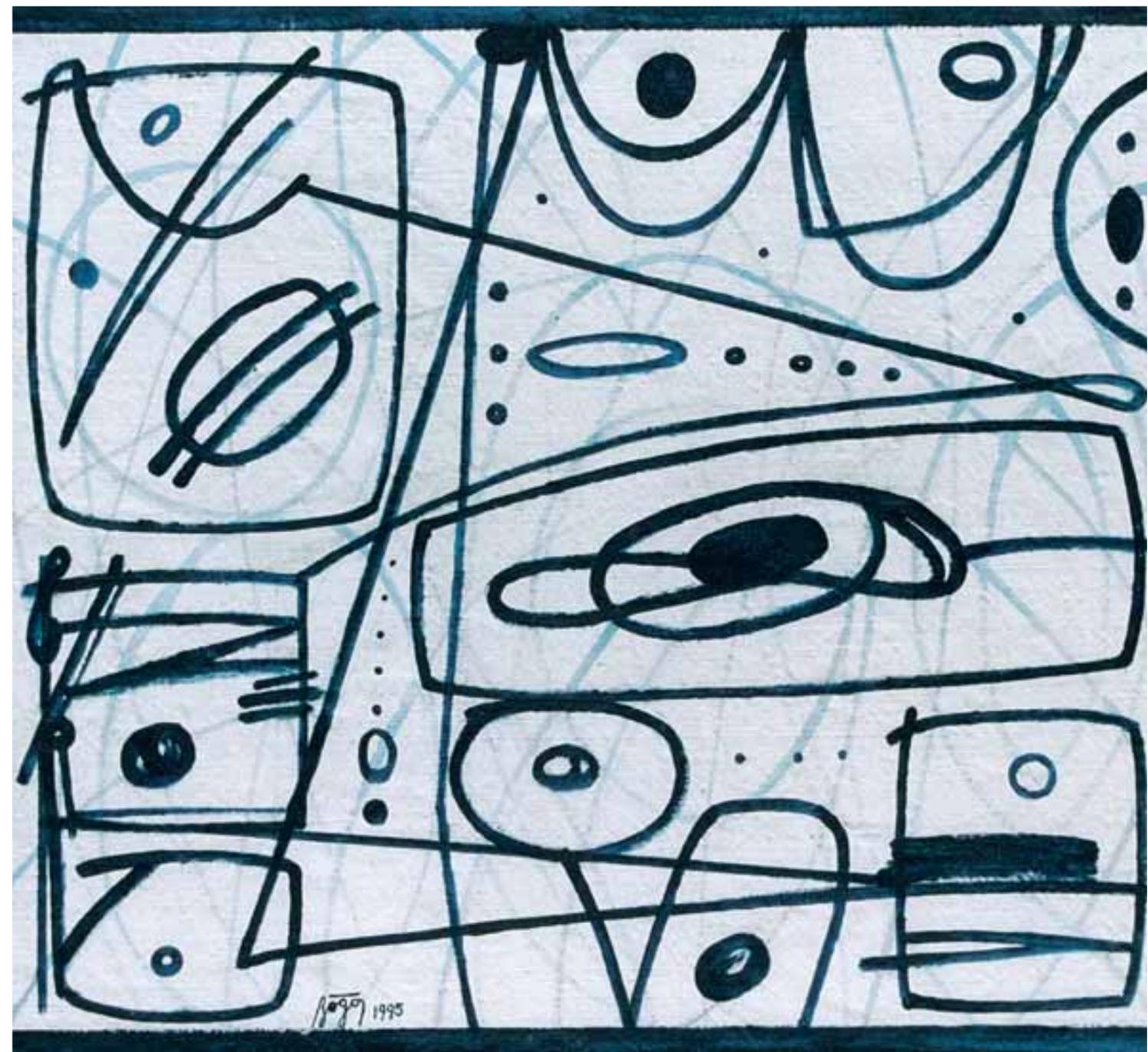
We must not give into the “WTO’s diktat”

The straight talking of Billie A. Miller, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Barbados and President of the ACP Trade Ministers Committee, made quite an impression. Her message was clear: the EPAs must promote development with funds needed in addition to the 10th EDF so ACP countries can adapt to the new situation. A way around the EDF’s “rigid procedures” and slow release of monies should be found for such specific funding, she said. Without any certainty about this, there is no question of the ACP countries “allowing themselves to be terrorised by the diktat of the WTO” and the looming deadline at the end of 2007, she stated. If the negotiations with the six ACP sub-regions have stalled, for René Radembino Coniquet, it’s because key questions are on hold. Urgent solutions are required to “ease the constraints relating to supply in the ACP countries, and find additional resources for effective application of the EPAs”, he added.

MEPs and ACP MPs put this point across in a resolution on “the status of EPA negotiations”. They emphasised that the EPAs should contribute first and foremost to sustainable socio-economic development of ACP countries through the promotion of greater value-added for the goods and services produced in ACP countries. Reciprocal free trade between the EU countries and the ACP countries is a serious risk until the competitiveness of the ACP countries’ economies is guaranteed. The EU’s current proposals for free trade worry them, in particular those for agricultural produce, because “this policy could pose problems for the development of the ACP countries”, particularly for food security and the development of local industries. JPA members were all behind a call to the EU not to “exert undue pressure on the ACP countries” and “to take the necessary measures so that, in the event that negotiations are not completed by January 1, 2008, the current exports of ACP countries

to the EU do not stop prior to reaching a final agreement”. All possible alternatives provided for in the Cotonou Agreement (Article 37), relating to ACP countries or regions who do not wish to sign an EPA without being penalised, must be properly examined, MPs told the Commission. And the improvement to rules of origin and non-reciprocal agreements (like access to the European market without customs duties or quotas, foreseen in the ‘Everything Except Arms’ initiative for Least Developed Countries) should be among options explored. Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, raised a legal objection to the JPA’s call for additional sums for ACP States, pointing to the commitment given by the EU to raise the aid for trade allocated each year to developing countries to €2 billion by 2010. A large proportion of this budget will go to ACPs, in addition to earmarked EDF monies, to support EPA negotiations. ■

* West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape-Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo), Southern and Eastern Africa (Burundi, The Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Uganda, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe), Central Africa (the eight CEMAC – Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa – countries plus the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sao Tome & Principe), Southern Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Angola, Mozambique et Tanzania), the Caribbean and the Pacific.



George Abraham Zogo, Untitled, 1995, oil on canvas 55 x 50 cm. Catalogue Zogo, Lai-momo 2001.

For Commissioner Louis Michel, good governance, building effective institutions like health, education, impartial judicial systems and support for the EPAs with regional financial allocations are all priorities. Faced with a request from the JPA that national parliaments and civil

society in the ACP States should be involved in the exercise, he replied that he did not want to “impose procedures on sovereign States”, but said he could “suggest” such consultation. MEPs and ACP MPs held the 13th JPA in Wiesbaden, Germany, June 23–28 2007. ■

An extraordinary summit

ACP Summit

The 5th ACP Summit, held in Khartoum, December 7–8, 2006, in the midst of negotiations with the EU on Economic Partnership Agreements, reaffirmed the Group's unity and its support for cooperation with Europe, with a reminder that the development dimension must remain at the heart of future accords.



Khartoum Summit.
Credit ACP Secretariat.



In several ways, it was no run-of-the-mill meeting. Prior to the summit, some diplomats voiced their embarrassment at it being held several hundred kilometres from the scene of the Darfur tragedy, and in a country whose government was reluctant to see the United Nations take over from the African Union the monitoring of a ceasefire ignored by certain parties. What is more, something unheard of since the first ACP summit was organised in 1997 in Libreville:

the current European Commissioner for Development, Louis Michel, was absent. The European Union and the European Commission were represented at the Khartoum Summit, although at a lower level than usual. However, participants affirmed the Summit was 'a success' in attendance terms. Besides the EU, the Commonwealth, the Arab League, the International Francophone Organisation, the Economic Community of West African States, the International

Monetary Fund, the International Migration Office and two ACP-EU institutions (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation and the Centre for the Development of Enterprise) all sent observers, as did the Palestinian Authority, Morocco and Venezuela.

There was strong representation on the ACP side. In addition to the host, President al-Bashir (named Chairman of the ACP Group for a period of two years), and the Mozambican President, Armando Guebuza, whose country staged the previous summit in 2004, six Heads of State attended: Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), Blaise Compaoré (Burkina-Faso), Pierre Nkurunziza (Burundi), Ismaël Omar Guelleh (Djibouti), Colonel Ely Ould Mohammed Val (Mauritania) and Faure Gnassingbé (Togo). Gabon was represented by its Vice-President, Djibou Divungi di Ndinge. Ethiopia, Lesotho and Rwanda were represented by their respective Prime Ministers.

► Strengthening intra-ACP solidarity

ACP leaders re-affirmed their desire to consolidate the unity and cohesion of the Group through strengthened intra-ACP political dialogue and cooperation at a key moment: when negotiations are being held on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA). They are being drawn up to gradually introduce free trade between the EU and the six ACP regions from January 1, 2008. The ACP Heads of State and governments noted "with grave concern", the stalemate and uncertainty hanging over the ongoing round of Doha negotiations under the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and drew attention to this having "serious repercussions on EPA negotiations". There was grave concern voiced too over the "continuing erosion of traditional commercial preferences", notably the Cotonou Agreement's Commodity protocols on ACP sugar and banana exports. They requested the release of "adequate resources" to boost competitiveness of these sectors and support economic diversification.



► Condemnation of the coup d'état in Fiji

In the Summit's final declaration, which adopted the slogan 'United for peace, solidarity and sustainable development', Heads of State and Governments reiterated their "condemnation of genocide, revisionism and denial of genocide, ethnic cleansing and all crimes against humanity", and called on perpetrators of such crimes to be punished "in accordance with international law". The Summit voiced its condemnation of any attempts to seize power "by unconstitutional means" and undertook not to recognise "regimes that result from such situations" – a clear allusion to the 'coup d'état' which occurred in Fiji on December 5, 2006. It was moreover condemned by the ACP Council of Ministers the very next day.

Addressing their partners from the developed world, ACP leaders called for reform of the trading rules including the gradual phasing out of agricultural subsidies and domestic support that distorts production and trade, particularly in the case of cotton. Finally, ACP State representatives considered that negotiations on the opening of public markets as well as on questions of investment and competition, should only start up when their countries were ready to hold them.

► Development: Extended cooperation

The Summit welcomed "the commitments made by the EU and its Member States to scale-up their development aid budgets" and to contribute 0.56% of their Gross National Product to Official Development Aid (ODA) by 2010. It also took note of the increase in financial commitments by the EU under the 10th

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré,
Série *Diplomatie africaine*,
drawing, coloured crayon on paper.
'Afrique Europe: rêves croisés'.
Credit European Commission
and artist.

European Development Fund (EDF). The EU's decision to use direct budgetary support to finance the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals was appreciated, as was the European initiative to formulate cooperation strategies for ACP regions. Inevitably, the question of indebtedness came up once again. "Creditors and debtors must share responsibility for preventing and resolving unsustainable debt situations in a timely and efficient manner", stated Heads of States and Governments. They reaffirmed the need to restructure international financial bodies, so that developing countries could participate in World Bank and IMF decision-making processes.

➤ Absorbing the consequences of the oil price shock

As for the energy crisis, ACP Leaders insisted on the "urgent need" for the international community to address the effects on costs created by external shocks such as the rise in oil prices, natural disasters – including those resulting from climate change – the fluctuation in prices of staple commodities and erosion of preferences due to trade liberalisation. At the same time, aware of the need to create favourable conditions for growth in foreign direct investment, they declared their commitment to creating conditions to enhance the private sector and the development of an "enabling environment", underlining the important role that the European Investment Bank (EIB) could play in supporting the private sector.

ACP Leaders called on their partners to help them to adopt suitable policies and measures to resolve food security problems. In the area of social development, ACP leaders said they were determined to implement policies that met the needs of the most vulnerable populations, particularly education and health. The priority of access to drinking water and sanitation was reaffirmed, as was support for the activities of the ACP-EU Water Facility, for which continued financing was requested under the 10th EDF.

The drama surrounding the influx of illegal migrants to the Canary Islands from their countries of origin led the Heads of States and Governments of ACP Countries to call for dialogue with the EU to establish "responsible and fair mechanisms" to deal with the issue, develop the potential of migrants and support the contributions of diasporas towards the development of their countries of origin.

Environmental issues also came into the spotlight. Support for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol was reaffirmed, and ACP leaders reminded the Europeans by underscoring the need to ensure implementation of a decision adopted by ACP-EU Ministers in 2005 to create an ACP-EU Natural Disaster Facility. The tragedy that occurred in Abidjan in August 2006 fresh in the mind, they condemned the transportation and dumping of toxic waste in ACP regions. Finally, they reiterated their concern over the growing digital divide between ACP Countries on the one hand and on the other, the main emerging economies in the developed world, urging industrialised countries to contribute towards building a more equitable information society.

F.M. ■

Conflict diamonds: still threatening



On January 1 last year the European Commission took over from Botswana as Chair of the Kimberley Process, an initiative which began three years ago to stamping out the trafficking of conflict diamonds. Despite its successes, the struggle continues. One of the first tasks of the European Chairmanship will be to put an end to the smuggling of 'Ivorian rebel' diamonds.

Paradoxically, the civil wars in Angola, Sierra Leone and Liberia ended before the Kimberley Process came into being in 2003. Including producer and consumer States, the diamond industry and NGOs, its mandate is to oversee a scheme for the certifying the origin of rough diamonds. Further, it is to ensure that diamond trafficking does not fill the coffers of warlords. Naturally, the end of these wars has brought a reduced proportion of conflict diamonds on the world market in relation to world production as a whole – down from 15% according to NGOs, or 4% according to the diamond industry prior to 2003, to just 0.2% now, to quote European Commission statistics.

➤ The guard mustn't be lowered

But this is not a reason to lower vigilance, argues the new Chair of the Process, Karel Kovanda, Deputy Director General for External Relations of the European Commission. The former diplomat, who until the beginning of 2005 represented the Czech Republic at NATO, fears that the slightest lessening of surveillance will have harmful consequences. Not all conflict diamonds have disappeared, he reminds. "We have reason to think that Ivorian diamonds originating from the

rebel areas in that country are being sold on the world market via Ghana and are fraudulently given certificates attesting that they are of Ghanaian origin", explains Karel Kovanda. The Commission's task will be to ensure full implementation of the action plan that Ghana committed to bring into effect at the plenary meeting of the Process in Gaborone (Botswana) last November. This action plan is meant to strengthen internal controls, thus preventing Ivorian rebel diamonds from being mixed with Ghanaian diamonds and 'laundered'. Ghana will be provided with expert gemmologists capable of determining from their colour and purity if diamonds from 'packages', certified by Ghana and accompanied by secure documents, originate from there. Another challenge will be to verify whether the rebels in the Central African Republic might have had access to alluvial deposits from the Lobaye River.

According to managers of the Diamond High Council in Antwerp (Belgium), the main trading hub of the international diamond trade, another benefit of the Kimberly Process is that it has meant an increase in export earnings for countries most affected by fraud such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (RDC) and Sierra Leone. This is because 'capturing' conflict diamonds prevents all illegal diamonds from being re-circulated through legal channels. Contraband



The Summit host, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, Credit ACP Secretariat.



gems and those which are used to finance armed groups or terrorists are considered as being part of one and the same category.

Strengthened by the success of the Process, Karel Kovanda would like to use it as a model to prevent the trade of other primary materials, such as other precious stones, from financing conflicts, too. At the same time, he is aware that the Kimberley recipe, as it stands, cannot be applied to other products due to the unique characteristics of diamonds (value-to-weight ratio, degree of market transparency, etc.). The moment is timely. Germany, which took over the G8 presidency in 2007, has included Africa, the leading global supplier of diamonds, and the question of the link between wars and natural resources, among its priorities.

The European Commission also intends to strengthen the transparency and accuracy of statistics on the trade of rough diamonds. Monitoring this relative data is crucial as in the past it has led to the detection of suspicious flows of goods. Besides this commitment to improve the traceability of diamonds, the Commission's ambition is to increase the efficiency of the scheme by enlarging the club of 47 Process members representing 71 States. Karel Kovanda also wants to ensure that by the end of the year all member countries have undergone an evaluation by 'peer review', undertaken by representatives of other countries, NGOs and the diamond industry.

➤ Integrate small-scale, informal miners

The Kimberley Process has not curtailed all violence connected with diamond mining. Even when there's no fully-fledged violent conflict, confrontations between illegal miners and security officers from mining companies – or soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or in Angola in particular – sometimes prove to be bloody. Kovanda does not deny it, but considers that too much should not be expected of a system conceived to resolve the specific problem of wars financed by diamond smuggling. However, he says he is prepared to explore courses of action which might enable the Kimberley Process to play a part in resolving the problem of human rights violations caused by smuggling gems, other than those provoked by rebel movements.

Karel Kovanda is also considering whether to integrate associations of small-scale miners into the Process who, in Africa, constitute the overwhelming majority of workers operating in the alluvial diamond-mining sector. "The legalisation of the situation of alluvial miners is certainly one of the aspects we must take an interest in. It was no accident that during the last plenary meeting of the Process in Gaborone, the decision was taken to create a special working group on the mining of alluvial diamonds", remarks the new chairman of the Process. "It may not happen this year, but sooner or later we will have to concentrate on the issue of living and working conditions of workers in the alluvial sector", concludes Karel Kovanda.

F.M.*

Freddy Tsimba, *Corps en mutation*, 2006 202 x 106 x 54 cm, metal.
'Afrique Europe: rêves croisés'.
Credit European Commission and artist.

* Co-author with Olivier Vallée, *Gemmocraties : l'économie politique du diamant africain*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1997

Calendar

July–December 2007

July 2007

- 1-3 African Union Summit. Accra, Ghana
www.africa-union.org
- 1-4 28th Session of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community. Bridgetown, Barbados
www.caricom.org
- 9-11 Global Forum on Migration and Development. Brussels, Belgium
www.agfmd-fmmd.org

August 2007

- 1-2 Pacific ACP Trade Ministers meet. Port Vila, Vanuatu
www.forumsec.org

September 2007

- 10-13 9th Session of the ACP Parliamentary Assembly. Brussels, Belgium
- 26-27 4th meeting of EU-Cariforum Ministers on EPA negotiations. Caribbean, venue not yet established
Will a deal be struck by year end?
www.caricom.org

October 2007

- 1-11 54th Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Geneva, Switzerland
www.unctad.org
- 8-10 ACP Trade Ministers meeting. Brussels, Belgium
An EPA stocktaking by the six regional ACP groups
www.acp.int
- 28-2/11 12th World Lakes Conference. Jaipur, India
From the science to the culture of lakes, Jaipur, India hosts the 12th World Lakes Conference, organised by the Non Governmental Organisation the International Lakes Environmental Committee
www.taal2007.org
- 31-2/11 International Conference on Coastal Management. Cardiff, UK.
Climate change issues and development pressures on coastal areas make this a timely event bringing together NGOs, civil engineers and governments
www.costalmanagement.org
- 23-7/11 8th Session of Parties to the Conference on Combating Desertification. Madrid, Spain
www.unccd.int

November 2007

- 2-9 Development Days 2007. Lisbon, Portugal
- 14-16 10th Session of the ACP Parliamentary Assembly. Kigali, Rwanda
- 17-22 14th Session of ACP/EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. Kigali, Rwanda
www.acp.int
- 23-25 Commonwealth Heads of States Meeting. Kampala, Uganda
'Transforming Commonwealth societies to achieve political, Economic and human development' is the theme of the meeting in Kampala of the 53 Heads of State making up the Commonwealth Includes business, youth and peoples' fora.
www.chogm2007.ug
www.thecommonwealth.org

December 2007

- 3-4 Conference 'Diasporas and Transnational Communities'. Wilton Park, UK
In what ways do diaspora communities contribute to their host countries and countries of origin?
www.wiltonpark.org

ACP House, Brussels.
Credit Mapez Agency.



A day in the life of Louise Assomo

The darling of Belgian designers, a young Cameroonian

Louise Assomo is fast becoming the darling of the new generation of designers in Belgium. This is no mean achievement in a country already with a wealth of top designer names, notably those from the 'Antwerp school' such as Ann Demeulemeester, Walter van Beirendonck, Dries Van Noten or Marina Yee, who have all conquered Paris and London. Assomo's strengths: the sophistication, sensuality and ease of her clothes and uniqueness of her accessories, as well as an ability to listen attentively to those who wear her creations.

Louise Assomo's imagination knows no bounds. Whereas the majority of designers present one range at their fashion shows, she works on several, trying to please as many women as she can. She uses 'real' women as her creative inspiration rather than fantasy figures, as many male designers tend to do. "Women are the object and subject of my inspiration. I want them to feel good in what they're wearing, even as they go about their daily lives. I'd say my collection cheers people up if they're feeling down", she says.

> Ethereal and sensuous

Her creations are fluid; floating dresses that are almost cloud-like, ethereal or sculpting the body, exciting and sensuous. All have a certain sparkle, emphasised by accessories made by the designer herself, that seem almost part of the outfits; artistic pendants, made of feathers, crepe twists and thin chains heightening a woman's mystery. And then there are bags and shoes: beaded, painted, embroidered, with ties and other intricate details. She creates desirable glamour with a twist. And she's involved at all the stages of making a garment, from the rough sketches right through to the final touches. It's this craftsmanship of which she's most proud, she says. Fresh from the 'Francisco Ferrer School of Design' in Brussels, Assomo won the prestigious 'Escarpin d'or' prize in Paris for her shoes. She is fast accumulating trophies. This



year she was one of the finalists for the award for the best young Belgian creator of the year. Her appeal extends to the public, professionals and media. The latter lauded her with praise following each of her two big fashion shows in June and November 2006. And her following extends beyond the trade press. 'Victoire', the supplement of Belgium's leading Francophone daily, 'Le Soir', ran a feature on her, and the leading weekly publication, 'Le Vif Express' chose a photo of her boutique to illustrate the annual 'Parcours de stylistes', a Brussels fashion event. Even 'Vogue' in Taiwan has caught wind of her creativity. Also the popular Brussels weekly, 'Zone 2', concludes: "Louise Assomo may only just be starting out, but she's already one of the big names in Belgian fashion".

> A dancer's grace

She already counts among her fellow icons such as Emilie Dequenne, winner of the 'Palme d'Or' at the Cannes Film Festival for 'Rosetta' by the Dardenne brothers. The strength of this slip of a woman is that she doesn't have a 'dikke nek', as they say in Brussels' slang: a big head. She goes about her business with the grace of a dancer, swiftly but never hastily, twirling around, determined without being obstinate. If she's stressed, and it's impossible that she isn't, it's not noticeable: "Let's go slowly, I'm in a rush!"

A day spent with Louise Assomo is a breath of fresh air. She wakes a little late for an 'early bird', around 9 a.m. It was a long night, continuing into the small hours due to 'Love Fashion', the opening party for the Belgian and Brussels Fashion Fair. Fortunately, she's a teetotaler. It's a rush to get to the Fair by 10 a.m., where she is sharing with other young and talented designers, the 'Espace Pigmentum', floor space to show their creations, put aside for them in recognition of their creativity. "They must have called it 'Espace Pigmentum' after me", she says with a hint of irony.

Louise Assomo holds court in the area reserved for her business. Our conversation quickly becomes a debate, with Isabelle, her pretty and intelligent trainee and two other promising designers, Hüsnüye Kardas and Natascha Cadonici. The subject is the ban in Spain on the use of ultra-thin models in fash-



ion shows. Surprisingly, the four designers wholeheartedly support this move. Of her own accord, Louise Assomo makes nothing smaller than a European size 36, or UK 8, so as not to be party to the damage caused by anorexia to young girls.

The afternoon finds us in different surroundings. She has an appointment in a small village, thirty-odd kilometres from Brussels. We head there with her companion, who is both her advisor and her partner. It's like an Aladdin's Cave! The shop belongs to the 'Stragiers', father to son weavers for generations. Here, Assomo dis-

covers an enchanting fairy-tale world. There are all sorts of cloth, most made on the premises and in an array of colours, finishes, stitching and textures. Chambray, taffeta, mohair knitwear, chiffon, crepe georgette, cashmere, damask cotton: expertise that is hard to find, and is sought after by France's leading fashion houses who come to place their exclusive orders.

Nicolas Stragier, who is in his early thirties, is fascinated by the cut of Louisa Assomo's designs. He initially came across them in a magazine, called and invited her to come and get to know more about the 'Stragier savoir-faire'. It is the first time, he says, that he's dared to do this. "It's because your style excited me", he tells her. He was to be Assomo's attentive guide for over five hours, until nightfall. The style of a craftsman like Nicolas Stragier is not about selling, but something more subliminal; a good eye and artistic sense – he's an endangered species. Assomo was in seventh heaven.

On our way back, we talk about Africa. Louise left the continent at the age of 16. "I am of African origin. Whatever may happen, that will always come though in my work. It's a way of being. I don't make African fashion. I think about all women. But there will always be a little something in the way a garment skims the body, hinting to people that this girl comes from elsewhere. When they see me they say, OK, we know where she's from."

And she knows where she's heading!

H.G.

www.louiseassomo.com
Boutiques in Brussels, Antwerp and Tel Aviv.

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Louise Assomo.
Photo Hegel Goutier.

Assomo collections Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter 2007.
Photo Hajer, credit Louise Assomo.



Until we meet again

Homage to Isabelle Bassong

Isabelle Bassong passed away on November 9, 2006. For many of those involved in and observers of EU-ACP cooperation, she was not only the most senior of ACP ambassadors and the second most-senior member of the entire diplomatic corps in Brussels, she was also a friend.

Kind, courteous, and loyal, she hung on to her sense of humour that she had as a former pupil of the 'Collège moderne des jeunes filles' in Douala (Cameroon) where she went to school. Often formidable, too, for example when she was called upon to defend the interests of the Group on issues as technical as bananas, chairing the commodity's working group up to the time of her death.

Accredited for the first time in 1988 to the European Communities and the Benelux States, she was trained as a linguist, held a DES from the Sorbonne and an MSc. from the University of Denver, also in languages. She was appointed Secretary of State for Health in 1984, and was 'the grandmother of the ACP Group'. I hope her ten grandchildren will not be taken aback by the boldness of this remark.

Isabelle Bassong was President of the Committee of Ambassadors, and took part in the negotiations of the Lomé IV Convention (1990), the revised Convention of 1995 and the Cotonou Agreement (2000). At the same time, she was Cameroon's Counsel at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, throughout the long disputes between her country and Nigeria from 1994 to 2004, over

the issue of sovereignty of the Bakassi Peninsula. It was only logical that Isabelle Bassong's personality and her rank earned her a lavish tribute at her official funeral celebrated in Brussels by the Apostolic Nuncio on November 28, at the Basilica of Koekelberg, which was packed to the rafters. In the presence of her loved ones, the representative of King Albert II of Belgium, the diplomatic corps, including her ACP colleagues and her fellow Cameroonian ambassadors in Europe, as well as many members of the Cameroonian community of Belgium, the second-largest from sub-Saharan Africa in the Kingdom (about 10,000 people) after, *histoire oblige*, that of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

On December 16, there was a funeral mass celebrated by the Archbishop of Yaoundé, Monsignor Tonye Bakot, at the Basilica Marie-Reine-des-apôtres, in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean-Marie Atangana Mebara.

Alongside her family and friends, several members of the government and a representative of President Paul Biya attended the ceremony, followed by her burial in Yaoundé.

She was born on February 9, 1937 in the Fang region in Ebolowa in the South of Cameroon. Although she has taken her last breath, her smile is still with us. And among those who knew her there is no doubt that on accompanying her to her final resting place, there were those who whispered: "Until we meet again, Isabelle".

F.M.



Isabelle Bassong, a kind, courteous and loyal friend.

BOOST FOR RENEWABLE energy SOURCES

In the battle against climate change, it is paradoxically the developing countries, with the exception of oil producers, with a comparative advantage. Their economies, albeit precarious, are not overly dependent on fossil fuels, the main culprit of the acceleration of global warming. This is the perfect opportunity to develop renewable energy sources. But there are still a large number of obstacles to their development, not least money, which is the key to the battle. Going part of the way, the European Commission has proposed a world venture capital fund dedicated to renewables. The first beneficiaries, in 2007, will be ACP countries.

> Investing in 'clean' technologies

Global warming is not only a concern of wealthy countries. The latest ministerial meeting of the International Convention on Climate Change, held last November, brought this out. It's no coincidence that this 12th United Nations (UN) Conference was held in Africa for the first time. Africa has largely been ignored in discussions, up to now monopolised by skirmishes between industrialised countries which went over and over figures to find out how greenhouse gas emissions could be cut with the least cost. This time Africa was able to make its voice heard. The Nairobi conference discussed arrangements to be put in place after the initial period of measures under the Kyoto Protocol end in 2012. The larger, still unresolved issue was to decide whether developing countries should be included in a regime that relies mainly on so-called 'flexible' market mechanisms to stabilise emissions, including carbon emissions trading. Another mechanism is the only one of interest to developing countries to date: the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). This enables investors in the North to earn emission credits by financing 'clean' systems in the countries of the South. In Nairobi, Kivutha Kibwana, Kenyan Minister of the Environment, presiding the Climate Conference, issued an appeal for the 160 participating countries to back such projects. Africa is in a different situation to Asia, where the energy requirements of the likes of China or India run the risk of eclipsing the limited efforts made by the industrialised countries of the old continent. Kivutha Kibwana underlined the difference: "We need a fair system that stabilises emissions while allowing sustainable development of our economies", he said. This was enough to silence those still fiddling with their calculators in the Kenyan capital. A United Nations report, published early November, emphasised the "more serious than forecast" soil deterioration in Africa.

While soil erosion is mainly due to large-scale deforestation, agricultural practices and inappropriate water management, it could worsen in extreme situations – major droughts or floods – caused by climate change. "Climate change has become one of the most serious threats facing humanity, endangering the development of billions of the poorest people on the planet", said Kivutha Kibwana in Nairobi.

> The 'Nairobi Framework'

Attacking the many causes of erosion and the deterioration of ecosystems is a long-term undertaking. Meanwhile, participants in the ministerial meeting of the Climate Convention dealt with what was most urgent first. Taking the lead from then-UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, a new mechanism was launched – the 'Nairobi Framework' – intended to help developing countries, particularly African countries, to set up public and private partnerships supporting "clean development projects".

These partnerships could draw on the Adaptation Fund under the Climate Convention to help the most vulnerable countries cope with the unfavourable effects of climate change – a fund Nairobi participants finally agreed to pay into. The European Commission put its contribution on the table: a €100 million Global Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Fund (Geeref). "This fund", said European Commissioner for the Environment, Stavros Dimas, "should enable a fair distribution of the CDM projects, offering venture capital to small-scale sustainable energy projects in developing countries and accelerating the transfer of clean technologies". The Commission initially foresees annual contributions of €80 million for the next four years, relying on other public and private sources to inflate the amount up to at least €100 million.

The fund should enable investment projects to be financed to the tune of almost a billion Euros. In reality, the fund has already attracted €112 million – the Italian and German governments making commitments in Nairobi to contribute €8 million and €24 million, respectively.

The first beneficiaries of this mechanism which aims to help developing countries and those with economies in transition, will be ACP countries earmarked to receive €15 million venture capital in 2007. The ethical bank, Triodos International Fund Management, in association with E+Co, will have the task of setting-up of the fund, working with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).



Berni Searle, *Half Light*, 2004 Lambda print, 238 x 120 cm. Credit Michael Stevenson Gallery (Cape Town) and artist.

> Energy sources lack capital

Although proving to be a real success (at least in some industrialised countries), projects to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy sources find it hard to attract commercial capital. The problems arising, says the Commission, are complex and mostly to do with a lack of venture capital, which is a major guarantee for lenders. The venture capital requirement of developing countries and economies in transition is put at over €9 billion, way above current levels. It is vital to mobilise funds from the private sector, says the Commission. Geeref's aim is to help to overcome such obstacles by offering new possibilities for sharing the risks and co-financing to encourage commercial investment from home and abroad. Rather than financing projects directly, Geeref will stimulate the setting up of regional sub-funds which specifically respond to regional conditions and needs. These sub-funds are planned for the ACP region, North Africa, the countries of Eastern Europe that are not members of the EU, Latin America and Asia. The emphasis will be placed on investments of amounts under €10 million, which are often shunned by commercial investors and international financial institutions. Commercial loans will be used to help small and medium-sized businesses and finance various projects. If the amounts invested were to reach the billion planned by the Commission, they would enable environment-friendly energy production capacity of nearly 1 gigawatt to be put on the market of third countries, enough to

supply sustainable energy to between 1 and 3 million individuals, eliminating between 1 and 2 million tonnes of CO₂ per year. ■

A record budget allocation for energy

Access to energy is one of the main priorities of the EU. In June 2005, the ACP-EU Council gave the go-ahead for the creation of an ACP-EU energy organisation. With a budget of €220 million, it is intended to underwrite the co-financing of a series of energy projects aimed at the poorest populations of the ACP countries, through public-private partnerships. As a priority, the organisation will fund energy infrastructure projects (60% of the budget), the rest being split equally between projects aimed at improving the access of rural populations to up-to-date energy services and modernisation of cross-border power grids. Following a call for proposals in July 2006, 91 tenders were pre-selected. The list of the projects selected will be published during the summer of 2007. ■

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/energy/index_fr.htm

TOXIC WASTE: 20 YEARS ON, AN UNFINISHED BATTLE

Twenty years after the first scandals over the export of toxic waste to developing countries, the recent tragedy that occurred in Côte d'Ivoire is proof that the nightmare continues. This is despite measures taken at international level, a battle led by ACP Countries and the EU in particular, to put an end to the lucrative and deadly traffic.



Brahim El Anatsui, *Wastepaper Bags*, 2004, variable installation (tallest 205 cm), used aluminium printing plates. 'Dak'art 2006', Dakar 9/5 - 5/6/2006. Credit Dak'Art and artist.

The year, 1987: Not one week went by without conservationists denouncing a new contract or a new transfer of toxic wastes to developing countries. In a guide to what he refers to as the West African 'waste bin', the Belgian MP, François Roelants du Vivier, lists in his book (*Les vaisseaux du poison*, Editions Sang de la terre, Paris 1988) the names of 13 countries in Africa, including Nigeria, where 4,000 tonnes of chemical waste from Italy were discovered at Koko. Then the German 'poison ship', the 'Karin B', roamed from port to port; on board bar-

rels dripping with PCB were repatriated to Livorno, Italy.

At the time, this crusade ended in the adoption of a legislative arsenal aimed at regulating this hazardous business. On March 22, 1989, the Basel Convention on the Control of Cross-border Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal came into force, as did the ban the export of such substances by OECD Member States to non-Member countries. Then, on January 31, 1991, Member States of the Organisation of African Unity (AU) sanctioned the Bamako Convention, imposing a ban on the import of toxic waste

to Africa making up for the deficiencies of the Basel Convention on this subject. As for the European Council, it adopted a resolution on February 1, 1993 on the Supervision and Control of Shipments of Wastes circulating within, entering and exiting the EU. Consideration of issues on the transport and disposal of hazardous wastes is written in black and white in Article 32 of the Cotonou Agreement between EU and ACP countries, signed in 2000.

> A very lucrative trafficking business

It is still necessary to enforce laws against individuals or companies for whom their infringement can be extremely profitable. At the end of the 1980s, the average cost per tonne for the disposal of hazardous wastes was US\$250 in the United States, whereas one contract for the burial of wastes only offered payment of US\$2.5 per tonne to Benin's Government. And according to the former Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Mustafa Tolba, the firms dumping these lethal products make around of US\$10 million dollars profit per cargo!

This is precisely the sort of calculation made by those responsible for the dumping of toxic wastes at several landfill sites in Abidjan last August by the Panamanian vessel, Probo Koala, belonging to a Greek ship-owner. It was chartered by the Dutch company Trafigura Beheer, anxious to avoid the high costs of waste treatment in the Netherlands, which has the facilities, and instead transferred them to West Africa, Greenpeace observes.

> **Deadly cocktail**

The damage was considerable. The Ivorian Minister for Health reported on October 13, 2006, 10 deaths, 69 hospitalisations and over 100,000 medical consultations of people poisoned by the fumes from these toxic wastes: 528 tonnes of a deadly cocktail based on petroleum, hydrogen sulphide, caustic soda and phenol. The tally of total damage, which included the pollution of water tables, of the waters in the Ebrie Lagoon, of fish and agricultural products originating from contaminated areas as well as compensation to be paid to the victims and producers involved, was still ongoing at the end of 2006.

In Côte d'Ivoire, on the other hand, the event triggered a ministerial reshuffle. The ministers for transport and environment were swiftly dismissed. An operational cell for the coordination of the national plan to control toxic wastes and two investigative committees, one national, one international, were set up by Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny. On top of the investigation launched by the Law Officer of the Treasury to bring about criminal justice proceedings, the two committees have to determine responsibility at both national and international levels.

> **EU Environment Commissioner on the offensive**

European Commissioner for the Environment, Mr Stavros Dimas, took the initiative in EU circles. After learning that the non-governmental organisation Greenpeace had identified the 'ship of death' in the Estonian port of Paldiski and organised commando action to keep it there, Stavros Dimas arrived at the site just two days later. In a press statement, the Commissioner voiced his support for the Estonian authorities' decision to pursue the perpetrators of these illegal transfers once a search of the ship had confirmed the presence of highly toxic substances on board.

At the meeting of EU Environment Ministers on October 23, 2006, the Commissioner proposed that such environmental crimes become

part of criminal legislation in EU Member States and be punished accordingly by fines or prison sentences. But there is still a long way to go before this is achieved, as the Member States were hesitant to support the Commissioner, arguing that the clampdown on such deeds was a matter for their exclusive jurisdiction. But the European Court of Justice (ECJ) backed up the Commissioner stating that using criminal legislation to protect the environment did fall in his powers.

In the wake of the Court's opinion, on February 9, 2007, Stavros Dimas proposed a new EU directive to make crimes against the environment part and parcel of criminal law, to give more weight to the restrictions on illegal exports of toxic waste. Justice is taking its course. 'Eurojust', an institution established in 2001 by the EU to combat serious crime, comprised of lawyers, magistrates, prosecutors, judges and experts from Member States, announced on October 20 that it had set up a coordination mechanism between the Estonian, Dutch and Ivorian authorities to facilitate investigations into the transportation of waste by the Probo Koala.

> **ACP Summit's condemnation**

Pressure has continued on another front. On Côte d'Ivoire's initiative, the Heads of State and government leaders of ACP countries condemned the transportation and dumping of toxic wastes in their countries, described as a "direct threat to the long-term management of natural resources, environmental protection and the health and well-being of the populations". The resolution also asks all States to implement agreements on the dumping of toxic or hazardous products, to ratify all the amendments to the Basel Convention and to take appropriate legislative measures to classify the violation of international agreements in the field as criminal acts. The initiative is now in the hands of the OECD and the EU (the Member States, the Commission and the European Parliament) to whom the resolution is addressed. The battle continues...

F.M.

R eport



A woman holding her voting card waits in line at the voting station at St Anne Cathedral in Kinshasa, DRC, 30 July 2006. Photo Tiggy Ridley. Credit IRIN news service.

CONGO DRC

After a decade of wars, hope of stability has re-emerged in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) after the staging of democratic elections for the first time in over 40 years.

Our report focuses on the challenges of reconstruction, which will need ongoing international support if they are to be met. This will have a continent-wide and global impact.

The European Union has given its firm support to this process of bringing about stability.

As for the Congolese themselves, this report looks

at the various visions put forward by the main political groups on the development strategy that needs to be implemented to fulfil such new challenges. It also profiles the new team in charge of the country's reconstruction.

Finally, the scale of the tragedy experienced by the country has been so great that it has overshadowed other aspects of life in the Congo: the beauty of the country, the ingenuity of its people, the richness and dynamism of its culture. These are all explored in this report.

The Panamanian ship 'Probo Koala'. Photo Christian Aslund, credit Greenpeace.



François Misser

Reconstruction challenges



On average, the level of access to electricity throughout the country is just 6% and less than a quarter (22%) of the population have access to safe drinking water. Infant mortality rates are high, with two out of every ten children dying before reaching age five. Worse still, there is a resurgence of formerly controlled or eradicated diseases (measles, plague, polio, cholera), not to mention AIDS. Education is also a big concern, with primary school attendance falling from 92% in 1972 to 64% in 2002. There's a proliferation of shantytowns in Kinshasa (with an estimated 7 million inhabitants) and also at Mbuji-Mayi (almost 4 million). Families have resorted to building their huts on railway lines in Kinshasa. Unemployment ranges between half the working population in towns to one-third in rural areas. Organising the election was a real feat in a country where entire regions have seen the loss of the transport infrastructure. Bicycle-taxis have replaced mopeds and cars in Kisangani. In Equator, roads have reverted back to tracks and the forest has overgrown plantations. However, in one respect, travel around the country has improved. Until August 2005, explains the Head of the Waterways Authorities, Jean-Pierre Muongo, it took 40 days' sailing to cover the 1,700 km separating Kinshasa from Kisangani. Now the journey has been whittled down to just 15 days.

On February 5, 2007, after the first democratic elections in four decades, Congo finally had a new government.

This was real progress after such a long period of decline dating back to the beginning of the 1990s – two wars in which four million people died from hunger, illness, abuse by armed gangs and the breakdown of the health sector. On several occasions, it was thought that Congo's old demons might derail the electoral process. These concerns were especially rife in August 2006, when the announcement of the results of the first round of the presidential elections gave rise to a battle between supporters of the final two candidates still in contention. Finally, the 'proactive optimism' promoted by the European Commissioner for Development, Louis Michel, and the attitude of the Congolese themselves – who wanted to believe that the process would eventually succeed – paid off. But, "the bet has not yet been won", as the sceptics say. Hence, at the end of January, the indirect election of certain governors in controversial circumstances gave rise to riots and an ensuing crackdown in the Lower Congo. Sadly, there was a high death toll (137 according to UN figures) and the UN Secretary-General has demanded an investigation into these acts of violence. Certain areas of Ituri, the two Kivu and the Equator Provinces, continue to be pillaged by armed gangs, although their power to cause serious harm is decreasing. The Congo will need external support if it is to undertake significant reconstruction work, particularly to equip its police forces with the training and

resources needed to handle such situations in an appropriate manner in the future. The first task, however, is to rebuild the government. The majority of its civil servants are currently not being paid and have 'privatised' their own duties, including the police and customs officers. "There are a lot of hands reaching out to drivers in the Congo", sums up a member of the police disciplinary body of Kinshasa.

► An enormous task

The task of the new government, of which the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (DSRP) completed in July 2006 by the transitional authorities forms the strategic basis, is enormous. It is based on five pillars: the promotion of good governance and peace-building through strengthening institutions; consolidating macro-economic stability and growth; improving access to social services; combating HIV-AIDS and supporting the community process. Today, over 70% of Congolese live below the poverty threshold, so to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 there needs to be an annual GDP growth of 10%. The actual rate in 2006 was 6.6%. According to the DSRP, the minimum monthly wage required to feed one person is 10,000 Congolese Francs (approximately US\$20). Putting this into context, it is a little less than a soldier's pay, and they nearly always have several mouths to feed, making it an impossible task.



Page 42 above: National Coffee Office, Dongo (Equator). Photo François Misser.

Page 42 below: Lack of infrastructure is one of the main obstacles to development. Credit EUSEC.

Above: Infrastructure problems mean that petrol is three times dearer in some regions than in Kinshasa. Photo François Misser.

Below: Accused of harassing the population, Congolese soldiers don't earn enough to feed their families. Credit EUSEC.

It's no easy task for the Congolese government to overcome these huge handicaps. Only last year, several instances of poor performance (including an inflation rate of 18.2% and budgetary overspends) led to a suspension of International Monetary Fund (IMF) monies under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility. This move may well affect Congo's ability to meet its external debt servicing obligations (US \$13 billion) before it reaches completion, when the debt can be cancelled under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. 2007 will be a tough year due to the suspension of external aid in the balance of payments, according to the Governor of the Central Bank, Jean-Claude Masangu.

► **Taking stock of assets**

But the natural assets of the Congo are such that they can provide the means to meet the challenges. The water from the snowmelt of the Rwenzori Mountains and from the Congo River and its tributaries irrigates the tropical rainforest and shelters the extraordinary biodiversity of a country where there are 480 species of mammals, 565 species of birds, 350 species of reptiles and 1,000 species of fish. This is the water which not long ago irrigated the plantations that made the Congo into a giant grain-store and a major supplier of wood and tropical products for export. In future, this will perhaps make it a giant of the world's bio-fuel market. This river water which, surging into the huge Inga Dam, makes it the Gordian knot of development of the African continent and with a strength of over 40,000 MW, offers hope to Southern Africa in overcoming its energy deficit. Also, much has been said about the 'geological scandal' of a country that has over 70% of the world's cobalt reserves and 10% of its copper reserves, not to mention gold, germanium, columbite-tantalite and diamonds, the Democratic Republic of Congo being 'neck-and-neck' with Botswana as the leading producer by volume of diamonds. Mine owners are ready at the starting line. A copper mining project that could quadruple national production by 2008 is to begin at the Kamoto site.

► **Another Congo is emerging**

Naturally, so-called one-sided contracts signed during the wars will have to be renegotiated first. This has already been announced by the politicians and the new head of the exploitation company, Gécamines. In sum, confidence has to be restored and the security of people and property improved, but it is also necessary to



Above: Transport hell: ambushed and vandalised bus on the Beni-Komanda road, in the Ituri forest. Photo François Misser.

Below, left: Trying to escape unemployment, hundreds of thousands of Congolese are getting involved in small-scale mining, as in Ituri. Photo François Misser.

Below, right: In Kisangani, 'taxi-bikes' have replaced 'mobylettes' and cars. Photo François Misser.

"change people's mentalities", to quote President Joseph Kabila during his inauguration speech. All of this – or nearly all – is still to be done. Presently, the Katanga and two Kasai mining provinces are on the threshold of a new industrial revolution.

A feeling of hope is felt. Recently, the top hotels in Kinshasa were full. The political will to make this huge reconstruction programme work was illustrated at the end of January with the first trip outside of New York by the new Secretary-General of the UN, followed by the deployment the largest contingent of 'blue hel-

met's' to the country (18,000 soldiers). Despite problems, there is also the hope of taking advantage of the fabulous tourism potential of the Congo. The most daring, like the Belgian firm, 'Go Congo', have already begun cruises on the river. On top of this, nightlife is starting up once again in what used to be Kin Kiese, or the 'City of Joy'. There are other signs of promising change, like the people who preserve the Yangambi Biosphere Reserve and the Kisantu Botanical Gardens – information banks on the country's national treasures. Little by little, another Congo is emerging. ■

THE EUROPEAN RESPONSE

Faced with the huge challenges of reconstruction in the Congo, the EU and its member states have had to be pioneers, deploying all their methods of cooperation and innovation with new forms of collaboration between European and other development partners. As necessity is the mother of invention, so the Democratic Republic of Congo is a laboratory, where lessons learnt may be useful in other countries and circumstances.

This open and collaborative approach was apparent in the areas of national reconstruction and also in support to the electoral process. Both were prerequisites for the preparation of the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), which the Commissioner for Development, Louis Michel, proposed in December 2006. It should see a doubling of funds for the period 2008–2013, compared to €411 million available over the previous period. Following up from Operation Artemis (June–August 2003) which consisted of a European military force securing the area of Bunia in the Ituri district in the east to allow the UN to deploy its 'blue helmets' and provide access for humanitarian organisations to reach local populations. The Commission set up an €8 million programme to restore law and order in the East. This was implemented by the NGO 'Réseau des Citoyens' ('Citizens Justice and Democratic Network'). "We had to start at the very beginning", the Head of the EU Delegation in Kinshasa, Carlo De Filippi, explains. "The public prosecutor's department was closed and the prison open". Contrary to usual practice, advance payments had to be made to magistrates so they would agree to return and start to put the judicial system back into gear in an area abandoned by the Government years before.

► **Ensuring election security**

The EU was also influential in the eventual success of the electoral process, contributing 80% of the estimated total cost of €400 million, the Commission alone pro-

viding €165 million. The Commission also financed the European Election Observation Mission, headed by General Philippe Morillon, and supported the creation of the thousand-strong Integrated Police Unit (IPU) with the task of protecting

Democratic Republic of Congo

Basic information

Area: 2,344,885 km²

Population: 57.5 million (estimation 2005)

Main cities: Kinshasa, Mbuji-Mayi, Lubumbashi, Kisangani, Kananga, Goma

Languages: French (official), Lingala, Kikongo, Swahili, Tshiluba (national)

Religions: Catholic, Protestant, Kimbanguist, Muslim, Animist

GDP: 7.1 billion US dollars (estimation 2005)

GDP per capita: 123 US dollars

GDP growth rate: 6.6% (2006)

Main exports: diamonds, oil, cobalt, copper

Primary education rate: 64% (2002)

Infant mortality rate: 126 deaths/1,000 live births (1st year)

Access to electricity: 6%

Access to drinking water: 22%

Sources: IMF, PRSP of DRC



those involved in the transition process and ensuring security during the elections. Currently, the National Operations Centre of the Independent Electoral Commission, which is 95% EU-funded, is preparing complex local elections, with a total of 6,000 representatives to be elected and a far greater number of candidates.

There is unanimous agreement that the European Union Force (EUFOR), deployed from June–December 2006 at the request of the UN to ensure security during the election in Kinshasa, played an influential role in August 2006 in ending conflict between troops and supporters of the two candidates in contention in the second round of voting that had threatened to scupper the entire election process.

The Commission spent €25 million on training and equipping police officers to protect ballot boxes and polling stations, as well as providing other election resources country-wide. At the same time, more than 30 European police officers are supervising the IPU and other European experts are helping the Congolese Government to lay the foundations for police reform under the EUPOL mission. Over €10 million has been earmarked by the Commission to set up a monitoring committee chaired by donors and the government, conducting an audit of the work force, as well as developing a training curriculum and a regulatory framework for the different levels of police officers.

The Commission has also broken new ground by supporting the building of an integrated national army, reinstating centres that mix soldiers from different factions, as well as improving living conditions of Congolese soldiers' families, previously left to survive as best they could. At the same time, under the EUSEC mission, European troops have established a system for distributing soldiers' pay, replacing the previous methods that followed the chain of command. This resulted in officers scooping up the pay of 'phantom' soldiers no longer in their command. This new system has made it possible to increase the pay of low-ranking soldiers from US\$10 to US\$25 per month. Now, the objective is to establish a republican army. But there's still a long way to go. The Congolese have the challenge of still having to integrate 73,000 soldiers, observes Colonel Patrick Dave, Deputy Head of the EUSEC Mission. This is a crucial step. "We can invest millions into development, but what use will that be if the Congolese soldiers continue to live off the back of the population?" asks Carlo De Filippi.



The EU financed 80% of the cost of elections. Photo François Misser.



Improvements to Kinshasa's streets are helping those with hand pushed barrows. Photo François Misser.

➤ Rehabilitating protected areas

The EU is also taking action to support good governance. A total of €33 million has just been given for building capacity and improving systems of management and control of the Ministry of Justice and the National Audit Office, as well as those of natural resources. "The citizens are expecting this.

Here, someone who has money doesn't have to pay a lawyer, he buys the judge", explains Carlo De Filippi. The private sector is also waiting for these reforms in order to start investing in earnest. As for institutional support, the EU is coordinating its action with other donors. The Commission has participated in a World Bank-managed trust fund to strengthen

capacity in the most important sectors of European support (infrastructure, health, environment, the protection of nature, etc.) "In the area of conservation in particular, the challenge is considerable", says Cosme Wilungula, Director of the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature. Now funded to the tune of €2.2 million by the Commission, the buildings were being renovated during our visit.

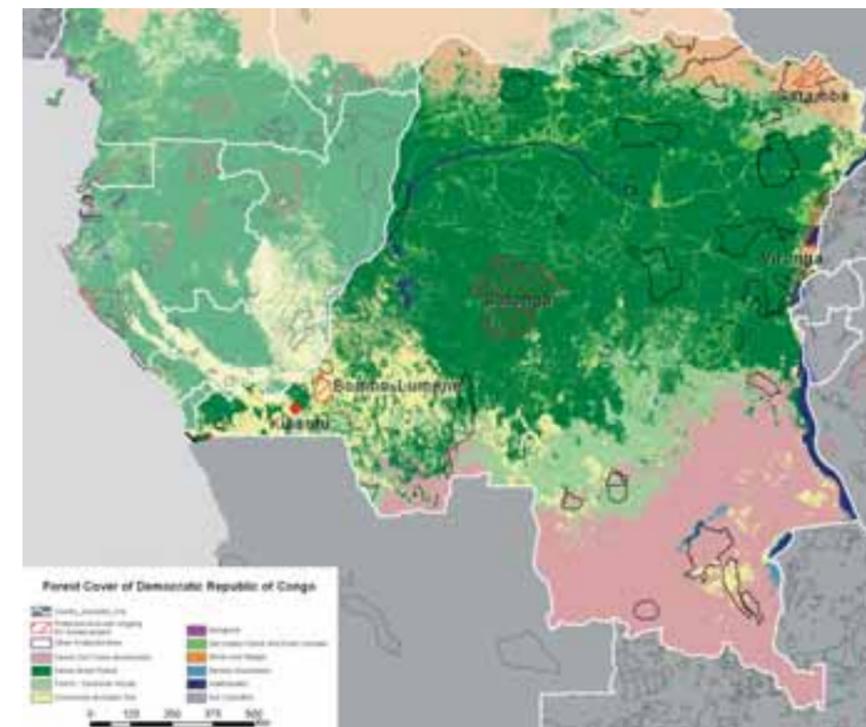
The extent of the task ahead is clear. Armed groups are decimating the hippopotamus of the Virunga National Park on the Rwandan border and the white rhinoceros of the Garamba National Park on the Sudanese border is also under threat in the face of indifference by local decision-makers.

What is more, wildlife parks have been invaded by unauthorised small-scale miners and mining firms who have obtained licences to operate inside certain wildlife reserves. In response to this, the Commission has allocated €5 million for the rehabilitation of protected areas and for the training, salaries and equipment of 500 national guards in the Virunga National Park.

In addition, other action under the regional ECOFAC programme – with a budget for the Congo of €15 million – includes €1 million granted by the Commission to support the ERAIFT post-graduate training school for integrated management of tropical forests. Situated on the campus of the University of Kinshasa, this school trains African managers in forest ecosystem management, and its new centre for operations, which was opened in February.

The Commission invested €108.6 million in maintenance of the 'Route Nationale 1', the principal road between Kinshasa and Kenge (Bandundu) and the rebuilding of other key roads. This work is crucial to ensure regular food supplies and for a drinking water distribution network in Kinshasa.

Currently, the poor state of the roads actually causes loss of goods (70% of all products on some routes) due to spoilage, explains one project manager. Around 300 km of roads are being rebuilt in Equator as well as roads for agricultural use in Kasai in partnership with Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC). In addition, a €22 million urban development programme is to be used for training, decontamination, solid waste management, anti-erosion control and the cleaning out of drainage networks. Also, under the Water Facility, two projects for a community-managed drinking water supply systems are planned at Mbuji-Mayi and Kinshasa.



"The Commission has allocated €5 m for the rehabilitation of protected areas and for the training, salaries and equipment of 500 national guards in the Virunga National Park". Forest-cover map of the Democratic Republic of Congo with protected areas and EU-funded projects. Map derived from satellite imagery from the 1990's by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission in the frame of the TREES project.

➤ Responding to urgencies

The Commission is also present in the health sector with a €80 million programme in North Kivu and the two Kasai provinces, as well as in the Eastern Province. All focus is on building capacity and setting up a national medical supply system. Added to this, an emergency rehabilitation programme of €65 million was approved in 2006 for the Eastern war-ravaged part of the country. It involves the rebuilding of roads and rural tracks to facilitate agricultural products getting to market – for sanitation and for the supply of agricultural inputs. The objective is to bridge the gap between emergency programmes and the development programmes of tomorrow. The DRC also benefits from Commission budgets for food aid and food security, for NGO co-financing, as well as approximately €40 million of funds per year from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO). In total, the Congo has received over €700 million of support from the Commission since 2002. Up to now, the EU has taken care of the country's most urgent needs, closing obvious gaps in infrastructure and preparing the way for a development and reconstruction support programme.

This will continue to be discussed with the new government and is to be financed with 10th EDF monies. Last year, the Commission absorbed the Congo's largest debt to the European Investment Bank of €105 million, offering the prospect of EIB participation alongside the World Bank in funding the rehabilitation of the Inga dam. Buoyed by all this activity, hopefully a new era is beginning. The DRC is moving from a state requiring 'transitional assistance' to a more structured form of cooperation, aimed at supporting the objectives of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper drawn up in July 2006 by the transitional government (with the support of the Bretton Woods Institutions), as well as the objectives of the new government's programme.

F.M.

For more information
Marie-France Cros, François Misser, *Géopolitique du Congo (RDC)*, Editions Complexe, Bruxelles 2006
www.editionscomplexe.com

The vision of the Congolese authorities

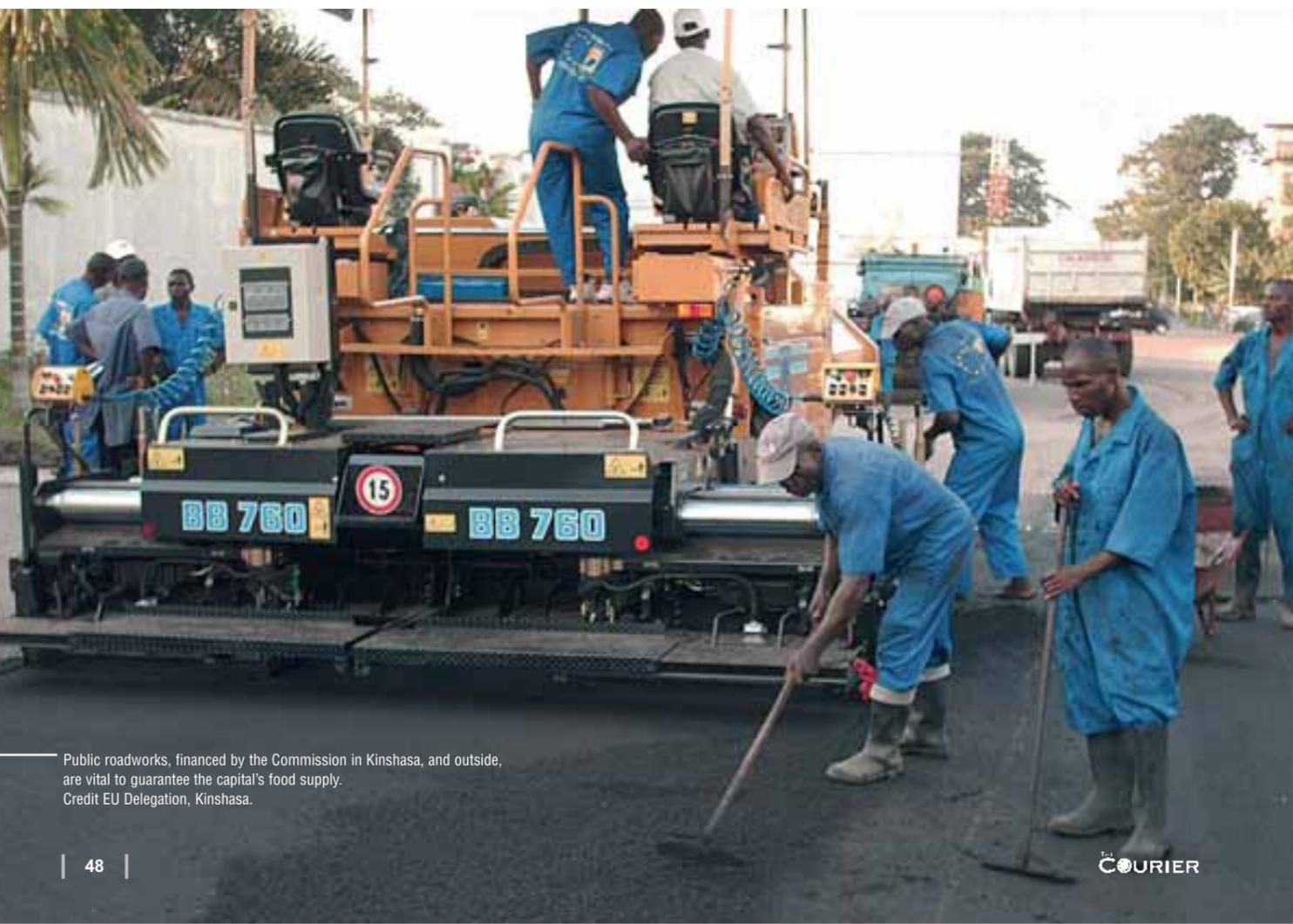
There is a consensus between the presidential majority and the opposition on five major areas of reconstruction, as set out by the President of the Republic in his inauguration speech – but differing ideas prevail on implementation.

There are certain preconditions to taking up the challenges of the five areas of roads, health, education, energy and water, according to Senator André-Philippe Futa, President of the 'Alliance pour la Majorité Présidentielle' (Alliance for the Presidential Majority – AMP) and a former Finance Minister. Initially, consolidation of the micro-economic framework for good governance and a constitutional state is necessary to reassure individual citizens and the business community. This was forcefully put by the managing director of the 'Fédération des Entreprises Congolaises' (Federation of

Congolese Businesses – FEC), Henri Yav Mulang, who also advocates dealing with the internal debt to the private sector and the urgent rehabilitation of the communication network.

> New Order

During the transition, it was not possible to carry out these much needed initiatives with the best of efficiency due to the mixed make up of the new coalition government, says André-Philippe Futa of the AMP.



Public roadworks, financed by the Commission in Kinshasa, and outside, are vital to guarantee the capital's food supply. Credit EU Delegation, Kinshasa.

Elections, which brought in a majority government, have created a new order, "but we should not believe that all problems will be solved by investing a billion dollars in roads", Futa warned, adding: "It will be necessary to attack the inefficiencies of the system, the 'anti-values' which are still far too widespread in society and that will take time". The former Finance Minister says it is possible to make more use of tax revenue on top of financial support from donors who should be dissuaded from imposing new deadlines. Currently, work underway includes performance contracts signed between the State and the Tax Directorate-General (DIG) and the Customs and Excise Office (OFIDA) which raises half of State revenue. This will not solve the problem of massive corruption, gaining momentum during the transition period due to corrupt officials who often went unpunished. Futa also suggested that it would be possible to increase the number of BOT type contracts (Build, Operate and Transfer), with foreign investors.

> Tax system revision

Sesanga Hipungu, MP, the former Planning Minister – and now spokesman of the opposition leader and President of the Movement for Liberation of Congo (MLC), Jean-Pierre Bemba – thinks that the government should reach beyond the 'minimal perspectives' of the Strategy Document for Reduction of Poverty (SDRP) for the reconstruction of the country. From 2007, he says, tax revenue could be doubled by getting to grips with customs fraud, outsourcing the civil service to a private entity, systematically strengthening controls on goods on loading and overcoming the endemic haggling between customs officers and businesses. Equally, he believes that taxation in the mining and telecommunications sectors is too low, and tax should be applied to real estate. It is also imperative that the judicial review – financed by the World Bank – of the so called 'léonin' (one-sided) contracts signed by the State between the two wars, should be used by the Parliament to "restore the balance", without "destabilising businesses".

As for the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU, which is currently being negotiated by Congo in a grouping that also includes Sao Tome and EMCCA (the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa), the head of the AMP is not overly concerned. In a country where taxes presently raise less than 10% of GDP, he predicts that there will be no loss of revenue



The EU equips and trains 1,000 men of the Integrated Police Force Unit (UPI). Credit EUPOL.

resulting from the dismantling of current tariffs. However, there is one condition: Congo must have a sound statistical basis and proper national accounting, and this will take time. He also says it will be necessary to identify the branches of the economy that will not be able to stand excessively high Value Added Tax (VAT). According to Sesanga Hipungu, the commitment to move to an EPA with the EU has been given and there is no going back. However, he doubts Congo is ready for the 2008 deadline, the European Commission's schedule for introducing an EPA.

An opening of markets is not only about disadvantages. It is true that the country's economic and industrial fabric – in tatters today – will need to be revitalised to be competitive, but competition with the outside world will drive forward the necessary reform in certain sectors, provided that proper supportive measures go hand-in-hand with the Agreement's implementation. Henri Yav emphasises the urgency of bringing the uncompetitive industrial fabric up to the necessary standard, as well as addressing the issue that the Central Africa Negotiating Group is currently involved in several parallel regional integration processes.

> Pandora's Box

On the political front, André-Philippe Futa regrets that the word 'Congolitis' was again used by politicians to accuse their adversaries

of not being 'real Congolese', hence challenging their legitimacy. Looking to the future, the President of the AMP says that the concept of dual nationality, if accepted, would enable the Congolese Diaspora to integrate better into their host country and augment their ability to send funds back to their country. Like President Kabila, André-Philippe Futa says that what's needed is a "change in mentalities" to promote sustained development. He acknowledges – and is critical of the fact – that corrupt practices occurred in a number of areas during the elections but also points out that it was the first democratic experiment in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Still referring to 'Congolitis' – one of the now shelved MLC campaign themes – Sesanga Hipungu says that the country should not seek to open a 'Pandora's Box'. "If we were to create a commission of enquiry to track down those involved in nationality fraud, the political class would experience a real tsunami", he warns. He is concerned about ongoing corruption, which in his opinion tarnished the election of certain governors at the beginning of February (which led to the disturbances in Lower Congo – resulting in 137 deaths, according to the UN). Furthermore, there is also a risk of opening up a crisis of legitimacy of the Congolese institutions, says Sesanga Hipungu, who feels that the majority is not allowing the opposition sufficient room to manoeuvre.

F.M.

A government by ballot box

The DRC's government appointed on February 24 by the National Assembly is the first in over 40 years to come to office following democratic elections. Ahead is the formidable task of launching reconstruction and consolidating this budding democracy.

The appointment of the new government on February 24 by 295 of the 397 elected representatives present in the National Assembly was a major event for the Congolese people. Firstly, it is the first democratically elected government in more than 40 years. Secondly, due to the internal tensions within the transitional team – some of whose members fought each other during the election campaign – the country had been without a cabinet for the previous six months.

A distinctive feature of this new government is that it brings together several generations of Congolese politicians. They range from the veteran of the struggle for independence, 80 year-old Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga (a compatriot of the late Patrice Lumumba) to the heirs of the leading players who helped shape an independent Congo. Joseph Kabila, son of the late Laurent-Désiré Kabila, was elected by 57% of the votes cast in the second round. He is now in the same camp as the son of former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, François Joseph Nzanga Mobutu, appointed Agriculture Minister in the new Congolese government.

> A voluntarist policy

In bringing together the sons of figures who were as fiercely opposed as Mobutu and Kabila, the new government is the inevitable result of compromise. But it is a compromise in terms of the views expressed during the election campaign. Not surprisingly, the programme the Prime Minister presented to the National Assembly on February 22nd recognised that “the interaction of the free market can serve as an instrument for growth.” Given that the Finance Minister is none other than the former head of the Federation of Congolese Companies, Athanase Matenda, such an approach is what one would expect. At the same time, the government programme underlines that market mechanisms must be tempered by a political will founded on the “values of socialism”: solidarity, distributive justice and equal opportunity. The result is that the model advocated is markedly centrist – that of a “social market economy,” as described by the Prime Minister himself.

As a consequence of seeking to include several political persuasions, this new government was described as “overmanned” by its critics. It

has 60 members, including six Ministers of State, 34 Ministers and 20 deputy Ministers. President Kabila's People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) and its allies control a majority of the important economic posts (Energy, Finance, Industry, Economy, Infrastructure, Public Works and Reconstruction). However, Antoine Gizenga's United Lumumbist Party obtained Mines and the Budget and the strategic Justice posts. To satisfy everybody, a large number of portfolios and a number of ministries (Energy and Hydrocarbons, Social Affairs and National Solidarity) were divided up. This brings the risk of overlapping responsibilities, which explains why in May the President of the Republic issued an edict to clarify the respective competences of each ministry.

That said, the mission assigned to the government is to get to work in the five fields of reconstruction defined by President Joseph

Kabila in his inaugural speech of December 6th: infrastructure to open up the country and relaunch agriculture with a view to ensuring food security, education, employment, water and electricity, and health. The aim is to consolidate the peace, build State structures, relaunch the economy, combat poverty and social inequalities, and also restore “family and moral values.” In doing so, the Prime Minister plans to restore transparent management to the offices of public finances and natural resources. The revision of the ‘one-sided’ mining contracts concluded during the two wars (1996–1997 and 1998–2003) and the forest concessions awarded following the 2002 moratorium will serve as test cases of the ability to reform.

This leaves the issue of raising the resources for this ambitious programme. The government plans to increase expenditure from 15.8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in

2006 to 29% in 2009. The total costs of the programme for the 2007–2011 period is set at US\$14.3 billion, US\$6.9 billion of which will come from the Congolese State's own resources and the rest (US\$7.4 billion) from external aid.

> Signs of easing tensions

The mobilisation of foreign aid is dependent on agreeing on a new programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that suspended its funding on March 31, 2006 due to the failure of the State to meet performance targets and the non-implementation of structural and sectoral reforms by the transitional government. The new government recognises that the economic reform programme (‘Programme relais de consolidation’), which aimed to put the Congolese economy back on track so as to reinstate IMF funding under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Programme, was not executed satisfactorily. The new government believes that “very strong signals” must be sent to the population as well as its partners.

At the political level, the new government will have the task of easing a climate still under a cloud of the clashes of March 22–23 between the personal guards of presidential election loser Jean-Pierre Bemba – loathe to demobilise his men – and government forces. European diplomats in Kinshasa estimate that between 200 and 600 were killed in the fighting and condemned a “premature use of force” on the government side, after European Development Commissioner Louis Michel had said that there must be “no private militias outside the regular army”.

There have recently been some signs of an easing of tension. Since Jean-Pierre Bemba left for Portugal on April 11 – officially for health reasons – tensions have perceptibly decreased in Kinshasa. On April 25, elected representatives of the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) and their allies from the Organisation for Democracy and Reconstruction (ODER) have put an end to their boycott of the National Assembly, which they had justified on the grounds of intimidation. While a section of the opposition condemned the presidential camp for taking control of the State on May 11, it was former President Mobutu's former Prime Minister, Leon Kengo wa Dondo (an opposition candidate and Senate President-elect) who was called on to become interim Head of State in the case of a power vacuum. Seemingly, anything can happen in the Congo.

F.M.



Supporters of the incumbent president, Joseph Kabila, at the voting station at St Anne Cathedral in Kinshasa. Photo Tiggy Ridley. Credit IRIN news service.

The Congolese government

President of the Republic: Joseph Kabila Kabange

Prime Minister: Antoine Gizenga Funji

Ministers of State:

Agriculture: François Joseph Mobutu Nzanga Ngangawe

Home Affairs, Regional Affairs and Security: General Denis Kalume Numbi

Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation: Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi

Higher and University Education: Sylvain Ngabu Chumbu

Infrastructure, Public Works and Reconstruction: Pierre Lumbi Okongo

Minister of State to the Presidency: Nkulu Mitumba Kilombo

Ministers:

Minister to the Prime Minister: Godefroid Mayobo Mpwene

National Defence and Veterans' Affairs: Chikez Diemu

Justice: Georges Minsay Booka

Planning: Olivier Kamitatu Etsu

Regional Integration: Ignace Gata Mavinga

Finance: Athanase Matenda Kyelu

Budget: Adolphe Muzito

Portfolio: Jeanine Mabunda Lioko

National Economy: Sylvain Joël Bifilwa Tchamwala

Information, Press and Communication: Toussaint Tshilombo Send

Industry: Simon Mboso Kiamputu

Foreign Trade: Denis Mbuyu Manga

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises: Jean François Ekofo Panzoko

Transport and Communication: Rémy Henri Kuseyo Gatanga

Rural Development: Charles Mwando Nsimba

Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education: Macaire Mwangu Famba

Scientific Research: Sylvanus Mushi Bonane

Public Health: Victor Makwenge Kaput

Mines: Martin Kabwelulu Labilo

Energy: Salomon Banamuhere

Hydrocarbons: Lambert Mende Omalanga

Employment and Social Security: Marie-Ange Lukiana Mufwankol

Civil Service: Zéphyrin Mutu Diambu-di-Lusala

Social Affairs and National Solidarity: Martin Bitijula Mahimba

Women's Affairs: Philomène Omatuku Atshakawo Akatshi

Youth and Sport: Pardonné Kaliba Mulanga

Land: Liliane Pande Muaba

Urban Planning and Housing: Laurent-Simon Ikenge Lisambola

Postal, Telephone and Telecommunication Services: Kyamusoke

Bamusulanga

Environment: Didace Pembe Bokiaga

Tourism: Elias Kakule Mbahingana

Culture and the Arts: Marcel Malenso Ndodila

Human Rights: Eugène Lokwa Ilwaloma

Humanitarian Affairs: Jean-Claude Muyambo Kyassa



Bob Kabamba*

New decentralisation in the Congo

Like some of its neighbours, the Democratic Republic of Congo has opted for the devolution of power as a way of ensuring grassroots development. However, the Constitution speaks of two types of States. It ushers in a kind of constitutional regionalism – a sort of disguised form of federalism – if the relationship between the central State and Provinces are analysed. It also refers to decentralised entities: the city, the municipality, the sector and the leadership, each of which has its own legal personality and enjoys more independence than previously in the management of their own resources.

Hand-in-hand with this constitutional regionalisation of the Congolese State is a plan to share out the funds available in the national treasury. This works out to be 60% for the central government and 40% for the provinces (which are entitled to retain their own funds). Under this system, the provinces can secure funding within a short space of time, whereas given that taxation is a national issue, the central State holds the power to ensure the revenue is fairly distributed.

There is nonetheless considerable concern that this revenue-sharing arrangement might create major disparities amongst the provinces.

Of most concern is that the equalisation fund – enshrined in the Constitution – will not manage to bridge gaps in development between the provinces.

► National before provincial laws

The power-sharing formula lists the responsibilities that are devolved exclusively to the central government or to the provincial authorities. This same constitutional text also specifies the concurrent competences of the central government and the provinces. In future, this detailed list of powers could run into trouble due to the precise definitions, particularly in ever developing sectors like telecommunications. Under the constitutional arrangements, a provincial assembly may not encroach upon the central powers, nor may the National Assembly or the Senate infringe upon provincial areas of influence. However, the National Assembly or Senate may devolve powers to the provinces or vice versa, while the authority to exercise these powers continues until the assigning power decides otherwise. Not an easy relationship! Then, any rules adopted from this delegation of authority continue to apply until new ones have been passed. In the case of concurrent jurisdiction, national legislation takes precedence over provincial, while any provincial laws found to be out-of-step with the national laws and regulations are automatically invalidated where there is inconsistency. Whatever form the State proposed by the Constitution takes under the Congo's new decentralisation process (and as illustrated, it is extremely complex) it is still up to the men and women appointed to the regionalised or decentralised institutions to carry out their duties in the sole interests of the Congolese people.

* Bob Kabamba is a political scientist at the University of Liege and a visiting researcher at the University of Kinshasa's Research Centre in Constitutional Law.



People queue to cast their votes at the polling station at St Anne Cathedral in Kinshasa. Photo Tiggy Ridley. Credit IRIN news service.



President Joseph Kabila in Kinshasa. Photo Thierry Charlier.

Culture bubbles up

A waking giant when it comes to mining, biodiversity and hydroelectric and agricultural potential, Congo also has cultural stature. As can be expected, two wars and almost two decades of economic decline have inevitably taken their toll on the creative arts. Now, a new generation is emerging.

Despite its deep-seated crisis, the Congo continues to flood Africa with the sound of rumba, long after artists like les Grand Kallé, Wendo and Franco took the continent by storm. As recently as January 2007, Papa Wemba and his band, 'Viva la Musica', had enormous success during their tour of Kenya. And the deep voice of Koffi Olomide, with backing reminiscent of religious music, has already become legendary. But the richness of Congolese music, which draws particularly on traditional native sounds, church choir music, as well as Afro-Cuban rhythms, does not end with rumba.

> Quest for alternatives

A new generation is emerging, seeking meaning and aiming to express – both in form and substance – the preoccupations of a people worn down by poverty, war and bureaucracy. Among the representatives of this generation is Jean Goudal with his simple guitar strumming. Of casual appearance – in a baseball cap and West African hunter's jacket – he alternates between bitterness and humour and sings like a young tropical Georges Brassens, about 'shégués', the street children and young adults on the capital's streets. It's all about vocal improvisation and jazz played with a melodious trumpet and reggae sound. Something new is afoot in Kinshasa, as spectators at the 'Musiques croisées' concert at the end of January at the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles in Kinshasa discovered, featuring other followers of this alternative music including Jonas Lokas, a formal rumba musician of the 'Choc Stars'. Alongside, there is an emerging Congolese jazz, including the band, 'Ya Kongo', which has revisited the traditional musical roots of several of the country's regions, creating new harmonies and for the first time introducing the traverse flute to the music of Kinshasa. According to Lokas, this quest for new musical forms responds to public demand, as alternatives are sought to the rumba "to let off steam" and old tunes are again being listened to in the city's bars and clubs. There is a desire of artists to move into the spiritual world, but in a different way to evangelical singers like Marie Lisambo or Charles Mumbaya, whose sales are driven by the buyers' belief that they are supporting God's work. There is a very real paradox in all this richness for, apart from those involved in small-scale recording – only too happy to pirate anything – Congolese music usually uses the medium of CDs imported from Europe and South Africa. The local record industry, which was still flourishing in the 1980s, has now all but disappeared. To re-ignite it, "We must become committed to the cultural industry. We don't have a choice, and to do that, the State has to dip its hand in its pocket", says Lokas.

> Meeting with Picasso

The search for meaning and spirituality can also be found in painting, which was until recently dominated by the 'naïve' or 'popular' genre, a close cousin of the comic strip. These include works by Moké, Tshibumba and Chéri Samba, who painted the famous fresco in the



Kinshasa, Boulevard du 30 Juin. Photo François Misser.



Ixelles-Matonge district of Brussels. The main protagonist is Roger Botembe, also one of the most famous collectors of statues and masks in the Congo. He draws inspiration from these masks in his paintings, inevitably sparking comparisons with Picasso and his fellow cubists. But he goes beyond forms, towards the spiritual, always seeking inner beauty, rather than the plain aesthetic. A red, black and white trilogy reoccurs in his work: red, the colour of rejoicing, black, life on earth, and white, the colour of plenty, where, he says, "our ancestors are hiding". His quest took him to Haiti to rediscover voodoo rites such as 'Fula', which imbues people with the power of life and whose origins can be traced to the Congo, where it is known as 'Fula Ngende'. Another painter, Botende, aims to show the

behind the fatalism of "the intellectualism of crisis". Kabasubabu depicts a Congo, which by 2025 has exorcised the demons of defeatism, guided by Pentecostal Christian Social Democrats. He depicts an economy with a flourishing arms industry and export-oriented industrial-scale plantations, provoking ridicule from some quarters. But according to Martin Ekwa, a Jesuit Priest and founder of the 'Centre d'Action pour Dirigeants et Cadres d'Entreprise au Congo' (the Action Centre for Company Executives in Congo – Cadicec), one of the country's few think-tanks, Kabasubabu at least puts solutions forward. Father Ekwa believes that rather than being in a deep seated crisis, his country is feeling its way cautiously as it evolves. But he does go on to state that a turnaround is vital. In his latest book, 'L'école trahie' (Editions



Above: Chéri Samba, the humorist of popular painting. Below left: Roger Botembe's work. Below right: Enlightened Roger Botembe and his quest to regain identity. Photos François Misser.

Congolese the way back to the source of their culture, as he says they are suffering from a loss of their identity which is partly due to the wars they have experienced. Their motives and desires are a strategic objective, because "there is no development without creative arts", says Botembe, who has attracted a large number of artists to his studios since the collapse of the Fine Arts Academy in 1992. Like Lokas, Botembe calls on the country's leaders to restore the nation's culture and in signing his paintings backwards, he expresses a personal frustration in making this happen.

> Breaking the mould of fatalism

In literature, in a complete departure from the work of the prince of the black novel, Achille Ngoye and established novelists like Yves Mudimbe and Hubert Kabasubabu, in his forward-looking novel, 'Kinshasa: the final explosion will not take place' (L'Harmattan, Paris 2006), aim to leave

Cadicec, Kinshasa 2004), Martin Ekwa reacts to criticisms of the weaknesses in the education system, which, it is claimed, underlie the 'crisis'. In reality, he says, the origins of the problem are former President Mobutu's destruction of the State education system, replacing professional management by those dependent on the political authorities and the indifference of politicians – or even civil society – to the abandoned and shattered education system. According to Ekwa, everything is connected with the fear that university educated citizens promote the overthrow of the government; but the country will need educated people. He advocates a management college, while the Archbishop of Kisangani, Monseigneur Monsengwo, is seeking to rally support for his project to set up an administrative college to train the country's leaders. What is clear is that in every sphere of culture, the advent of a democratically elected government has created a climate of excitement, expectation, and a plethora of proposals for new initiatives. Perhaps these amount to the first tentative steps of a cultural renaissance in a country where culture and education have been undervalued? F.M.

THE CONGO is also...

Over the past decade, it is the dramas in the Congo that have made the news, the sole exception being the holding of elections in the short space of a few months. After all, there is more to the Congo than negative headlines.

The extraordinary beauty of the country has all but been forgotten starting with the glowing crater of the Nyiragongo volcano which, between the grey sky and the anthracite lava, towers above the green banana fields. Then there is the majesty of the cathedral-like cloak of the equatorial forest soaring to a height of 30 metres with a rich palette of colours for every season and the equally majestic river with its drifting islands of water hyacinths and the unmissable magnificent sunsets over the blue mountains of Itombwe. You are surrounded by endless imagination and skills of man. The joyous crystal-clear song of the Bambuti Pygmies welcomes the dawn in the Ituri forest and the huge fish traps overhanging the Wagenia Falls are like precarious scaffolding, upstream of Kisangani. Then there are the floating villages of the Lokélé fishermen on the River Tshopo. To overcome the fuel shortage in the unmechanised regions, 'tolekas' (bicycle taxis) have taken off in Kisangani, a town also supplied by 'djobus-djobus' (dug-outs), the giant scooters, or 'tshkudus', of the peasants of Kivu who come to the markets of Goma for their supplies. The bicycles supply half of all the goods in Katanga, the capital of Western Kasai. The truck drivers of Equator Province who run their engines on palm oil are another example of such limitless resourcefulness.



And what delights await the palate! Congolese cooking is one of the most varied in all of Africa. The 'kossa kossa' river prawns, safous, grilled or stewed caterpillars, antelope, monkey, boa, crocodile, 'maboké' (fish and vegetables cooked in leaves), 'biteku-teku' (vegetable purée) and chicken à la moambé are just a few of the dishes that are as surprising as they are delicious.

Then there are of course the better known attractions such as the Kubas carpets, the Kuba, Luba and Tshokwe statues, the popular painting, the Mangbetu hairstyles, the rumba and its descendants. Congo, five times as big as France, ten times as big as the United Kingdom, and 80 times the size of Belgium, is more than just a country, it is a whole world – a civilisation, a kaleidoscope of sensations. One of the most enjoyable aspects is the way the people are so welcoming to foreigners.

Apart from a few pioneers who are relaunching cruises on the River Congo, visits to the friendly bonobos, and ecotourism in Garamba Park near the Sudanese border, few foreigners encounter these pleasures. Red tape, a lack of security in some areas, health risks, logistical difficulties and the negative perception of the country combine to create real obstacles. But it is also worth saying that a skirmish in Kivu does not necessarily affect everyday life 2,000 kilometres away on the Atlantic coast or in the grasslands of Katanga.

This, too, is the Congo.

F.M.

Left: Lake Tanganyika, from space.
Above: The two capital cities, Brazzaville and Kinshasa, on opposite banks of the Congo River.
Credit NASA, Earth from sky.

PACIFIC AND EU CHART COURSE FOR NEW ACCORD

Oceans apart, sheer distance seems to be a gulf for improved trade cooperation between the Pacific and the European Union (EU).

The Pacific and the EU are navigating a different course to the other five regional ACP groupings currently negotiating European Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the EU whose centerpiece is free access to each others' markets with development assistance to take advantage of new openings, all due to come on stream from 2008. Out of the fourteen Pacific ACP islands; Cook Islands, Fiji



Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu currently negotiating an EPA, it is the smaller States who say they will not gain as much as other ACP regions from the improved market access on the table. East Timor, also a Pacific ACP State has been monitoring negotiations but having been busy with State-building has opted not to participate directly in EPA talks to date. EU Statistics reveal that the

Pacific currently exports just 10% of its goods and produce to the EU and takes just 5% of total imports from the EU. Two Pacific countries dominate this exchange; Papua New Guinea and Fiji accounting for 90% of this export figure, mainly due to sugar, and absorbing 40% of imports.

Patteson Oti, Foreign Minister for the Solomon Islands and alternate lead EPA negotiator for the Pacific, indicated to 'The Courier' that an agreement on duty free and quota free exports by Pacific to the EU would benefit in particular the bigger countries of the region; Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, the Solomons and Fiji. Pacific States are individually considering whether to sign up to a goods agreement under the EPA.

Minister Patteson said Pacific countries feared that opening doors further to EU goods and produce could trigger other nations to ask for the same bene-

fits in the World Trade Organisation under the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause. He added the Pacific was eyeing a regional EU fisheries agreement beyond the handful of existing bi-lateral ones for Pacific ACPs. The Pacific also has its compass set on more temporary labour mobility for semi-skilled workers in the EU – largely an EU Member State national issue anyway – and changes to the EU's rules of origin which do not currently take into account the Pacific's distance from other ACP nations, vulnerability and size of many States.

He said the Pacific wanted a package of assistance to take advantage of the new opportunities under the EPA, notably for smaller States from human resources training to fisheries surveillance and to cushion any adverse effects of an EPA. €76 million – with a possible 25% top-up – have already been allo-



cated under the 10th EDF's Regional Indicative Programme for the Pacific 15, 2008-2013, in addition to EU funds for each individual Pacific nation under the so-called National Indicative Programmes.

"We recognise the uniqueness of the islands as guardians of the Pacific ocean, which can be considered a global public good with resources which must be sustainably managed in the interests of the islands. The financial instruments of the Cotonou Agreement are there to allow the region to capitalise on the EPA provisions and their potential for economic growth respectful of environmental protection", said Francesco Affinito, Deputy Head of Unit for the Pacific in the European Commission's Directorate General for Development.

D.P.

"Smaller states will benefit from a regional fisheries agreement" Patteson Oti, alternate EPA Pacific lead negotiator. Credit Secretariat of the Pacific Community.



BRUSSELS: CULTURAL CAPITAL



Anne Adriaens-Pannier.

In 1979, for the Brussels Millennium, some facetious souls came up with the slogan, 'Brussels throws a party every 1,000 years' – a joke at the expense of the capital's cultural policy! Yet Brussels is in fact a cultural centre that has always attracted renowned figures from the arts and sciences: Lord Byron, Victor Hugo, Verlaine, Rimbaud and Jacques-Louis David, to name just a few. It was in Brussels that the latter produced one of the greatest works of European art, 'The Death of Marat'. Between the wars it was to Brussels that Einstein, Joliot Curie, Marie Curie, de Broglie, Planck and Heisenberg came every summer to unveil discoveries in physics and chemistry that would revolutionise the world. Brussels is probably the only city in the world with a population of under a million to offer culture on such a scale. It is home to 70 museums, as many theatres, and 'La Monnaie' opera house, whose repute would

surely have earned it the label 'the best in the world', had it been located in a certain neighbouring country. But does this make it a major cultural capital? Two leading and committed players in the city's cultural life give their somewhat contrasting opinions. Firstly, Anne Adriaens-Pannier, curator of this season's notable exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, entitled, 'Léon Spilliaert, a free spirit'. Anne speaks with sensitivity and undisguised passion about Spilliaert (1881-1946), about art, and about Brussels. Then, Michel Kacnelenbogen, co-director with Patricia Ide of the 'Théâtre Le Public' and, like Spilliaert, a free spirit and passionate about all things cultural, has his say. Founded less than a decade ago, 'Le Public' has become a benchmark for the quality of its productions. Kacnelenbogen speaks out about the prejudices of the press and of the capital's political circles. **H.G.**

> Anne Adriaens-Pannier

Although Spilliaert came from Ostend, like many people who live in Brussels he benefited from everything going on in the city. At the turn of the century, and until 1914, Brussels was at the centre of what can be described as 'avant-garde' art. There was such feverish activity in Brussels at that time in literature, music and



'A Streetcar Named Desire'. Stage photo, credit Le Public.

sculpture. Between 1880 and 1914, artists from all over the world were drawn here, invited by cultural associations such 'Le Cercle des Vingt' or 'Le Cercle de la Libre Esthétique.' Many international artists first displayed their works at these exhibitions before showing elsewhere. For Spilliaert in particular, Brussels was a place of artistic self-discovery.

'Le Cercle des Vingt' and 'Le Cercle de la Libre Esthétique' were based on a revolt against the academicism of art and against any hierarchy within art or between the artist and the artisan, and above all against any authority such as the juries. The events they organised brought together musicians, painters and sculptor, all in the same space. This was 'Gesamtkunstwerk' in action, the principle of non-discrimination between the arts to which they subscribed. An architect, for example, would enlist the services of all kinds of artists to decorate and finish a house. One of the results of this approach is the 'Palais Stoclet', a gem of art nouveau. This was in the 1930s, the pre-war period, in which this cultural fervour in Brussels was at its peak.

After the war, during the 1950s, the influences principally came from outside Belgium, and from the United States in particular. What is interesting about Brussels is that we are not focused exclusively on Belgian art. Here at the Museum of Modern Art, for example, the contemporary section has works from India, Egypt and Africa alongside Belgian art. We are always very open. Perhaps we do not fight enough to safeguard Belgian culture. But at the same time, this openness that is enriching.

Is Brussels now losing its influence? Yes and no. Because today, rather than having one sponsor, namely a Belgian Minister of Culture, artists have several. They can approach governments of the French-speaking or Dutch-speaking communities.

The Dutch-speakers ask for nothing other than to immerse themselves in French-speaking cul-

ture and vice-versa. Just look at the number of theatre plays that are bilingual. One no longer differentiates between a Dutch-language or French-language production. It's extraordinary. Brussels is genuinely a cultural capital.

> Michel Kacnelenbogen

The attitude of the Brussels French-speaking media is paradoxical. If you scan what makes the cultural headlines, three-quarters of them are all about showbiz stars and lauding Belgians abroad. The remaining quarter who are bothered about Brussels are deliberately elitist. Fair enough, but not one rule for one and one rule for another. You cannot on the one hand go over the top about showbiz and on the other neglect local culture on the grounds that it is too ordinary. Take our production of 'A Streetcar Named Desire' that you cited as an exceptional cultural event. It was talked about in the press, but not to an extent that reflected its real success.

I'm not saying this phenomenon is unique to Brussels. Journalists in French or Anglo-Saxon cultures certainly have the same tendency, but this is compensated for by the chauvinism of large countries where they are forced to cover home grown happenings.

One in four theatregoers who go to theatres subsidised by the French-speaking Community of Belgium, also comes to see plays at 'Le Public'. Yet we receive less than 3% of these subsidies. It is as if specialist education swallowed up more of the budget than general education.

Of the public resources allocated to culture, too large a proportion goes to the Flemish-speaking Community of Brussels that represents just 20% of the city's population.

So why despite everything do we have so many great Belgian artists? It is down to humility. That is a very important asset that protects us from showbiz culture. Since we could not afford all the glitz, anyway, we aim for quality. This is a side effect of the imposed humility.

Brussels is not a cultural capital. It is the capital of a country and of Europe. It's a Europe that is too ready to take decisions in the name of its citizens and is a seat of power competing for influence. But I am active in theatre precisely because it gives some freedom, a place where one can make mistakes. In the modern world, this is a luxury.



Michel Kacnelenbogen.

Marie-Martine Buckens

THE CHEMISTRY AT WORK IN BRUSSELS

Brussels could easily be a characterless city of glass severed by highways, as one would imagine of a capital boasting major international institutions like the EU and NATO, over 1,000 offices of international agencies and 2,000 international companies. This often-unacknowledged city has, however, retained its unique identity; a blend of exuberance and opportunism, streets and buildings undergoing never-ending demolition and construction. The chemistry at work comes partly down to history.

The first people to live in Brussels settled on the St. Géry islet in the 11th Century. This strategic spot meant inhabitants traded with the major European cities via the Senne River and its tributaries. During this period, the 'Rosella' or 'settlement in the swamps', became a hub of trade and ideas in Europe, arousing the interest of Europe's 'heavyweights' of the time. Brussels has successively become the capital of the Burgundian Netherlands, and Austria's Hapsburg Dynasty, which, upon inheritance of the throne of Spain, made Brussels the headquarters of the States-General of the Netherlands, headed by Charles V. This was the end of a period characterised by a comparatively peaceful relationship between the Brussels middle classes and the imposed monarchy. Dark years followed when the Duke of Alba spread terror to suppress the attempts by town councillors to achieve independence. One hundred years later, Louis XIV bombarded the city centre. The reins of power then alternated between the French and the Austrians up until 1815, subsequent to Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, when Brussels came under the leadership of William I of Orange, Prince of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. This was the last straw. The middle classes in the city rebelled and proclaimed the independence of Brussels, then of Belgium. The year was 1830. Even then, the population of Brussels came from all walks of life and backgrounds: not only Flemish people, with their Germanic cul-

ture, French in the case of the middle classes (Napoleon had left his mark), Walloons and their Latin culture, but also people of Jewish and Spanish origin. They united under a foreign king, a Hapsburg, Leopold I. History seemed to be repeating itself, but the people of Brussels had now learned how to 'get by'. To 'clean up' the blighted areas bordering the river Senne, where the poor lived, the town councillors decided in 1870 to cover it over, signalling a radical change in the city centre's shape and identity. Upheaval is something people have learned to live with, and has been subject to almost non-stop changes made to the city ever since. Leopold II wanted to turn Brussels into a capital like Paris. All that remains are a few roads and monuments. The wheeler-dealers and property tycoons were the ones who set about altering, and even disfiguring, certain central districts. Major institutions have arisen against this backdrop. In 1958, Brussels became the headquarters of the European Community. In 1967, land on the outskirts of the city was offered for the headquarters of NATO, hounded out of Paris by General de Gaulle. The city is the third leading international conference venue. Thirty per cent of people living in Brussels are non-nationals. Brussels' natives are quite matter-of-fact, but these fairly good-natured souls can be suspicious at times. The people of Brussels and their lack of chauvinism have allowed these newcomers to settle down happily, provided they do not 'colonise' their hosts. ■

Roger Mazanza Kindulu

BRUSSELS, MPUTUVILLE, THE CAPITAL OF WORLDS

Les Congolais et Bruxelles

Brussels is home to a large sub-Saharan community from Angola, Cameroon, Ghana and Nigeria, most arriving during the waves of immigration of the 1990s. It also includes Burundians and Rwandans, whose countries used to be Belgian colonies. The largest African community in Brussels by far is from the Democratic Republic of Congo (several thousand). Brussels is a city of dreams for people from the Congo. During the 1970s and 1980s, Congolese from all walks of life ended up in Europe as part of huge migratory movements. Back then, the city was the stuff of dreams for all young people, eager for a better life. People started using the word 'Miguel' to indicate 'Europe', and particularly Belgium and Brussels, pronounced as 'Brisel', just as 'Kisasa' for Kinshasa. In 1977, I stopped over in Athens. Back home, I was giving an account of my travels when a youngster asked, "Po na nini okendeki potu te?" or, "Why didn't you go to Europe?". I understood what he meant; for him, Greece was not part of Europe. People in Congo used to say: "There are two white people, three Portuguese and one Greek in the room". For them, white

people, 'mindele', were Belgians. The Greeks and Portuguese were simply traders, living amongst us, eating like us and sometimes going out with local girls. Three years later, I made up for what I had missed. After completing a report in Germany, I stopped off in Miguel and Matonge, the African district, where I bought some of the famous 'Dutch wax' cloth, very popular with Congolese women. Not forgetting to take back a few recordings of Congolese music. Matonge, part of the Brussels municipality of Ixelles, is like Kinshasa's 'cité d'ambiance', a district that never sleeps. At the entrance to this Brussels district, until recently, was a splendid mural by the renowned Congolese painter, Chéri Samba, reflecting the welcoming atmosphere of this exotic area: people of all races and from all walks of life rubbing shoulders. Matonge is a real crossroads, a meeting point for people from all corners of the globe. It has everything: African cafés and restaurants, clothes shops, food and beauty products, travel agencies, freight services and facilities for sending money to Africa, a radio station, a TV channel, Congolese newspapers...

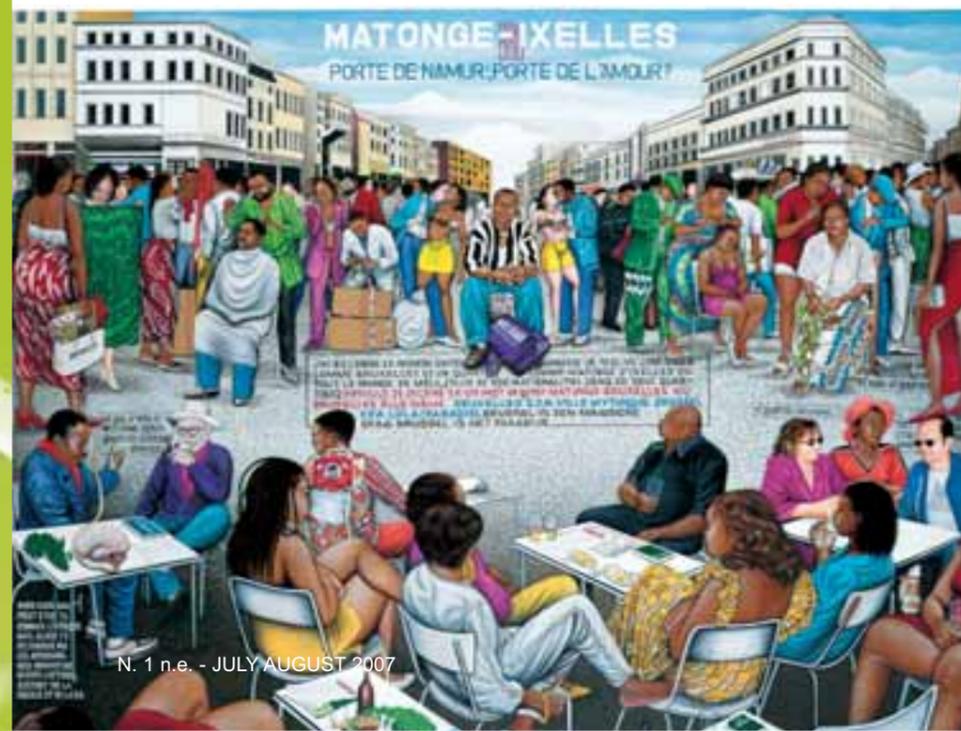
A shared past that goes back a long way...

Brussels has always been in the thoughts and dreams of Congolese. During the Brussels Universal Exhibition in 1958, citizens from all parts of then-colonised Congo met for the first time outside their native country. The Brussels Round Table declared the independence of the Belgian Congo, June 30, 1960. Forty-seven years on, The Round Table still has an aura about it. I remember politicians returning from Brussels triumphantly announcing that they had brought back the country's independence. At the time, many of us thought 'independence' was an item carried in a briefcase! The first academics making up the College of Commissioners-General left for Brussels when the Republic's first government was dismissed. The first Congolese footballers to make their careers abroad; Mukuna Trouet, Bonga-Bonga, Mayama Braine and so many others, headed for Brussels. ■

> Capital of 'Mikili'

Over the years, the Congolese people have dropped 'Miguel' or 'Mputu', meaning 'Europe' in Kikongo, one of the country's main languages, in favour of 'Mikili' or 'worlds' – referring to all European countries with Congolese communities. Brussels has become 'Mputuville', or the capital of 'Mikili'. So, whether their home is Paris, Lille, Aix-la-Chapelle or London, all Congolese dream of a trip to Mputuville one day. "Just as the manatees go to drink from the Simal fountain", as the poet Léopold Senghor said. ■

The mural by the Congolese painter Chéri Samba, which used to decorate a building at the entrance to Matonge. Credit CEC (Coopération par l'Education et la Culture)



EUROPE, A CAPITAL 'QUARTER'

The European Union in Brussels

Their glass, granite and metal structures dominate the Brussels skyline, sitting uncomfortably with the typical turn of the 19th Century Brussels town houses with their decorative facades. This construction cluster extends from the Schuman roundabout slightly to the east of Brussels – named after one of the founder fathers of the Union, Robert Schuman. A guided tour of this labyrinth of buildings around the 'European Quarter' will help get to grips with the unique EU decision-making process.

Justus Lipsius, the Council building, named after the 16th Century philosopher, looks down the rue de la Loi. A pinky-brown granite bloc, its solidity suggests signing and sealing. Decisions are taken by one Minister from each of the 27 EU States on the whole range of EU legislation. Its six-month rotating Presidency gives each EU Member State scope to impress areas of particular national concern (www.consilium.europa.eu).

Facing the colossus of the Council across the road is the most recognisable EU building, the 'Berlaymont', the 'X'-shaped 14-floor high European Commission first built in 1967 on the site of a former Augustine monastery and

re-opened in 2004 after a decade-long re-fit. This is the headquarters of the body that proposes legislation. The Commission, (www.eu.europa.eu) has a five-year term and a President, currently former Portuguese Prime Minister, José Manuel Durão Barroso.

Each EU country individually appoints a Commissioner who is attributed a policy area. Belgian Louis Michel is Development and Humanitarian Aid Commissioner.

The Commissioners are aided by the Directorates General (DG) in each policy area, now numbering over 30, many of which are based in the criss-cross of modern office blocs nearby. Director-General (DG) for development, Stefano Manservigi, heads 'DG' development, Koos Richelle is 'DG' for the 'Europeaid' Cooperation Office (www.ec.europa.eu/europeaid), formed in 2001 to look after the day-to-day implementation of projects in ACP States and in other parts of the world and the EU's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) running emergency aid, (www.ec.europa.eu/echo) is headed by 'DG' Antonio Cavaco. The African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Secretariat (www.acp.int) is a short walk through the 'Parc Cinquantaire' on the avenue Georges Henri. Its current

Secretary-General is Sir John Kaputin from Papua New Guinea.

Drop down the hill from Schuman and catch sight of one of Brussels' prettiest rooftops sitting on top of the European Parliament's hemicycles, named the 'Whim of the Gods', as it is shaped like the box of a famous brand of French cheese of that name (www.europarl.europa.eu). The Parliament's blue-glazed facade fills more and more of the 'Place Luxembourg', the adjoining cobbled Belgian square. The EU's progression has meant a 'gentrification' with chic cafes and restaurants, but the façade of the oldest train station building in Europe, dated 1838, still stands here although its rail links are now underground. Two other consultative bodies wrap up the unwieldy EU decision-making process: the Economic and Social Committee (EESC) (www.eesc.europa.eu) members drawn from employee, employers and other civil society interest groups, and the newest addition, the Committee of the Regions (www.cor.europa.eu) comprised of local and regional government appointees operating from an unmissable glass building a stone's throw from the Parliament.

D.P.

European Parliament, Brussels.
Photo M.M Buckens.



The services sector, the backbone of the Brussels economy.
Credit Solvay.

Leo Cendrowicz *

Brussels economy: Growing anyway

Perhaps best known abroad as the de facto capital of the European Union, the economic role of Brussels and its importance are less well understood.

In fact, the city is a hive of economic activity, with an open and cosmopolitan business culture and an exceptionally strong appetite for trade. The Brussels-Capital Region is home to 54,000 businesses, of which around 2,000 are foreign. Many, of course, are associated with the international character of activities in

Brussels, a city that hosts a vast foreign community of diplomats and civil servants, interpreters, lobbyists, consultancies, advertising agencies and journalists.

Most of Brussels' inhabitants speak at least two languages well, and many speak more. It is usual – indeed, expected – for a receptionist in an office to speak English, French and Dutch, and the same goes for people in managerial positions. English is increasingly the language of business and is spoken even by

directory enquiries and telephone sales people. In addition, from the marketing angle, the co-existence of several cultural communities in Brussels makes the city and the region an excellent test market to study of consumer behaviour.

Brussels now has the largest number of international organisations in the world and attracts over 1,000 business conferences annually, ranking it the fourth most popular conference and congress city in Europe. It is



also rated the seventh most important financial centre in the world and the fourth most attractive city in Europe for starting a business.

The city has many other hidden advantages, such as a strategic geographical location in Europe, some of the most productive workers in the world, excellent transport connections with other cities and a plentiful supply of relatively cheap office space.

A lesser-known attraction of the Brussels region is the favourable tax rates for expatriates: each day they spend out of Belgium is tax-deductible, and they can also opt out of the expensive Belgian social security contributions while still benefiting from the country's excellent health and education services. The amount and the value of foreign investment is another economic feature of the Brussels region: it represents over one-fifth of all investment in Belgium, and around 60% of the foreign companies with business interests in Belgium have their registered office in Brussels.

Brussels is also the city where many of Belgium's top companies choose to base their headquarters even if their production sites are elsewhere. These include the Delhaize retail group, the CFE industrial group, the Besix construction company, the Sabca aerospace company, metals group Umicore and the chemical and pharmaceutical companies, Solvay and Union Chimique Belge (UCB).

Although the Brussels economy is mainly service-oriented, it has a highly diversified industrial fabric. Of course, as an urban area, the Brussels region does not have the facilities for large-scale industry. The Volkswagen plant, which employs several thousand people on its production lines, is a notable exception, while Toyota Motor Europe is based in Brussels and DaimlerChrysler centralises sales, marketing, and logistics in its city offices.

There are 27 industrial zones in the Brussels area, located alongside the main access roads, along the Brussels Canal and on the edge of the ring road and the motorways that converge on the capital. The main areas are mechanical engineering and electronics, chemicals, printing and publishing, clothing and the food industry. However, there has been a recent shift to high value-added products, such as fine chemicals, aircraft construction, precision tools and telecommunications.

Some 45% of Brussels physical exports are cars, followed by chemicals at 12% and machinery and electrical equipment at 11%.



Eurostar train. Brussels, a centre for transports. Credit Eurostar.

Brussels in figures

The Brussels-Capital Region itself is composed of 19 communes spread over 162 square kilometres, or half a percent of the total area of Belgium, and its 1.1 million inhabitants account for a tenth of the country's 10.4 million population.

But the Brussels Region contributes almost a fifth of the Belgian economy's gross value-added, while its 555,000 jobs account for 17.7% of national employment. Its economy is service-oriented: 88% of Brussels jobs and 89% of its added value are with service companies.

Some 300,000 people from other regions commute into work in the capital every day: in other words, more than half of the people employed in Brussels come from other parts of the country.

In trade terms, the Brussels-Capital region represents around 4.2% of the Belgian commodities, although this amount increases to nearly 20% if the services are included. Over half of the products made in Brussels are exported.

The international presence has become vital for the economy of Brussels. As host to the EU, NATO, and the Belgian government, Brussels contains 159 embassies and 2,500 diplomats, and is the second largest diplomatic city in the world.

The European element accounts for a significant part of the city's activities: there are 30,500 European officials, but when added to people linked to the EU and family members, it works up to around 105,000, more than a tenth of the total population. Indeed, the number of EU residents in Brussels region is around 160,000. The institutions have brought in wealth, and as a region Brussels is now the second richest in Europe after London, with a per capita GDP of over twice the EU average.

The EU accounts for 89% of the exports – 21% to France, 17% to Germany and 10% to the Netherlands – while the Americas claim 2.9%, Asia 2.4% and Africa 2.2%.

But the services sector forms the backbone of the Brussels economy, accounting for around 88% of jobs in the region.

These are highly diversified and include banking, research, information technologies, tourism, transport and health.

The biggest service is the financial sector,

where Brussels has a long tradition of banking, a respected stock exchange that is part of the Euronext system, and a variety of insurance, leasing and investment fund firms including major financial services groups Fortis and KBC.

Brussels is particularly renowned as a reference centre for international banking transfers and clearing. Its expertise in this specialised field has been nurtured through the presence of the headquarters of world lead-

ers like Swift, Euroclear and Banksys. The Bank of New York is just one that has made Brussels its worldwide processing centre. The city is also a training ground for processing with courses like Solvay Business School's programme in Financial Transaction Services.

The information and computer technology sector is another key area of the economy, with around 4,500 ICT companies in Brussels, employing 75,000 people – and accounting for one quarter of all new jobs. Indeed, Brussels' IT sector dovetails with its financial services, having taken a lead in developing e-banking and e-business.

The health sector has become an important vehicle of growth and employment in the Brussels region, representing more than 3,000 companies and around 70,000 jobs. Brussels is well equipped in this field: it is home to three faculties of medicine and pharmacy, five university hospitals, a military hospital, more than 40 general hospitals, psychiatric and specialised clinics, specialised public research centres, four university schools and numerous private centres.

University research has also fuelled the city's leading role in developing life sciences, including biotechnology and pharmaceutical activities (no less than four Belgians have received the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology). Its network of scientists, prominent research institutions and universities includes almost 3,000 researchers in life sciences.



Belgium at a glance

Geographically and culturally, Belgium is at a crossroads of Europe, and over the past 2,000 years has witnessed a constant ebb and flow of different races and cultures.

The country gained its independence in 1830, and has survived despite being made up of two different language groups. These are the Flemish, who speak Dutch, and the francophones, who are dominant in Wallonia and Brussels (there is also a small German minority in the east). It is a constitutional monarchy and a federal State divided into three regions, Flanders, Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region.

Brussels is supposed to be a bilingual region, although in practice, around 80% of the city's inhabitants have French as a first language. English is also widely spoken. Some argue that Brussels is now all that holds Belgium together: because it is a largely French-speaking city situated in Flanders, it makes a break-up of Belgium hard to imagine.

Belgium is the third most open economy in the EU as measured by the value of exports and imports relative to GDP (84%). It was one of the first countries in Europe to industrialise, building up the coal, textile, steel and heavy engineering sectors. But once-thriving Wallonia is still affected by this declining legacy – only partly offset by new businesses like light engineering, chemicals and food processing. By contrast, Flanders has been successful in modernising and attracting high-technology investment.

Science parks, like the Parc Da Vinci, the Mercator research park and the 92-hectare Erasmus Science Park, work closely with the universities.

One of the emerging technologies concerns the environment and Brussels companies have developed new methods to deal with waste, reduce energy consumption, and to cut air, water and noise pollution.

Brussels is, of course, the place that gave its name to the sprout, but although the vegetable is not grown in the city, there is a strong tradition of food in the region. The most famous Brussels food export is chocolate, from the Côte d'Or bars to the exquisite pralines of houses like Godiva, Pierre Marcolini, Wittamer, Leonidas and Neuhaus. But Brussels also exports biscuits, including the 'speculoos' gingerbread.

But no mention of food in Brussels could ignore the beer: the country produces 450 of the world's finest ales, and brewing is rooted in Belgian culture, with varieties like the 'lambic', a yeast-free local brew available as 'gueuze', 'kriek', 'faro' and 'framboise'.

Culturally, Brussels enjoys a worldwide reputation for design.

Although nearby Antwerp is lauded as

Belgium's fashion capital, Brussels designers like Xavier Delcour, Olivier Strelli, Natan, Yves Doods, leather stylist Delvaux, and hatmaker, Elvis Pompilio, have made their mark. Brussels can also boast its own style district – the Rue Antoine Dansaert just in front of the Belgian stock exchange – with trendy art galleries, fashion shops, antique stores, cafés and restaurants.

The capital has other artistic talents. Brussels is the city of Pieter Brueghel, Tintin creator Hergé, surrealist painter Magritte and Art Nouveau's Victor Horta. Their influence reflects the strong tradition of graphic arts that is still vibrant today in architecture and interior design.

Like any city, Brussels faces economic challenges. Although the Brussels region is second only to London as Europe's most affluent, high unemployment remains a concern, particularly among immigrants.

The closure of national airline Sabena, the decision of courier service DHL to relocate from Brussels to Germany, and the halving of the VW workforce recently caused much anguish in the city.

But such setbacks can only serve to underline the ever-growing importance of the EU

to the local economy. And given Brussels' historic ability to adapt to changing circumstances, the city can be expected to make the most of the new opportunities. ■

* Leo Cendrowicz is a Brussels-based journalist

For more information, click on:

The Brussels-Capital Region:
www.bruxelles.irisnet.be

The Brussels Enterprise Agency (BEA):
www.bea.irisnet.be

The Brussels Chamber of Commerce and Industry:
www.ccib.be

The Brussels-Europe Liaison-Office:
www.blbe.be

Brussels Export:
www.brusselstrade.be



The most famous Brussels food export is chocolate. Credit Eurostar.

MARKET FOR CULTURAL PRODUCTS: A BREAKTHROUGH FOR THE ACP COUNTRIES

1st ACP Cultural Festival

For the first time ever, the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries has staged a Cultural Festival. Organised last autumn in Santo Domingo, it was a unique event, not only for show-casing talent, but also as a trade fair and opportunity to fine-tune an ACP strategy on marketing creativity.

This Festival was a culmination of the initial stage of the 'Dakar Declaration' and 'Action Plan' on a strategic programme for expanding the ACP countries' cultural resources, set in motion in 2003. As well as agreeing to hold regular cultural festivals in the future, governments also decided to set up a cultural foundation. Several international agencies have welcomed the 'Dakar Declaration' as an important instrument of public international law since it backs cultural industries as a priority both within ACP countries and also for international cooperation.

Twelve months on, the Maputo Summit of ACP government leaders, on June 23, 2004, fixed the choice of culture ministers. Member Countries were encouraged to adopt legal texts on boosting the sector's industries, while paving the way for extensive job creation.

> Santo Domingo springs a surprise

The Festival erupted in a shower of fireworks sponsored by the authorities of the Dominican Republic, setting the mysterious night-blue Caribbean sky ablaze, much to the surprise of Santo Domingo which had seemed indifferent to the huge posters and banners that, perhaps somewhat belatedly, publicised the event. Sparks flew against the backdrop of the timeworn stones of the majestic ruins of a Hispano-Moorish convent

that still seems to echo to the footsteps of Christopher Columbus.

The Cultural Festival took hold of the city, gaining in intensity, like swinging jazz music. Starting quietly, by the end of the week it was a dazzling event that is bound to go down in the annals of this charming 'mestizo' capital. Witness the increasing number of spectators, and above all their delight, particularly the younger ones, whose curiosity was visible in their eyes sparkling with wonder at the sight of these cultural treasures from distant civilisations. Santo Domingo discovered that their African, Pacific and Caribbean neighbours had sent the finest of what they had to offer of their art worlds. News spread quickly by word of mouth, even for the less popular art forms, such as contemporary dance. All the performances were staged in the Fine Art College's large Manuel Reda Theatre. The venue was half empty on the first day, full on day two and after that they were turning people away at the door. The same went for all the other events, even business meetings on commercial strategies.

> Extolling beauty and elegance

The Festival was host to hundreds of artists, cultural agents and other experts from 40 or so ACP countries, dozens of activities, performances, exhibitions, film shows, fashion shows and the grand parade of artists. A Council of ACP Culture Ministers from three



Akiyodans Dance Company. Contemporary dance, this less popular dance form is a hit with the crowds. Photo Hegel Goutier.

continents with numerous representatives of partner countries preceded all these activities, lauding the beauty, elegance and quality of the performances. Most of the contemporary dance performances had previously won awards at leading festivals. These include Rako (Fiji), the Compagnie Kettly Noël



Mayra Andrade.
A big asset for ACPs: music.
Photo Hegel Goutier.

(Mali), Opiyo Okach (Kenya) and the Akiyodans Dance Company (Haiti). The smooth dance style of the quartet of dancers from the Rako company is lyrical. The light steps, spaced percussions and gently swaying hips are an ode to silence and equilibrium, within ourselves and between us.

Kettly Noël, a dancer of Haitian origin, but brought up in Mali, transfixed the audience by her solo, 'Errance', a portrayal of isolation and madness, scrutinising our inner fears, without seeking to amuse or shock. In the theatre, you could hear a pin drop. At the end, there was suspended silence before a huge burst of applause erupted.

> Showcase

People living in ACP countries tend not to be familiar with each other's cultures. The visitors to the exhibitions of visual arts, paintings, sculptures, photographs, videos and installations came face to face with showcases, not only of the cultures of this group of countries, but also of their histories, societies, political tendencies, looking for things in common and differences. How the visitors must have been gripped by the piece by Benin's Pélagie Gbaguidi on the theme of the 'Black Code'. A copy of this book could be seen spinning in

front of gigantic pictures of Toussaint Louverture's historic gesture of freedom. Together with 'Mein Kampf', this is possibly the most despised book in the history of publishing, sounding the death knell for man's humanity!

The piece by Freddy Tsimba (DRC) was also deeply moving: his sculptures are cries from the heart for the women who were raped and became pregnant in the recent war that ravaged his country, but who still found the tenderness within to love their children. Bullet cartridges and shells are bound together with lace; the shells for the savagery and the lace, shedding tears for the gentleness inside the victims and in everyone. "Initially, I met a woman who told me about how she came to be raped. An idea of how to express this harrowing experience formed in my mind. I ended up creating a work about nine women and their nine months of pregnancy... People speak about women being raped. When you say women being raped, this implies the rape of us, every one of us".

With 'Illusion Men', Togo's El Loko's exhibit suspended portraits of faceless men mirroring tiny receptacles on the ground which cast liquid blue reflections: it was an allegory of Africans talking to Europeans while overlooking talking to each other. Social and political

IN PRAISE OF THE DISCIPLINE IN AFRICAN ART

Senegalese choreographer, Germaine Acogny, was one of the founders, along with Maurice Béjart and the Senegalese President and poet, President Léopold Sédar Senghor, of the Mudra Dance School in Dakar. She took advantage of her visit to Santo Domingo to hold a master class attended by, among others, many well-known dancers from the Dominican Republic and some from Cuba:

"I believe African dances can reinvigorate a dancer's body with energy, the joy of dancing for fun and discipline. In my master classes, the focus is on having a good time. Fun but strict! Fun and serious! Our traditional dances are very intricate. We learn to dance methodically. Africans are said to be born dancers, but I don't agree. I even think it's a racist remark. Rhythm and dance have cultural roots. They can be learnt. With perseverance. It's all about discipline".

questions are raised. There are questions, too, about existence, as in the case of Geneviève Bonieux, from Mauritius, who uses 'The snake charmer', a sculpture of a woman's head wreathed in a snake of ropes and nails, a striking view of the inner torment of a human being.

> Key asset: music

The ACP's edge to gain a foothold in the market for cultural products is first and foremost through music. Small countries are managing to gain recognition thanks to the efforts of their musical communities. Andy Palacio's triumph has been to draw outside world's attention to Belize, particularly the Garifuna, black Amerindians of this country. The young musicians of Mozambique's 'Nfithe' managed to whip the Santo Domingo audience into a frenzy. They and their counterparts from Zimbabwe, 'Bongo love' are members of the 'Music Crossroads Network', created to boost the cultural and economic opportunities for young people from disadvantaged, unstable backgrounds.

And if there is a symbol of the Festival's success, this accolade should no doubt go to the young Cape Verdean singer, Mayra Andrade. Barely 22-years old, she is now busy making her mark on the international music scene with her first recording 'Navega'. She is admittedly following in the footsteps of Cesaria Evora, who is championing her and

has no doubt helped her to understand that coming from a small country may be a tremendous advantage. "It has been a great help to me coming from a tiny country, a microscopic nation like Cape Verde. I may not have achieved so much if I had been born in the United States or the United Kingdom. People are curious and wonder what is going on over there. Cape Verde's music is world renowned, it is its banner, but 15 years ago most people had hardly heard of the country. Now when I tell people I'm from Cape Verde I can see it firing their imaginations."

Mayra Andrade also symbolises the mutual understanding in Santo Domingo between creative people, business people and policy-makers. Without a shadow of a doubt, this open-minded attitude is another of the Festival's triumphs. This was shown when we asked her to imagine having the opportunity to speak her mind to a fictitious minister. She didn't pull any punches: "Mr Minister, I didn't expect to see you here this evening. I hope you will be good enough to take note of what the artists represented here in Santo Domingo have to tell you: at times you tend to overlook the values and principles that you yourselves uphold. I can put this in song better". And then, looking at us straight in the eyes, using the table as a percussion instrument, she delighted us with a chant in a mixture of Portuguese and Cape Verdean Creole. The minister found it absolutely enchanting! H.G.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

We take a quick look at what went on behind the scenes to ensure the success of the first ACP Cultural Festival with one of the key members of the organising team. The ACP Secretariat took the initiative acting on a decision of ACP Culture Ministers three years earlier to organise this first ACP Festival, right up to the choice of the country by the Caribbean region, which picked the Dominican Republic to host the event and the conclusion of negotiations with the European Commission on financing. With the support of the Committee of Ambassadors, the ACP Secretariat set up a 'Task Force', representing all departments involved in the event's organisation. It worked on the project's feasibility, put forward people to run it, negotiated with European partners and made contact with dozens of cultural networks in ACP nations. A team of consultants led by Dominique Thiange, organiser of many large African culture events in Europe, carried out this part of organising the event.

"Working out the logistics of the Festival took two months. And the groundwork obviously took much longer. The Festival did not take its final shape until June, after an initial fact-finding mission to the Dominican Republic. We started setting things up on the spot mid-August. At that point, the ACP Secretariat picked a small team of high-calibre, well-chosen experts who were of crucial importance in putting the project into motion in a short space of time. My task was thus assisted," comments Ms. Thiange.

The various arts networks and cultural entities in African, Caribbean and Pacific nations played a big part in gathering famous musicians, dancers, actors, film producers, and fashion stylists and other artists from three continents, as well as specialists in the arts who led seminars on culture and the creative industries. "The success of the festival is largely down to these front-line professionals on the ground," stresses Ms. Thiange.



Germaine Acogny, choreographer.
Beauty, quality and discipline in African art.
Photo Hegel Goutier.



Freddy Tsimba, sculpture of rape of women caught in war.
The festival, an open book on countries across three continents.
Photo Hegel Goutier.



Santo Domingo springs a surprise.
Photo Hegel Goutier.

MEETING OF ACP MINISTERS OF CULTURE AND 1st ACP FESTIVAL IN SANTO DOMINGO

A challenge for ACP countries, the Dominican Republic and ACP-EU cooperation

In inaugurating on October 13, 2006 the 2nd Meeting of ACP Ministers of Culture and the 1st Cultural Festival of the ACP Group of States, the President of the Dominican Republic, Lionel Fernandez, put the seal of success on a long-awaited event. Persistence, not only on the part of the ACP Secretariat but also from its European Commission partners and the Dominican Republic itself, as well as organisers and artists from three continents, had paid off.

► **It all began in Dakar in 2003 with the 1st Meeting of ACP Ministers of Culture**

When ACP Ministers of Culture meeting for the first time in the Senegalese capital decided to organise the first cultural festival of the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and to adopt on June 20, 2003 a plan of action and agreement, they were no doubt unaware of two things. The first is that this agreement would have such a huge impact on international groups in the cultural field. They are now viewed as innovative, if not revolutionary, in their role in the creative and economic development strategy of poor countries. The second is that the preparation of 1st ACP Festival was to encounter so many obstacles. Originally, this festival was to have been held in Haiti in 2004 to celebrate the second centenary of the country's independence. But political events in the country changed everything. After repeated postponements, the festival was finally held at another time and in another place. The one constant in all this was the soil of the Island of Quisqueya.

► **The guiding light: Dakar**

Through the many twists and turns, the Dakar Plan of Action and Agreement paved the way, their international credibility acting as a guarantee for the festival which was the only the visible part of the enterprise, together perhaps with the plan for an ACP Cultural Foundation. The invisible part was the whole body of proposals to build clear cultural policies in ACP countries and regions to safeguard and protect cultural heritage. Also part of the plan was to strengthen cultural cooperation between ACP States and their development part-

ACP-EU COOPERATION AND THE FINANCING OF CULTURE

The economic and social importance of culture for the development of ACP countries is stipulated in the Cotonou Agreement (Article 27) signed in June 2000.

The financial aspects of Dakar Action Plan have been implemented in close cooperation with the European Commission. The ACP Group and the European Commission have identified two cultural programmes to be financed under the 9th EDF:

The Support Programme for the ACP film industry and the audiovisual sector (budget €8 million).

The Support Programme for the ACP cultural industries, with a budget of €6,333,333.

Contact: Secretariat of the Group of ACP States, Department of Policy Questions and Human Development, Mrs. Aya Kasasa, aya.kasasa@acp.int

Financing of the 1st ACP Cultural Festival

European Commission: €1,000,000

Dominican Republic: €2,500,000



From the left: José Rafael Lantigua, Dominican Republic Minister of Culture, Onofre Rojas, EFD National Authorising Officer, Sir John Kaputin, ACP Secretary General. Photo Hegel Goutier.

ners, and improve the abilities of the ACP States in all these fields – above all in developing cultural industries. The ministers of culture led the way to what would be a genuinely historic event: the position adopted by the ACP Heads of State in Maputo, Mozambique, on the role of culture in sustainable development.

► **The consolidation: Santo Domingo**

The document adopted by the 2nd Meeting of ACP Ministers of Culture in Santo Domingo amplifies the strategies defined in Dakar. It promotes the development of South-South cooperation, starting with an active partnership between the ACP and Brazil in the field of cultural programmes and lends its support to a project to open a 'House of Africa' in the country. It also develops an approach to lessen the digital divide in the ACP States as a means of combating illiteracy and promoting an integration of culture into education to highlight cultural diversity.

► **In line with the reforms in the Dominican Republic**

One of the principal players of the Cultural Festival's success in the Dominican Republic was the National Authorising Officer (NAO) of the European Development Fund (EDF). This is the representative of the Dominican Government responsible for managing cooperation with the European Union. He stressed, as did the other Dominican officials, the coming together of the interests of the ACP Group of States as a whole and his own country's national and regional agenda at a time when it is trying to give impetus to the role of culture in the Caribbean and Central and South America.

On one hand, the President of the Dominican Republic had just completed a broad consultation with artists, seeking a programme to develop the competitiveness of creative industries. On the other, the country is in the process of implementing constitutional reforms covering the cultural issue, as President Fernandez stressed at the Festival. "In the case



THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Area: 48,730 km²
 Population: 9,365,818 (2007)
 Capital: Santo Domingo
 Per capita GDP: €8,000
 Development index: 0.751 (94th place out of 177)
 Political structure: President Leonel Fernandez Reyna since August 16, 2004 for a 4-year term. Elected by universal suffrage
 Date of next elections: May 2008

Santo Domingo

Population: 2,253,437 (2006)
 Economy of Santo Domingo: services and manufacturing
 Education: 18 universities, including the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, the only public university and the oldest in the New World.
 Museums: 10 museums

Sources: CIA: UNDP, www.presidencia.gov.do

of the Dominican Republic it is a case of transforming third generation rights, such as cultural rights contained in international agreements and treaties, so that they can feature in the fundamental rights of the State Constitution", he said.

The Festival was held at a time when sections of Dominican society are involved in assessing the very foundations of their society, stressing the recognition of African heritage.

Minister of Culture, José Rafael Lantigua, one of the key figures in organising the meeting of Ministers of Culture and the ACP Festival in Santo Domingo, sums up the problem as follows: "The new models to characterize the Dominican identity, promoted by driven and distinguished researchers, (...) were born from the moment that the African heritage was assumed as a vital component of our culture. For this reason, as we celebrate the presence of Africa, alongside with other Caribbean and Pacific States, represented in this summit of Ministers of Culture, we also celebrate the cultural richness of which we are the owners and addressees, and in which the fusion of races and cultures has fulfilled a vital and unchanging role".

H.G.

Bernard Babb*

CARIBBEAN BOWLED OVER BY BALL GAME

Such is the zeal with which cricket is enjoyed that all else virtually came to a standstill in March and April with the hosting of the 2007 International Cricket Council World Cup in the Caribbean.

The event had been months in planning by governments, businesses, media and many others across the Caribbean's nine host nations. Its legacy goes beyond the boundary of the few weeks of wickets taken and runs scored. Say the word cricket and some immediately think of a small, chirpy and annoying insect. Not so in the Caribbean. In this part of the world, the first thing that comes to mind is a passionate ball sport bordering on religion. Just as the Caribbean is known globally for its breathtaking tropical assets – stunning sunsets, turquoise seas and sandy beaches – West Indians are regarded around the world as some of the best players of the game. Historically, cricket is an enduring colonial legacy, passed on from Britain to her former colonies, and is widely played in the

Caribbean, parts of Africa, Europe, Asia, Australasia and South America. Caribbean islands such as Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Antigua hold a fanatical enthusiasm for cricket. This love for the sport was the greatest driver that brought together several independent islands in the 15-member Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in a manner unseen before, rising to new levels of cooperation to stage the ninth edition of the ICC Cricket World Cup, www.cricketworldcup.com. From March 5, preliminary and semifinal round matches were played in St. Vincent, Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago, with the grand final staged in the newly re-developed Kensington Oval in Barbados on April 28.

► Regional Cooperation

Leading up to and during the tournament, high levels of cooperation, which had been lacking in several areas in the Caribbean, was evident in new partnerships and alliances, particularly at governmental and private sector levels. Apart from regional governments pooling US\$10 million in resources to create a new regional security framework, Caribbean territories also effected a single domestic space, issued a common CARICOM visa, www.caricom.org, successfully executed major construction projects and came together at the business level to provide a range of services for the global event. In Parliaments, common pieces of 'sunset' legislation were passed across the region to facilitate the staging of the World Cup. All laws specially formulated under the World



Kids like cricket. Kensington Oval, Barbados. Photo Bernard Babb.

Cup cricket legislation were to expire on May 15. Underpinning the notion of a single domestic space was collaboration among police, customs and immigration authorities for the free movement of teams, officials, sponsors, media and fans attending World Cup events. This networking among authorities, with assistance from Britain and the USA, fell within the new security framework for the region and some territories, including St. Lucia and Trinidad, for the first time moved to implement technology for machine-readable passports. Under the visa programme implemented by Caribbean governments, nationals and residents of several countries did not require visas to travel within the single domestic space.

In preparing to host cricket's global showpiece tournament, Caribbean governments outlaid millions of dollars to construct new stadia, enhance venues and improve infrastructure in several islands. Some funding also came from Asian governments, through development assistance. Taiwan contributed US\$6 million to develop the New Warner Park in St Kitts while the new 11,000-seater Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua, named after a former West Indies captain, was built with the aid of a US\$10 million grant from the People's Republic of China. The Indian government contributed US\$20 million to the new 17,000-seater Providence stadium in Guyana which also includes housing facilities in the environs of the stadium.

In Barbados, the Government committed over Bds\$135 million for a number of projects and the redevelopment of Kensington Oval, a venue with a rich heritage. Like in other islands, preparations for the World Cup in Barbados accelerated the delivery of services to nationals as well as improved infrastructure such as airports and highways.

► Catalyst for growth

"We wish to use the ICC Cricket World Cup 2007 as a catalyst for significant and measurable service, tourism, infrastructural, and economic development in Barbados", the Barbados Local Organising Committee said in the tend-

ring process. Vancouver Rouse, the Chief of Operations with the Barbados LOC, said while benefits were already being seen there was much more to come as Barbados intended to use the event to focus on business development, community tourism, national sports strategy, cricket development, and cultural industries development.

For the 60-day period from March to April 2007, Barbados came alive with craft, music, visual and performing arts, culinary arts, community sports, tourism attractions, and vending of all types, with major emphasis on showcasing Barbados and maximising visitor spending. Rouse said that in deciding Barbados' strategy during the bid phase, an Economic Impact Assessment study was done which showed that financial benefits from ticket revenues and visitor spending during the event would amount to Bds\$250 million. The benefits that will accrue in the 10 years after 2007 could exceed Bds\$750 million if there were a 5% increase in tourism receipts during that period. While most politicians and interest groups were supportive of efforts to host a successful World Cup in the Caribbean, some warned of discrimination against nationals and marginalisation of

small business people. In Jamaica, executives of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce (JCC), www.fantasyisle.com, predicted that the economic benefits promised from the events by the government would elude the nation. Past President, Michael Ammar, projected a US\$90 million (JAM\$6 billion) debt and said Government was only likely to recoup US\$10 million of revenues from the US\$100 million (JAM\$6.7 billion) it invested in the event. Ammar's concerns in some way were reflected earlier by Finance Minister Dr Omar Davies who said last year that Jamaica was unlikely to see any financial gains on its CWC investment. The JCC further accused government of not being forthright with details of the plans for CWC 2007, including details on how the financing of the JAM\$6.7 billion investment would be structured. Said Ammar: "It is going to be a legacy of debt".

* Bernard Babb is a Barbados-based journalist

1 \$Bds = 0.38 €
1 \$US = 0.76 €
1 \$JAM = 0.011 €



West Indies cricket captain, Brian Lara, at the crease during the Cricket World Cup. Photo Philip Spooner. pspooner@cw.blackberry.net



The newly re-developed Kensington Oval in Barbados. Photo Philip Spooner.

The peddlers of miracles

A 52-minute documentary ('Les marchands de miracles') by the Belgian director Gilles Remiche homing in on the most controversial aspects of the revival churches mushrooming in Congo-Kinshasa: several hundred in the capital alone. No off-screen commentaries. Merely pictures and the crude speeches of self-proclaimed ministers exploiting the frustrations born of despair. "The word may take you to Europe!" was the promise made by one of these supposed prophets, who manage to fill whole stadiums with people lining up for mass 'cures', while claiming the 'tithe' that enables them to ride around in limousines and "get a taste of the good life created by the Gospel". Others claim to exorcise "the spirit of poverty" and appeal for money before the crowds of people listening in a trance-like state. It just goes to show to what extent the politicians are under the power of these spiritual leaders. A vice-president and two presidential advisors can be seen using their presence to set the seal of approval on a gathering of these people who have no qualms about exploiting the Gospel for financial reward. Gilles Remiche also reveals the talents of these crowd-rousing prophets: the amazingly unrestrained promises to cure all manner of suffering, even over the telephone, or a laying on of hands before the camera of one of the 11 religious television channels winning over the masses like rock stars. More importantly, he shows how the phenomenon can become a scourge when one of these prophets promises that AIDS and cancers will "automatically disappear" once the evil spirit has been exorcised. Or another individual is heard to say, "AIDS is a disease just like malaria". By contrast, the camera records the bitter disappointment of an HIV-positive woman when she discovers, during a medical visit, that the prophet has broken his promise. Some of the prophets were not pleased. The production company reports that the director did receive some death threats. Presumably because the skilful editing may have sowed a healthy seed of scepticism about these practices in the minds of some of these people. Available on DVD: www.passerelle.be Associate producers: RTBF and the Cinema and Audiovisual Centre of the French-language Community of Belgium. François Misser ■



A gem Ayo "Joyful",

Polydor 2006, Universal Music

This is a must-have recording – one of the best to appear in recent months. Ayo's voice and music, her talent, her originality, her eclecticism, and her musical maturity combine to make this a real gem. Ayo was brought up by her Nigerian DJ father to the tones, subtleties and rhythms of Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Pink Floyd and all the many styles of African, American and European music of the 1960s and 1970s. Her mother's influence is also in the mix, a gypsy from Slovenia in Central Europe. The result is a music that defies all classification. Afro-gypsy, Afro-Tzigane, nu soul, folk-reggae... Yes, there is a touch of all these but it is first and foremost Ayo. The sheer sensuality of her voice and music combine with a dramatic intensity to make a number such as 'Down on My Knees', which is nothing less than a masterpiece, and I don't use the word lightly. Set against a

Another viewpoint

The artistic images published in this issue of 'The Courier' are taken from major events showcasing contemporary African Caribbean and Pacific art, including the following:

- *Another World, Bamako 2005*, selected works from the 6th African encounters in Bamako dedicated to contemporary photography and presented by its general curator, Simon Njami, at 'La Centrale Electrique', the new European centre of contemporary art in Brussels.
- *Dak'Art 2006*, the biannual of contemporary African arts launched in 1992. It has often been an uphill struggle, but the event is now recognised as one of the highlights of the international arts calendar, representing a rich and multidimensional Africa, respecting its cultural traditions and, at the same time, part of the contemporary scene. *Afrique-Europe: rêves croisés*, a European Commission sponsored exhibition in the wings of European Development Days, featured a number of works selected by Yacouba Konaté, the general curator of Dak'Art.
- *The 1st African, Caribbean and Pacific Cultural Festival*, organised by the ACP Secretariat, is covered in more depth in this issue of 'The Courier'. We believe that the aims, condemnation, irony, and sometimes the sarcasm expressed by the artists in the works we selected enhance the articles, present "another viewpoint" and add to the depth of the commentary.

We thank the artists for their works and event organisers for their efforts, as well as the City of Brussels' Deputy Mayor for Culture for letting 'The Courier' publish photographs of the works. We would also like to take the opportunity to invite artists and other cultural actors to submit artistic images for publication in a magazine whose aim is to show its readers – women, young people, the 'movers and shakers' of the world, the political and economic policy-makers – that art and artists are not minor players but a major part of the development process.

Sandra Federici, 'The Courier's' Artistic Coordination Officer

European Commission www.europa.eu
Dak'Art www.dakart.org
Secretariat of the ACP Group www.acp.int

quasi-reggae background, all the spices and fragrances of Ayo's music and being can be felt in this song. The impact is uniquely dramatic as her sweetly nasal, yet velvety soft voice, breathes the raw heartfelt emotion of a sensitive heart, punctuated by the beat of the bass drum. "Don't leave me... I'm begging... I love you, I need you, I'm dying, I'm crying... I'm begging... I love you..." A drum roll against the background of a smooth gypsy accordion carrying swing music to new heights and keeping it there. Phew! The other 11 tunes are all different and all just as wonderful. Ayo (Joy Olanunmibo Ogunmakin) writes her own songs, arranges them, interprets them on guitar, and records them live. Oh yes, and she's exceedingly beautiful, too!

Hegel Goutier ■

<http://ayomusic.artistes.universalmusic.fr/>

The disaster victim by T.T. Fons

Gooraorlou



Refused visa

by Didier Uiode

Yao



Africa – Caribbean – Pacific and European Union countries



CARIBBEAN

Antigua and Barbuda The Bahamas Barbados Belize Cuba Dominica Dominican Republic Grenada Guyana Haiti Jamaica Saint Kitts and Nevis Saint Lucia Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Suriname Trinidad and Tobago



PACIFIC

Cook Islands Federated States of Micronesia Fiji Kiribati Marshall Islands Nauru Niue Palau Papua New Guinea Samoa Solomon Islands Timor Leste Tonga Tuvalu Vanuatu



AFRICA

Angola Benin Botswana Burkina Faso Burundi Cameroon Cape Verde Central African Republic Chad Comoros Congo (Rep. of) Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Republic of the Congo Djibouti Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Ethiopia Gabon Gambia Ghana Guinea Guinea-Bissau Kenya Lesotho Liberia Madagascar Malawi Mali Mauritania Mauritius Mozambique Namibia Niger Nigeria Rwanda Sao Tome and Principe Senegal Seychelles Sierra Leone Somalia South Africa Sudan Swaziland Tanzania Togo Uganda Zambia Zimbabwe



EUROPEAN UNION

Austria Belgium Bulgaria Cyprus Czech Republic Denmark Estonia Finland France Germany Greece Hungary Ireland Italy Latvia Lithuania Luxembourg Malta Netherlands Poland Portugal Romania Slovakia Slovenia Spain Sweden United Kingdom



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