



THE
COURIER

THE ENGLISH EDITION - CARIBBEAN - FOR THE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND INFORMATION DEPARTMENT

**GHANA
ACP Summit
most profiled**

NEWS
**Food crisis
Africa has assets**

DISCOVERING SUMMER
**Réunion Island for
co-development**

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Nandipha Mntambo, *The fighters*, variable dimensions,
leather, resin, polyester, waxed rope, 2006.
Courtesy of .ZA - young art from South Africa, Palazzo delle Papesse in Siena.

When a beautiful image is clouded



The latest news from South Africa was not good. The unease of most commentators was clear. The image of a country that had achieved probably the most benevolent revolution of the 20th century, one rooted in humanism, forgiveness and empathy, had just been tarnished by a few groups of bullies picking at random on foreigners who were more vulnerable than themselves: African immigrants who lived alongside them in the poverty of the deprived suburbs. Worse still, the small groups of thugs that had started the violence had encouraged others to follow suit and after initially hesitating, the government was forced to deploy major resources to stop the hunt for scapegoats.

It is as if a beautiful painting had been despoiled. Something wonderful had been tarnished.

These awful acts of violence nevertheless triggered reflection on immigration issues. Firstly, it brought home the fact that the greatest burden of refugees from poor countries is on other poor countries. We learned that the number of Zimbabwean refugees in South Africa alone had reached three million. Also, many African countries, far poorer than South Africa, provide a home for impressive numbers of migrants from neighbouring countries.

By coincidence, calm had not yet been fully restored to South Africa as ministers from the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group met to launch the ACP

Observatory on Migration. *The Courier* reports on this. It was the occasion for some among them to call on their colleagues to adopt firm legislative measures to combat all forms of racism and xenophobia. This time such a call was not addressed to the developed countries but rather to members of the ACP family. For those who normally give lessons on the subject to others, there was certainly cause for embarrassment.

This issue's 'Dossier' brings news from the food crisis. We learn that poor regions sometimes have many more strengths than thought. This is true of several African and Pacific countries. We also learn that there is no real shortage of food. It is efficient production and distribution that would guarantee the food security for all that is sorely missing. Above all, what is lacking is a global agricultural policy.

Some are more aware of this situation than others. Réunion is certainly among the former. The subject of this issue's 'Discovering Europe', is the driving force behind a strategy for co-development in the Indian Ocean with its neighbours – Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles and the Comoros. The strategy will cover many aspects, from a common fishing fleet to climate change monitoring and free movement of companies and workers between the islands. A ray of sunshine.

Hegel Goutier
Editor-in-chief

Enhancing AID EFFECTIVENESS: An ACP perspective

H.E. Mr. Kadré Désiré Ouedraogo

Ambassador of Burkina Faso
Incoming Chair of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors

Landscape view in Madagascar. © EC

The 2005 Paris Declaration saw Ministers from developed and developing countries arrive at an “unprecedented global consensus” to take far-reaching and tangible actions to improve the delivery and management of development aid. This resolve was made within the context of the MDG targets established under the UN Millennium Declaration, and also in reference to the 2002 Monterrey Consensus on the progressive scaling-up of ODA to 0.7 per cent of donors’ GNI by 2015. The Paris Declaration stresses five main principles: ownership, alignment, harmonization, results, and mutual accountability. Twelve progress indicators have also been identified with specific targets to be realized by 2010. Assessment of post-Paris Declaration aid delivery and impact shows that the reality is far from encouraging. For that reason, the Accra Third-High Level Forum is timely. Understandably, discussion on aid effectiveness is futile in the absence of increased aid volume. Current predictions indicate that there will soon be shortfalls in the size of ODA, which will impact mainly poor and fragile states*. This potential development threatens to undermine the Monterrey Consensus and jeopardize the achievement of the MDGs. The EU, which recorded a drop in aid contribution for 2007, has indicated that it will step up its efforts to ensure that contributions are on target to double its ODA by 2010, as well as to meet 2015 commitments. On behalf of the ACP Group, I thank the EU for its efforts. Nonetheless, more immediate steps need to be taken by donor and recipient countries to rekindle the enthusiasm that led to the Paris

Declaration. Ownership is an important issue: recipient countries must have the latitude to feel that they are at least part-owners of the aid delivery process. The Paris Declaration provides for measurements of ownership to be aligned with a country’s *Poverty Reduction Strategy*. A study sponsored by the Joint Parliamentary Assembly revealed that this process limits opportunities to enhance ownership**.

The question is who knows best the problems of a country requiring aid. Government agencies and members of the civil society very often are more knowledgeable about problems than donor agencies. However, to ensure accountability, donor agencies tend to become more involved in the process. The ACP Group, the biggest bloc of aid-recipient countries, is of the opinion that ownership can be improved through informed dialogue.

Another concern for the ACP Group is ‘aid predictability’. Delays in delivery create problems for governments in the recipient countries. The EU’s introduction of MDG contracts is a step in the right direction to address this problem. Another concern is the need to improve policy coherence across sectors that are of great significance to developing countries, such as agriculture, trade, investment and migration. This requires policy alignment by donors and recipients to ensure that efforts to increase aid effectiveness in one area do not create an obstacle in another area.

Indeed, issues such as aid-absorption capacity are practical limitations for recipient states, and cannot be ignored by the relevant stakeholders. Those were the reasons underlying the Paris Declaration. Recipient countries, at

both the bilateral and multilateral levels, should do more to sensitize donors—including new players such as China, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela—to join in and support important commitments such as those expressed in the Monterrey and Paris conferences. Only in this way can we get back on track to significantly reduce poverty and achieve the MDGs.

* World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report 2008: MDGs and the Environment*; Washington DC, p. XIX.

** ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, *Committee on Economic Development, Finance and Trade*, 03.03.2008, [DT\704928EN & APP 100.249].



Courtesy of the Embassy of Burkina Faso in Brussels

Stefano Manservisi

Director General for Development, European Commission

Stefano Manservisi, Director General for Development - European Commission and Giovanni Bersani, Honorary President of the EU-ACP Parliamentary Assembly interviewed by a student during the Meeting in the Liceo "L. Galvani" (Bologna), 9th May 2008, Europe in the schools Day.

Photo by Giorgia Della Rosa. Courtesy of Africa e Mediterraneo



WE NEED ACTION NOT WORDS

Three years after donor countries pledged to make aid more effective, they face a crucial credibility test: at their meeting in Accra, Ghana, they have to show whether they pass from rhetoric to real action.

It is sometimes the most simple questions that leave us perplexed: "Why is it", I was asked by a teenager while giving a presentation to Italian students, "that poverty still exists despite all the efforts in development policies?" If it had been an expert, the answer would have been simpler. I would have talked about poverty indicators, mentioning that in the first five years of this century 24 per cent more children go to school, trying to show that development policy has made a difference. But the crucial point was: the student was right – absolute poverty still exists on a large scale, and we have to do better to reduce it.

This is why we have to succeed in Accra. It is not about repeating the pledges we have made in the 2005 Paris Declaration, saying over and over again that we want to coordinate development aid. When ministers from donor and developing countries come together on 2-4 September to discuss aid effectiveness, they have to pass on from rhetoric to action. This will be the crucial test for Accra.

The donor countries still have the biggest share of the burden of the proof. But our partner countries, too, have to do their own share: they have to develop a vision of what they want to

change in their countries, take the leadership of the programmes and implement them. But to make sure that the money we spend is well spent – the EU Commission and Member States alone spent €46 bn in 2007 which is more than half of world-wide official development assistance – is our big responsibility.

Yes, the EU has made considerable progress in the past three years, with numerous good examples, especially in the field of co-ordination of aid. But much remains to be done. We have to move on from this test phase to action on a much wider scale. Rather than sign a nicely written declaration, prepared in advance by ambassadors, we need an open discussion resulting in a concrete action plan, to be followed by each and every donor and partner country. Concretely, the EU Commission proposes that actions should be focussed on four key areas:

Predictability of aid: Donors should systematically adopt multi-annual programmes mirrored by multi-annual financial commitments. The annuality of the budget is no excuse. The European Commission has been doing this for the past decade!

Use of developing country systems: To reduce the bureaucracy for developing coun-

tries, donor countries should align more with them, adapting their contributions to their budget cycles, regulatory framework and tendering procedures.

A result-based approach: Rather than imposing *ex-ante* policy conditions leaving developing countries no real choice, no room for internal policy discussions, we should give them the ownership back. Aid programmes should be geared towards concrete and measurable outcomes and results, with the partner country in the driving seat.

Division of labour: To limit the number of donors working in a developing country, leaving the field to the one with the best know-how, donors should coordinate their work.

It will not be easy to push this through. Some donors would be happy to stick to a nice wording rather than going for concrete actions, and some partner countries would be happy to loudly voice old fashioned rhetoric rather than taking their part of responsibility and reform systems affected by poor governance. But there is no other way than to try it, and do it together, at EU level, at international level – if we want to have a positive answer to our youngsters' questions. ■



Training project and contemporary dance workshop in Angola of Fernando Hurtado Company, financed by AECID © AECID

Oriol Freixa Matalonga*

New cultural focus of Spanish CO-OPERATION

Culture as a human development objective is being propelled by the government of Spain's Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. An innovative strategy launched at the end of 2007, which marks a radical change in the relationship between culture and development, is now bearing fruit. At an international level, Spain's signing of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expression of the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO), demonstrates the country's belief that cultural diversity is a driving force for development.

ACP countries stand to benefit from the new focus on culture and development. The sector is one of eleven focal areas of Spain's development cooperation policy. Within it, seven new action areas are being developed: training human capital for cultural management; political aspects of culture; economic aspects of culture; education and culture; cultural heritage; communication and culture and cultural rights.

Specific programmes such as ACERCA (cultural management), FORMART (education and culture) and support for newly-created businesses (economy and culture) have been mounted. The grants programme for scientific cooperation is being extended, as are the resources available for the programme to encourage inter-university cooperation with higher education institutions in both Africa and Latin America.

With the implementation of *Plan África*, a growing openness to ACP countries is being promoted and especially to African countries of the

group. The Network of Spanish Cultural Centres Abroad (151 centres in 107 countries) has been strengthened, as have spaces for cultural exchange and dialogue through the creation of *Casa África*, *Casa Árabe*, *Casa Asia*, *Casa Sefarad* (Sephardic) and *Casa América Catalunya* (Africa House, Arabia House, etc.). A network of Arabic libraries has also received increased support, and the Cinema of the Southern Hemisphere Support Forum has been set up. Alongside these, the newly-created Bank of Good Practices in culture and development projects compiles records of successful outcomes and evaluates the impact of cultural cooperation.

There's additional support too for multilateral institutions focused on culture such as UNESCO-funded initiatives for African regions, and for the Iberamerican cultural space initiative to create new summit programmes. Spain has also increased its presence in international organisations and institutions with cultural agendas.

Moreover, the Spain-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Millennium Objectives Fund recently made culture and development one of its five key priorities, allocating over US\$95 million for this purpose. Among its initial beneficiaries will be several ACP countries: Ethiopia, Mauritania, Namibia, Senegal and Mozambique.

At an international level, the signing of UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expression illustrates the country's belief that cultural diversity is a driving force for development. The new strategy is also in line with the 2003 Dakar ACP policy declaration, the ACP cultural industries action plan, as well as the 2006 Santo Domingo declaration.

Statistics in the Report of the Aid and Development Committee, which contains an evaluation of Spanish Cooperation over the last five years, show that Spain is in an ideal position to meet its cooperation and development objectives and to fulfil Premier Rodríguez Zapatero's commitment to reach the target of 0.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) going to development cooperation by 2012. This means that Spain is well-placed to be one of the principal global providers of Public Aid for Development in the near future. ■

* Expert in International Cultural Cooperation

For further information: <http://www.aecid.es/09cultural/02cult/9.2.1.htm>

Debra Percival

FIJI PROBE

A European Union troika led by Dr Tjasa Zivko of the incumbent Slovenian EU Presidency was in Fiji on 19-20 June to assess political developments, including steps taken by the interim government to hold parliamentary elections by March 2009.

In the wake of the military takeover in Fiji in December 2006 by Commander Frank Bainimarama, the interim government agreed in April 2007 a set of 13 commitments following talks with representatives of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group and the EU under Article 96 of the Cotonou Convention. The ousting of democratically-elected Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase was deemed to constitute a breach of the 'essential elements' of the Cotonou agreement to which Fiji is party: human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law.

The visiting EU delegation asked precise questions on when elections will take place and on the nature of the 'People's Charter' on constitutional change. The delegation, which

also included French Ambassador Patrick Roussel, representing the EU's incoming Presidency and Roger Moore, Director at the European Commission's Development Directorate-General, was told that the drawing-up of a 'Proposed Charter for Change and Progress' could result in a delay to the election timetable. Fiji's interim Attorney General, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, was quoted in the *Fiji Times* as telling the EU troika that electoral change was necessary to give universal suffrage meaning in Fiji and to move away from institutionalising ethnicity. The EU delegation also met with ousted Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase.

A delegation of ACP Ambassadors also visited Fiji on 12-16 May, to carry out its own assessment. Fiji's interim Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Civil Aviation, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, told a meeting of ACP Ministers in Addis Ababa on 13 June that, "Fiji is committed to holding free, fair and transparent democratic elections in March 2009." He outlined some of the meas-

ures already taken including the appointment of a new elections supervisor at the end of May 2008 and said that funding had already been set aside in the country's 2008 budget for preparatory election work including voter registration. He said that talks were ongoing with the Commonwealth, the ACP-EU and Pacific Islands Forum on political developments.

In the wings of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) meeting in Rome, the EU Commissioner warned Commander Bainimarama that funds slated to offset the fall in the price of sugar sold to the EU resulting from EU sugar reform, could be frozen if Fiji reneged on its promise to hold elections by March 2009. Whilst Commissioner Michel acknowledged that there were problems with Fiji's existing election system, in a frank meeting with the interim Prime Minister, he said that electoral reform was not an excuse for delaying elections. According to reports from EU Brussels officials he said that in a democracy the electorate – and only the electorate – could sanction politicians. ■

Fiji Flag.
© iStockphoto.com/ Selensergen

TRADE WORRIES weigh on ACP ministers

Ministers from the 79-member African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of nations who met in Addis Ababa Ethiopia 9-11 June, cast doubt over whether the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) establishing free trade areas between ACP and EU states fit with their development needs.

These pacts “risk disorting regional integration,” said Mohamed Admed Awalesh, Djibouti’s Minister of National Solidarity, who chaired the ACP ministers’ meeting. This message was put over firmly to their 27 European Union (EU) counterparts at a joint meeting in the Ethiopian capital on 12-13 June.

“We in the ACP are concerned that while the progress made so far with respect to the EPA negotiations may be compatible with WTO rules, they are not adequately compatible with our development needs,” said Ethiopia’s Prime Minister, Ato Meles Zenawi. Facing time constraints to conclude EPAs by 31 December 2007, ACP States ended up signing interim agreements in smaller trading

blocs, or individually, rather than in groups as originally intended, said ACP ministers. The Caribbean Forum, CARIFORUM, is the only ACP body to have to date initialled a region-wide full EPA.*

Ministers also voiced concern over further erosion of trade preferences on sugar and bananas in ongoing World Trade Organisation (WTO) talks. In a statement, they said it would be extremely difficult to associate themselves with any consensus in the ongoing Doha WTO Round without “suitable treatment” for these products. And high oil prices which have pushed up transport costs could undermine the effectiveness of €1.24 bn of EU funds already earmarked for Multi Annual Adaptation Strategies (MAAS) in some ACP sugar-producing countries to offset the EU’s sugar price cut of 36 per cent which bites in October 2009.

ACP states called on the European Commission to ensure that sugar is not included as a tropical product in the ongoing Doha Round of world trade talks and to maintain the

current Special Safeguard Clause for sugar products with high sugar content. They also called on the Commission to examine the potential risks of buyers and importers trying to take advantage of the EU price cuts.

ACP countries urged their EU partners to reject any proposal to drastically reduce the current applied rate of €176 per tonne for non-ACP bananas imported into the EU. Dr Arnold Thomas, Ambassador in Brussels for the Eastern Caribbean States (ECS), said that the banana was in every sense a “burning” issue. “It burns up our pay cheques, it burns up our livelihood, it burns up our employment and it burns up the level of socio-economic development that we have achieved over the past four decades,” he told ACP ministers.

D.P. ■

*The Caribbean Forum of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states (CARIFORUM) includes: Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba. The EU initialled an EPA on 16 December 2007 with all CARIFORUM members apart from Cuba.



Members of the ACP Ministerial Follow-up Committee on Cotton during their meeting at the 87th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers in Addis-Ababa, June 2008. © Robert Iroga



Ismail Farouk, *GHB626GP*, 2006,
Courtesy of ZA - young art from South Africa,
Palazzo delle Papesse in Siena

Ground prepared for SOUTH AFRICA-EU Summit

New areas of cooperation and differences over future trade relations between South Africa and the European Union (EU) were top billing at the joint ministerial meeting between the two in the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana, on 3 June, ahead of the first ever South Africa-EU Summit in Bordeaux, France, on 25 July.

Co-chaired by South Africa's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Nkosawana Dlamini Zuma, and Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, political dialogue spanned Zimbabwe to the Middle East. Louis Michel, EU Development Commissioner and Jean-Christophe Belliard, personal envoy to Africa

for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), also took part.

South Africa is one of 79 members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group but has separate bi-lateral trade and aid relations with the EU. Both sides said they were committed to continue talks on a mutually beneficial agreement on an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) – a free trade agreement – between the 14-member Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the EU. However, South Africa raised the difficulties caused to its own regional integration agenda by the EU having initialled an 'interim' EPA with South Africa's fellow Southern African Customs

Union (SACU) members; Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland. The EU said that talks with ACP countries who have initialled interim EPAs are expected to complete negotiations on full agreements by the end of 2008, to include other areas of trade such as services and procurement. South Africa reminded the EU that it is not bound by such a schedule since it has not initialled any interim agreement.

New areas of bilateral cooperation – peace and security, cooperation in environment, science and technology, customs, energy, migration and transport – were all expected to be on the Summit's table.

D.P. ■

Twinning for DEVELOPMENT

"If each local authority with its (however limited) resources decided to twin itself with a town, a municipality, a district, a province or a region in the South, the world would be changed and poverty would decrease rapidly," writes EU Commissioner for Development, Louis Michel, in an open letter, dated 16 June, to local authorities throughout

the EU's 27 Member States.

The letter urges EU local authorities with plans of making ties with a partner in the South, to sign a 'twinning covenant' at the European Commission's annual European Development Days (EDD) event in Strasbourg, France, November 15-17. The central theme of EDD 2008 is 'local authorities and development.'

Many local authorities EU-wide already have such twinning arrangements where successful projects have been mounted at very little cost. Local authorities with such twinning plans and interested in sealing their commitment at the EDD event, can submit their proposals before 20 September to the European Commission: devtwinning@ec.europa.eu

D.P. ■



FOOD CRISIS

by Marie-Martine Buckens

The “hunger rioters” really brought it home to leaders around the world who are often too inclined to bury their heads in the sand when it comes to this area of policy: the food crisis is real. Not only that, it is on a scale that forces both experts and governments to rethink existing agricultural policies. Why? Because the crisis is not due to global shortages – despite what some claim as they evoke the spectre of overpopulation – but is the result of a deep-rooted malfunction. Simply put, it would seem that the world is discovering with great surprise that agriculture has always been the foundation on which countries are created. Of course, nowhere is this ‘surprise’ greater than in the original EU-15, where farmers represent just 1.6 per cent of the working population and even the arrival of the 10 Eastern and Central European states only doubled this tiny figure. Food self-sufficiency of a population is a basic precondition for putting into place other policies. So, world leaders have a formidable task before them. For some of them (see the interview with Matthieu Calame) the only long-term solution is to implement a global agricultural policy. ■



Bouaké rice.
© Fataiphotorush

CRISIS

Seeds of wrath, seeds of change

After the 'hunger riots' and the initial shockwaves they created, the analysts are taking stock. Yes, prices have reached record levels but, in reality, they had been markedly low for the past 30 years. Certainly, some regions of the world have an agricultural deficit, but the notion of a global shortage is an illusion. Here, The Courier makes a brief survey of the current situation using FAO figures as supporting evidence.

First there are the figures, and they are indeed jaw-dropping:

- A tripling of wheat prices since 2000, with a 130% increase in 2007 alone.

- A doubling of rice and maize prices during the same period, with rice prices in Asia doubling again in the first quarter of 2008 and reaching record highs on the Chicago futures market in May.

Then there are the estimates. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) puts the total cost of food imports from the world's poorest countries in 2007 at 107 billion dollars, up by 25 per cent against 2006. Finally, there is the guesswork. Just how high can oil prices go? The barrel price already topped the US\$100 mark at the beginning of 2008. This represented a 72 per cent increase during 2007 alone, bringing equivalent increases in the cost of fertilisers and pesticides. Then there is the 'biofuel effect' – the desire of Europe and the United States in particular to develop these energy crops has created an alignment of food and oil prices.

The soaring food prices have hit fragile economies hard. Almost 40 countries now face a food crisis, including traditionally self-sufficient countries like the Côte d'Ivoire and exporting countries like Egypt. In Haiti, Bangladesh and Cameroon, citizens have taken to the streets to vent their anger. And we must not leave out Guinea, Ethiopia and Mauritania; or even Mexico, where the price for maize tortilla, their staple diet, rose by 14 per cent in 2006. Then there is Indonesia where rice prices doubled in a year.

> Is it a temporary phenomenon?

"No", say most experts. Some also stress that the present dramatic price increases follow 30

years of particularly low – even extremely low – prices on world markets. "The era of low food prices on the international market is over," the European Development Commissioner, Louis Michel, declared in a statement at the European Parliament on 22 April. "Food prices will not return to their former levels and they threaten to become more volatile if measures are not taken quickly." And although they are expected to drop back from present levels, "it will be a slight fall," explained Marc Debois, Head of Sector, Natural Resources Unit at the European Commission's Development Directorate-General. He added that "price volatility is likely to reach more frequent peaks, sort of like what we are seeing with the climate."

> Is there a food shortage?

No. In its report, 'World agriculture: towards 2015-2030', the FAO said that: "In recent years the fall in growth rates of world agricultural production and yields (...) has occurred not because of shortages of land or water, but rather because demand for agricultural products has slowed." Why is this? According to the FAO, world population growth rates have started to decline but at the same time, "fairly high levels of food consumption per person are now being reached in many countries, beyond which further rises will be limited." However, to this the FAO adds, "it is also the case that a stubbornly high share of the world's population remains in absolute poverty and so lacks the necessary income to translate its needs into effective demand."

In short, demand has peaked, either as a result of reaching saturation point – in the rich countries – or, more basically, because a sizeable share of the world's population lacks the means to buy their daily bread. The FAO

therefore expects the growth in worldwide demand for agricultural products, which was running at an average of 2.2 per cent a year over the past 30 years, to fall to 1.5 per cent a year over the next 30 years. In the developing countries this slowdown will be even more dramatic – from 3.7 per cent to 2 per cent.

This is partly because China will have moved out of the rapid growth phase for food products. However, that still leaves the "stubbornly high share" of the world's population who lack the resources to buy food at a price that ultimately reflects the commercial practices of the major exporters. That is a price sufficiently low over the past 30 years to stifle local production, therefore forcing populations to become dependent on imports of basic products, but which is currently too high to allow them to buy this same food.

"Globalisation in food and agriculture holds promise as well as presenting problems," says the FAO in its report." It goes on to say "It has generally led to progress in reducing poverty in Asia." But, it recognises "it has also led to the rise of multinational food companies with the potential to disempower farm workers in many countries."

It concludes that "developing countries need legal and administrative frameworks to ward off the threats while reaping the benefits." Today, the notion of food self-sufficiency is finally being regarded with the merit it deserves.

M.M.B. ■

Keywords

Hunger riots; Food prices; Food shortages; Globalisation; Multinational Food companies; Haiti; Cameroon.

Closing press conference by the Director-General. High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, 3-5 June 2008.

© FAO/Giulio Napolitano



AGRICULTURE sits at the table of the major players

The much anticipated FAO Summit that brought together 180 nations in Rome in June – just several months after the first hunger riots – proved to be a disappointment. Its failure owed much to the assembled nations’ lack of a long-term vision on agricultural policy. More than that, the protection of short-term interests prevailed, even involving in some cases the withdrawal of subsidies and significant resistance over bio-fuels. However, a single meeting was never going to provide solutions to issues ignored for so long by most international financial institutions, and more encouragingly perhaps, everyone in Rome recognised that agriculture is too important an issue to be resolved simply by providing billions of euros in food aid.

“Emergency aid is necessary, but it must be a temporary measure”, declared Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid on 5 June at the Rome session. Michel was referring to the €3.2 bn promised by various aid providers, including the World Bank, the US, the Islamic Development Bank and France, not forgetting the €550M already made available by the European Commission. Louis Michel continued, “I am convinced that this emergency aid must be a temporary measure, and that volun-

tary limits should be established to ensure a rapid transition towards structural food security mechanisms”.

Like the World Bank in April and the French Minister for Agriculture, Michel Barnier, the Commissioner for Development recognised that “after years of under-investment – or disinterest in the rural development sector – we are now helping to make agriculture a priority again”. All the same, the European Commission admits it has been caught on the hop in the current situation. “The food crisis has pushed documents that the European executive has been preparing for months right to the forefront of the political agenda”, explained Marc Debois, Head of Section at the European Commission’s Development DG responsible for natural resources. Of these documents, the most significant is one that tackles agriculture in Africa (see the following article).

> European aid

More generally, there is also the European Union’s strategic programme for food security. This has been divided into two parts since 2007, with emergency humanitarian aid provided by the European Commission’s humanitarian aid department (ECHO) on the one side,

and a programme that finances regional and global actions related to food security on the other. Each of these budgets receives around €250M a year and as Mr. Debois explained,



H.E. Mary Chinery-Hesse, Chief Adviser to the President of the Republic of Ghana, delivering her statement at the High Level Segment.
© FAO/Giulia Muir



Mr Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid of the European Community, delivering his statement at the High Level Segment.
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“we finance the FAO’s early-warning programme through the second budget line.” He added, “the initiatives must also combine emergency and development aid, and are only financed if there is an operational strategy in place with the country concerned”.

The strategic programme was established for the period from 2007 to 2013. Within this framework, programming for the second budget line’s regional activities has already been carried out until 2010, receiving a total budget of €925M. “We will use this instrument to some extent to respond to the current food crisis”, pointed out Mr. Debois. However, the first budget line is still intended for emergency requirements and “some €230M has already been used since the beginning of 2008 for emergency food aid for all countries together”, explained Debois. He went on to add that “to meet the requirements, a supplement of €60M has already been requested, using the budgetary reserve”, emphasising that this aid “should be provided using local or regional production where possible”.

➤ Targeting the countries most in need

The European Union has provided a special emergency aid envelope for the ACP countries within the framework of the European Development Fund (EDF) and some €200M has now been allocated for 2008. However, this aid is only provided if strict conditions are met. First, the country concerned must make an official aid request. Then, if possible, an accurate needs-assessment is carried out. The European Commission’s Debois explained that “the risk is that certain Member States give preference to particular countries, and so we have to ensure that measures are well targeted to avoid some countries finding themselves “orphaned” and others with too much aid”.

He went on to say “after a quick survey of Commission delegations in the recipient countries – that looked at the impact of the food crisis on prices; had they increased; had this really caused problems; what measures have been undertaken by the government; what are the risks of deterioration in food supply and the political situation ? – we have, for the moment, identified around 30 countries where we could give support”.

➤ Priority for rural development

Already warned by a World Bank report in 2007 that emphasised the need to redirect funding towards agriculture, the European Commission has now decided to reinvigorate this sector in the longer-term. The plan is to “sustain a coherent agricultural policy and create distribution channels – all of which has been neglected for the past 20 years”, according to Marc Debois. He went on to point out that, in the past, aid granted by the EU made up 20 per cent of its total development aid budget, as opposed to just 3.4 per cent today. The last European Development Fund programme (the 10th), for the period 2008-2013 remedies this shortcoming. “Rural development in its entirety is allocated double the amount totalling €1.2 bn under the 10th EDF, as opposed to €650M under the previous one”, declared Louis Michel in Rome. He added that, “it has not always been easy, we have had to argue the case with our partners to convince them to show greater commitment to this sector”.

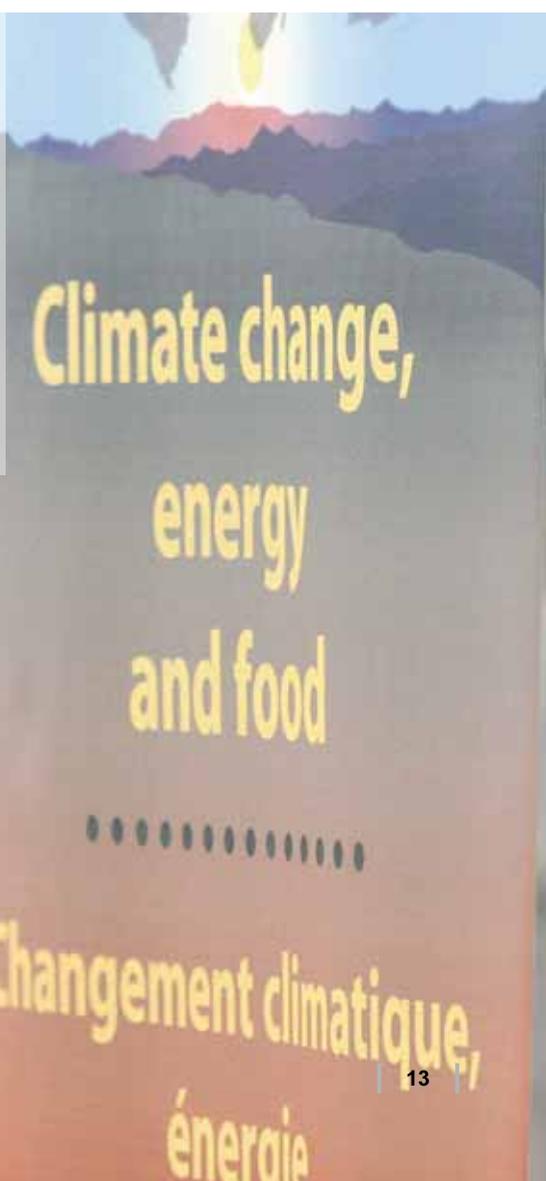
➤ Regional integration and governance

The European Commissioner for Development also pointed out that a key issue in agriculture is creating and organising local and regional

markets. At the Rome meeting he emphasised that “approximately a third of the world’s food shortages could be quickly relieved by improving distribution networks and helping to provide better access to markets for small farmers”. He also argued for regional integration that is vital in the fight against food insecurity. Finally, the problem of improving the governance of the global food supply has to be addressed. On this, Louis Michel explained in Rome, “I am thinking of the FAO in particular which has to re-establish itself as a flagship organisation”. Not just that, better co-ordination is required between the funding providers. As Michel pointed out, “the Commission believes that the response of the Union has to be in line with wider initiatives such as the one launched by the Secretariat of the United Nations (the CFA – Comprehensive Framework for Action) and the FAO’s recent appeal for a global initiative concerning food prices (ISFP – Initiative for Soaring Food Prices)”. **M.M.B. ■**

Keywords

Louis Michel; Jacques Diouf; Emergency Aid; trade; WTO; smallholder



Opening day of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, 3-5 June 2008. © FAO/Giulia Muir

“We need a GLOBAL Agricultural Policy”



Packing the harvest, Ethiopia.
© François Misser



Ethiopian farmer tending his
crops. © François Misser

Meeting with Matthieu Calame, agricultural engineer, specialist at the Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation and author of 'La tourmente alimentaire - Pour une politique agricole mondiale' ('The food torment - Advocating a global agricultural policy') (Ed. CLM - April 2008).*

What are the reasons for the food crisis in ACP countries over recent months?

One of the reasons, in my opinion, is that these countries are not historically nation states at all. They originate in the colonies. The problem is structural. Those which are not developed did not go through the essential stage of creating an internal market. Take Japan: its first concern was to put in place customs duties to enable it to produce. But developing countries, especially in Africa, have primarily remained raw material suppliers.

We have seen 30 years of falling agricultural prices, due mainly to subsidies granted by Europe and the United States to their farmers. It is this “infernal duo” that are chiefly responsible for the present crisis. As an African proverb says: “When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.” By selling off their food products at low prices, they stifled countries that lacked the means to subsidise their agriculture. The small-scale peasant farmers have stopped producing and we have seen the creation of a mass urban underclass with very low productivity. A vicious circle has been created. The governments of these countries find themselves torn between two diametrically opposed alternatives: either increase prices to save production or reduce prices for the consumers.

Today there is the added problem of raw material speculation, something I would describe as a disease of opportunism as it is only possible when the market is very strained. Another disease of opportunism is biofuels, introduced to absorb the excesses of countries that subsidise their agriculture, which is typically the case of the United States and Europe, where biofuels emerged when the system of fallow land was introduced, a necessary condition for pursuing subsidies.

But there is a second cause of the present situation, one that is often overlooked: these countries have not developed a proper tax system. The state apparatus is essentially financed by taxes levied on imports and exports. So in a country like Burkina Faso it is agriculture, essentially cotton, which funds the state, making it very vulnerable to price fluctuations in this raw material. But what is important is the wealth that is created internally. The EU could play a role by helping these

countries to put in place good tax plans, at the same time helping them to think of their development in different terms.

This is action that the EU could take in the medium term. What about the short-term?

We cannot do without short-term aid, even if it is bad for the long-term. It remains to be seen how such aid can be distributed and by whom. Another important rule to respect is to buy as much as possible locally and involve the agricultural unions, if they exist. This short-term aid is not without its negative effects. There are famines in urban areas as well as rural ones – a cotton producer can also be in a situation of famine. But often, for reasons of political stability, it is the towns that are the first to be helped, with a resultant mass movement of farmers from rural areas to towns.

I do not have a miracle solution. Globally, I could well imagine a system – which existed in Europe in fact in the 19th century with the famous “state workshops” – in which everybody is associated with a Commune (municipality). In the event of crisis, the population turns to the Commune (municipality). It is a process of decentralisation and I do not believe we can escape it. Europe is engaged in this process so why not support this decentralisation in these countries?

In the long-term, what sort of model do you advocate for relations between the EU and ACP states in the agricultural field?

First of all, we must remember that these countries are still subject to the economic model that makes them part of the parent country, while the links of solidarity with it are weakening. On the European side, we have no integrated diplomacy. So a form of clientelism or patronage often remains, France favouring Africa for example and the United Kingdom its former colonies. Such ‘clientelism’ is central to the link between the ACP states and the EU. It results in a lack of desire to develop competitive production. These countries have not gone through the stages of protectionism, followed by development and finally diversification of their production.

But to come back to your question. The need to reinvest in agriculture is clear. Do not forget that states have always been built around agriculture. The question is: What can the EU do in the light of its history, in particular the history of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)? A CAP that is relatively successful – but which has its weaknesses, especially social and environmental – because it is based on the principle of a single and regulated market. The hypothesis I make in the long term is that we would benefit from putting in place a global agricultural policy.

You advocate a global agricultural policy, but how could it take into account the interests of all parties?

Remember the negotiations between Germany and France when putting the CAP into place: Germany wanted to retain high prices to protect its agriculture, whereas Paris wanted low prices to favour its exports. The Germans prevailed, but to get what they wanted they agreed to pay the price by becoming the largest net contributor to the European Community. While making the necessary allowances, there must be the same reasoning at world level. We could imagine, for example, the rich countries paying for having a free market – by dipping into their resources on the non-agricultural market.

I am not denying that things are difficult, but is there an alternative? Otherwise there is no organisation and everybody closes their borders. We saw the rigid reactions of Thailand and Vietnam when they refused



Photo of Matthieu Calame.
Courtesy of Matthieu Calame

to export their rice. These reactions bear the seeds of major conflicts. We must beware of scenarios in which countries or regions turn in on themselves. So the sole alternative is to put into place international agreements.

So much for the long-term, but what could the EU already do on the international stage?

Perhaps the EU could submit proposals to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to help the ACP countries. It would be a question of relaunching negotiations to enable these countries not only to benefit from exemptions on tariffs for products such as bananas and sugar – ‘comfort’ products for our Western countries – but of proposing to extend negotiations to all agricultural products. I accept that this threatens to pose a problem for Thailand in particular as it exports broken rice to Senegal, but why not involve it in the discussions? **M.M.B. ■**

*The Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for Human Progress (formerly Fondation pour le Progrès de l’Homme, hence the acronym FPH) is an independent foundation. Its statutory purpose is very broad: to finance, through donations or loans, research and initiatives that contribute in a significant and innovative way to the progress of humankind through science and social development.

Keywords

Matthieu Calame; Common Agricultural Policy (CAP); subsidies; cotton; Burkina Faso.

OPEN questions

In their efforts to restore food self-sufficiency, developing countries will have to tackle the question of access to land – the source of so many conflicts - as well as the place they are ready to give to biofuels and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

> Access to land, a crucial issue

In Africa, while every country has its own system of land rights, access to land is most often the result of a forced marriage between private law (brought by the colonialists) and collective or customary law. Each of these systems of land rights brings with it a production method. This is often based on a single crop (export crops such as coffee and groundnuts) in the case of the 'Western' model, or multifunctional, often showing more respect for ecological balances, in collective or customary law.

However, the system of land rights does not determine everything. Other factors have an impact, beginning with the migration of populations fleeing war and poverty, or the conflict between farmers, hunters and the authorities that manage natural parks.

> The case of South Africa

The land rights issue is one of the problems plaguing the new South Africa. But as Thierry Vircoulon, author of *L'Afrique du Sud démocratique ou la réinvention d'une nation* [Democratic South Africa, or the reinvention

of a nation] (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005), explains, "rather than the land rights issue we really need to speak of land rights issues!" He points out that since 1994, agricultural reforms have been trying to restore a balance in land rights that would favour previously dispossessed communities. Presently, the vast majority of farms are still owned by whites and the vast majority of farm workers are still Africans. Vircoulon goes on to explain that "this situation, which is poisoning inter-racial relations, conceals a second land problem that is woefully neglected - that of tribal land." Managed by traditional authorities, but in real-



Maize fields.
© Fataphotorush

ity belonging to the state, this land is coveted by various groups that make up Africa's rural population with diverging, if not conflicting, interests.

Vircoulon believes it is necessary, "to go beyond the dominant political discourse to realise that the South African land issue is not a simple problem of White/Black opposition, but a problem for opposing social groups in a rural African world that is in the grip of rapid change as well as great poverty."

➤ The not so good idea of biofuels?

"Aid and investments destined for biofuel production should be frozen." That at least is the opinion of Olivier De Schutter, appointed last May as Special Rapporteur on the right to food by the United Nations Council of Human Rights (UNHCR). While some were hoping for a less direct message, this eminent Belgian lawyer has taken up the torch of his fiery predecessor, Jean Ziegler of Switzerland. Indeed, in June last year, on the eve of the Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Summit, De Schutter stressed that, "A hundred million hectares will be needed to produce 5 per cent of fuel in 2015, and that is quite simply impossible. The US objectives of 136 bn litres of biofuel for 2022 and the EU objective of 10 per cent of transport needs met by biofuels by

2020 are unrealistic." He added, "By abandoning these aims, we would be sending a strong signal to the markets that the price of food is not going to increase indefinitely, thereby discouraging speculation."

For its part, the EU is trying to calm the biofuels debate, pointing out the benefits that they could bring for the developing countries that grow them. Furthermore, while the European Commission accepts that the high prices that result are unfavourable to consumers, it points out that these can only benefit producers. "The rise in food prices must not be regarded systematically as negative," repeated European Development Commissioner, Louis Michel. He continued, "It also brings opportunities for developing countries that have the potential to export food." Biofuels could therefore become a new cash crop, alongside coffee or cotton. However, there is the risk that countries will, as in the past, move away from a diversified, food-producing agriculture system. In the meantime, several private companies have already acquired land in Africa to produce biofuels, mainly from jatropha. This is happening particularly in Mozambique, Ethiopia and Tanzania and again raises the question of land rights as in some cases companies acquired land on 99-year leases, making it difficult for the state to repossess it if it wants to increase food production.

➤ What to do about GMOs?

Advocates claim that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) make it possible to produce food on marginal land, especially on arid soils, and produce crops enriched with vitamins. They also require fewer pesticides. These are the arguments for GMOs that have convinced several developing countries, even if the sceptics in these same countries doubt the real impact of these super-crops. However, one thing is certain, GMOs can only develop within an existing, structured agricultural economy in which farmers have sufficient funds to purchase expensive – and patented – seeds. This explains their failure among Indian cotton producers in particular, who have often been faced with bankruptcy due to the cost. It also explains why the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) – financed by two US foundations (Bill Gates and Rockefeller), chaired by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan – declared that, initially, it did not want to see the spread of GMOs in Africa.

But GMOs are already well established in some African countries. After South Africa, Burkina Faso launched experimental transgenic cotton crops in 2003, in close cooperation with the US company Monsanto. In 2006, seven other African cotton producing countries (Benin, Mali, Chad, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo), supported by the World Bank, set up a Regional Biotechnology Centre, agreeing that, "in addition to fertilisers, there is a need to also include the question of seeds and the transition to GMOs." Once again, it is a matter of supporting a cash crop. One that is, in a pitiful state in the face of subsidised producers mainly in the United States and China.

Yet many analysts agree that the food crisis is first and foremost both political and social and that it is the implementation of GMOs that will enable the problem to be solved. Some also fear a headlong rush for technology as a solution, avoiding the issues of production distribution and purchasing power. This is a view held by the FAO's Director-General, Jacques Diouf of Senegal who, at least in 2006, declared that GMOs in Africa "are not a priority" in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) **M.M.B.** ■

Keywords

Customary law; Private law; South Africa; Biofuels; Thierry Vircoulon; Olivier De Schutter; Cotton; GMOs; Monsanto; Jacques Diouf.



Space for rice drying up.
© Fataiphotorush

Kofi Annan, Chairman of the Board, AGRA, at the signing ceremony for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and Heads of FAO, IFAD and WFP. High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, 3-5 June 2008.

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The “considerable potential” of Africa

When you talk about Africa’s “considerable potential”, in particular that of sub-Saharan Africa, you have to take into account the dramatic food-supply situation they currently face. Having said that, things are changing in Africa and various initiatives over the past few years – in particular the African Union’s huge agricultural development programme, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) – are testimony to this.

The Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), adopted at the Maputo Summit during the second ordinary assembly of the African Union (AU) in July 2003, is the most successful programme by African nations to meet the challenges presented by the food crisis. In Maputo, African leaders committed to contributing 10 per cent of their respective national budgets to financial support for the agricultural sector. Now, in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which aim to halve poverty and hunger between now and 2015, the CAADP is targeting an annual growth rate of 6 per cent in the agricultural sector. To achieve this, it has identified four key areas for investment: land and water management; rural infrastructure and market access capabilities; food and the reduction of hunger; agricultural research and advisory services.

> AGRA’s green revolution

The CAADP is not Africa’s only response to the situation. Other proposed initiatives include the much publicised “green revolution”,

espoused by two American foundations – Rockefeller and Gates – and presided over by the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan.

Furthermore, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) signed an agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) at the FAO Summit in June aimed at boosting food production in Africa’s “breadbasket areas”.

“This new partnership aims to make a short-term difference by optimising food production in areas with relatively good rainfall, soils, infrastructure and markets”, explained a statement issued by the FAO. AGRA’s President points out that the initiative is part of the organisation’s strategic vision to “build partnerships that pool the strengths and resources of both public and private sectors, civil society, farmers’ organisations, donors, scientists and entrepreneurs across the agricultural value chain”.

He added that it would also “help to advance the goals of the CAADP and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)”.

> European cooperation

“We strongly believe in the approach of NEPAD’s CAADP programme”, said Marc Debois, Head of Section at the European Commission’s Development DG. He continued, “firstly, on account of what it promotes, and also because it allows us to strengthen our relationship with the African Union”. As part of this, the European Commission is currently looking at what it will contribute to the “partnership” that it proposed in its “Advancing African Agriculture” Communication drawn up in 2007 and ratified by the EU’s Council of Ministers. Mr. Debois noted that “the idea is to set up national round tables where all the participants – political representatives, industry, farmers, NGOs etc. – define an agricultural policy for the country”. He added that “Ghana has already done this”.

In fact, the Commission’s document proposes both short and long-term actions. The long-term approach involves supporting research and development, as well as initiatives for the management of natural resources. But the initiative also makes provision for short-term programmes. These include the creation of risk-management mechanisms and an advanced warning programme in cooperation with the FAO. The FAO already has a system for gathering information and for providing tools to enable local governments faced with crisis situations to effectively use the information collected. **M.M.B.** ■

Keywords

AGRA (Alliance for Green Revolution); Kofi Annan; rice.

THE FIGURES

Food security still remains Africa’s greatest challenge. Today, around 200 million Africans suffer from malnutrition and this represents a 15 per cent increase since the beginning of the 1990s, and is almost double the level of malnutrition recorded at the end of the 1960s. Jeffrey Sachs, special advisor to the Secretary General of the United Nations and author of the book ‘The End of Poverty’, estimates that it will take US\$8 bn a year to redress this imbalance in Africa’s agriculture (compared with US\$5 bn for Asia and US\$3 bn for the rest of the world). So, what needs to be done? Author Jeffrey Sachs’s philosophy is simple: “to overcome this crisis, we have to provide financial assistance for the agricultural producers in the poor countries. This would increase production and therefore reduce prices. This would also help to resolve the current crisis”. However Sachs’s vision is not shared by the European Commission. “We are opposed, and our Commissioner in particular is opposed, to this kind of vertical aid”, explained Marc Debois. He went on: “the situation is so complex that we cannot simply provide targeted aid which may, for example, involve inundating farmers with fertiliser, without firstly ensuring distribution structures are in place and providing advice on usage”. ■

SOLUTIONS

As with many developing countries, the African nations are dependent on imports for their supply of cereals. This dependence has sparked a crisis following the recent sharp increases in global food prices. A possible solution to this would be to make Africa self-sufficient in rice production. The land required is available as well as the varieties of rice that include the well-known Nerica rice developed by WARDA, the African Rice Center. WARDA’s director, Dr. Papa A. Seck, believes that various measures are required to find a solution and these include substantial support for the production of rice, in particular the deregulation of international trade. He explained, “until recently, 11,000 North American rice farmers received subsidies worth US\$1.4 bn per year. Meanwhile, in Africa seven million rice farmers continue to struggle in a liberalised market without any subsidies and with limited access to credit or market information”. ■

THE PACIFIC

– a region of relative SECURITY

Beach at OarSmans bay in Fiji.
© Andrew Potter. Image from BigstockPhoto.com

Subsistence farming and significant fishery resources mean that the Pacific islands are not being hit at present by the full impact of price increases for foodstuffs. However, there are major causes for concern, including the uncertainty surrounding the market value of export crops (in particular Fijian sugar) as well as the devastating effects of cyclones.

The Pacific islands, as every expert points out, face three main problems – isolation, scarce resources and frequent natural disasters. These three issues have a significant impact on the food security of the islands, in particular the smaller ones such as Tonga, Niue and Vanuatu.

> Dependency

This geographic isolation puts a great strain on the price of import and export goods. K.L. Sharma, a professor at the



University of the South Pacific in Fiji, explains that limited natural resources results in a dependency on imported goods and the level of dependency has grown in recent years owing to the joint effect of the three factors outlined above. However, there is also the attractiveness of imported commodities which are attractively packaged and often good value-for-money. K.L. Sharma believes that inconsistent government policies have also caused some imported commodities to replace local production. An example of this is that the local production of Fijian rice has fallen from 29,000 to 14,000 tonnes between 1993 and 2002. "This," Sharma says, "is mainly on account of the withdrawal of government assistance in the form of agricultural products or technical advice, the non-renewal of concessions, the deregulation of the market and, finally, the preference for imported rice which has become less expensive than local rice". And despite recent efforts by the local authorities to revitalise the sector, Fiji remains a net rice importer: a commodity whose price has reached record levels during the first quarter of this year. Another factor is the devastation of crops by cyclones. Few Fijians have forgotten the effects of cyclone Ami which destroyed farms, infrastructure, cash crops and food crops in 2003. The estimated cost of the damage amounted to US\$66 million.

> The Samoan experience

However, traditional crops and animal husbandry – manioc, taro, coconuts, breadfruit trees, pigs and poultry – are still to be found in abundance on many islands. In Fiji, subsistence production (as opposed to large-scale commercial production) has even succeeded in penetrating the markets of the cities, providing food for a large proportion of urban residents whose numbers are growing rapidly. K.L. Sharma says that in 2002, "subsistence production represented 6 per cent of the GDP and 37 per cent of agricultural, forestry and fishery production". These figures are impressive and Fiji is often held up as an example for other Pacific islands to follow: as although they possess strong traditional agriculture they lack experience in business development.

But, as always, there is that unquantifiable factor to be taken into account – cyclones.

"Grow as many yams as you can, and put them to one side in case of cyclones. If there's no taro, breadfruit or bananas, then yams will provide a food reserve." This advice from a Samoan farmer was incorporated into a technical document drawn up by the United Nations Network for Rural Development and Food Security. The longer yams are left in the ground, the greater their yield. Most important, this commodity is not subject to the effects of hurricanes. But the big question remains, 'what can be done once the cyclone has passed?' Shortages of water and food can last from two weeks to eight months and this document looks at other strategies to adopt such as giving priority to crops that grow quickly, such as manioc and sweet potatoes. For storage, farmers have recommended a return to local traditions such as allowing the breadfruit and bananas to ferment in a hole dug in the ground (the so-called "biscuit of Samoa"). Such advice is vital for a population where two-thirds are dependent on subsistence farming (including forestry and fishing) for their survival. **M.M.B.** ■

Keywords

Fiji; Rice; Traditional cultivation; Cyclones; Taro.

On page 20: dried red pepper.
© Fataiphotorush

IMPORTED CEREALS

For the people of the Pacific islands the increasing use of cereals such as rice and wheat is taking its toll. According to K.L. Sharma's latest estimates the Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga are now 100 per cent dependent on the import of cereals and the dependency of Fiji has risen from 79 per cent to 90 per cent during the period 1993/2002 - principally on account of the decline (50 per cent) in its rice production.

Over the same period, Papua New Guinea has seen its dependency drop slightly (99 per cent to 97 per cent), while that of the Solomon Islands has risen from 91 per cent to 95 per cent.

All of the islands are now 100 per cent dependent on imports for wheat flour.

The dependency on rice imports for the Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji now range from 65 per cent to 100 per cent. ■

THE QUALITIES OF TARO

Taro, *talo, dalo, dago, aba, anega, aro, ma* – a lot of different names all for the same plant which has been consumed for centuries by the people of Oceania. While its name may vary from island to island, its tasty tubers and leaves provide consistent nutritional value. And what nutritional value with fibre, calcium and iron from the tubers, and vitamins A, C, B2 and B1 from the leaves. However, this "nutritional treasure", as the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) refers to it is under threat.

As the FAO explain, "Taro no longer occupies the important place that it once did in everyday life on many islands and it has frequently increased in price. People who work all day often find that it is much quicker to cook rice than to grow or buy taro and prepare it. Lots of islanders choose to buy rice instead of this wholesome tuber for the simple reason that it is quicker to cook". Rice is high in protein and calories, but does not compare favourably with taro in terms of mineral salts and vitamins. The FAO add that, "Vegetables imported from Europe at great expense do not stand comparison with this tasty tuber high in nutritional values, and which is widely available in the region." The FAO's technical document does not just contain nutritional and technical information it also offers recipes. To try them out go to <http://www.fao.org/WAIRdocs/x5425f/x5425f01.htm> ■

SOUL-SEARCHING in import-dependent Caribbean

The rise in food prices across the Caribbean, notably in Haiti where rioting resulted in deaths, has prompted some soul-searching on the region's heavy dependency on imported food. Weaknesses in the sector are being flagged and the need to turn words into action, signalled.

"The crisis is not about availability but of pricing," says Dr. Chandra Madramootoo, originally from Guyana and Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at Canada's McGill University. In an interview with us, he said that all countries of the Caribbean Community and Common market (CARICOM) have been affected by surging prices, although perhaps less so in Guyana and Belize, Guyana being a rice grower.

It is a heavy dependency on imported food-stuffs that makes the Caribbean vulnerable to price hikes. Due to transport costs, once the price of fuel rises, the price of food goes the same way. Very few CARICOM nations are now agriculturally-based. Take St Lucia, says Dr Madramootoo: thirty years ago 25-30 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was derived from agriculture. Today, tourism has taken over and this is just 5-6 per cent.

And in Haiti, Jean-Baptiste Chavannes of the broad-based peasants' movement National Congress of the Papaye Peasant Movement (MPNKP) already sounded the alarm bells of a mounting food import bill. In an interview with The Courier in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince at the end of 2007, Chavannes said, "We import US\$300 million of food every year. This is a catastrophe." Up to the 1960s, Haiti was self-sufficient in food, but local production of rice, poultry and eggs has gradually been destroyed.

> Liberalisation squeeze

Farming in Haiti had been beset by years of neglect, Chavannes told us. This was hastened

by liberalisation in the 1980s during the years of administration by the Duvaliers and an over-reliance on imports. The final push downhill for local production was the economic embargo against Haiti, from 1991 to 1994, which cut off imports of inputs such as animal fodder needed for farming. Since then, political turmoil that has weakened the administration, the resulting lack of credit for inputs, land degradation caused by use of firewood for fuel and poor infrastructure, have all taken their toll on the sector. Fifty per cent of Haiti's land is unsuitable for cultivation, said Chavannes.

Dr. Madramootoo says that due to high international demand, there are sporadic availability problems, particularly of chicken and rice. He says complaints are being voiced in the region over so much of Guyana's rice crop being sold outside the region. He adds that fishing boats are also currently struggling to keep up catches due to the high cost of fuel for engines.

The upshot is that getting to grips with farming issues in the Caribbean is overdue. These include, says Dr. Madramootoo, water delivery, linkages between agriculture and other industries like tourism, low levels of private investment, overcoming the small scale of agricultural production, lack of skilled labour, transport and insurance and adding value to local products. Rum (from sugar) is one of the few agricultural products where value has been added. **D.P.** ■

Keywords

Caribbean Agriculture; Dr Chandra Madramootoo.

Dr Madramootoo's list of farming risks Caribbean-wide

- Vagaries of the weather
- Lack of skilled labour and highly qualified personnel
- Weak market and transport structures
- Lack of capital and insurance products for high-risk ventures
- Weak linkages between agriculture and other sectors of the economy
- High cost of imported agricultural inputs and energy
- Weak Research & Development
- Inadequate linkages between field production and agribusiness
- Small size of operations
- Limited value added opportunities
- How to add value to primary production.

Agricultural bounty of Haiti. Painting by L. Saul, Villa Créole, Port-au-Prince, Haiti 2007. © Debra Percival

Slovenia marks respect for Cotonou

It's not easy to assess an individual European Union (EU) country's contribution to relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) nations during its six-month turn in the rotating EU Presidency chair. There's always an element of 'business as usual'. As Slovenia, in charge since 1 January 2008, hands over to France (1 July – 31 December), we look at how one of the smallest and newest EU Member States, with no national tradition of development policy, has made its mark and added to its own expertise in the process.

It's been a hefty workload for Slovenia's small team of national development experts just to make sure that everything remains on track, says Uroš Mahkovec, ACP counsellor at Slovenia's Representation to the EU. This includes moving ahead with talks on turning initialled 'interim' Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) – the ACP-EU free trade agreements – into 'full' ones by the end of the year and ironing out the remaining wrinkles in the legal texts with CARIFORUM* partners for the signature of their full regional EPA at the end of July 2008 in Barbados. Forty-two ACP states – mostly Least Developed Countries (LDCs) – have yet to sign up for any EPA.

Follow-up to the Africa-EU Lisbon summit and ensuring momentum in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), on the agenda of the EU Summit in June 2008, were other Presidency priorities. And Slovenia's State Secretary of Foreign Affairs is now a familiar face following a run of bi-lateral 'troika' between former, current and forthcoming EU presidencies including Nigeria, Cape Verde and South Africa. Support from the two preceding presidencies of Germany followed by Portugal, has been invaluable to Slovenia, stresses Uroš Mahkovec. This 'trio' of countries drew up a joint development strategy spanning

18 months (January 2007-June 2008). Slovenia's special input was getting EU member states to pay more attention to the effects of armed conflict in developing nations on women and children. Two Slovenian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); *Together*, the Regional Centre for the Psychosocial well-being of children specialised in psychological counselling and the *International Trust Fund (ITF)*, involved in de-mining projects are already globally recognised for their work experience gained in their backyard of the Balkans.

Uroš Mahkovec says that being a small country in the EU brings flexibility:

Everyone knows that there is no huge national agenda in the background

He points at the progress made in advancing Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA). Slovenia arranged a meeting of 30 'key' ACP



Victor Borges (right), Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cape Verde at EU Troika meeting, 27/5/2008, with Andrej Ster, Slovenian Secretary of State, Foreign Affairs (left).

© Council of the European Union

Ministers in its capital, Ljubljana, to discuss EPAs. He feels that Nigeria, for example, is now less hostile to the idea of an EPA whilst respecting the country's fears of fiscal losses.

► Softening

This "softening" towards EPAs was signalled at a 12-13 June joint ACP-EU Council of Ministers meeting in Addis Ababa where a joint resolution was agreed to by both sides "... a commitment to make every effort to ensure that all regions conclude World Trade Organisation (WTO)-compatible full EPAs with due regard for ACP circumstances." Uroš Mahkovec says the drafting of this resolution was a success in itself. It was the first time in 33 years of such meetings that a joint ACP-EU resolution had been agreed. The text also covered an enhanced focus on agriculture in ACP-EU policies and need for action by both partners if Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved by 2015.

"104 countries (77 ACP and 27 EU) are almost more than half of most multi-lateral fora. If this could be achieved in other fields such as the WTO, it's quite a good precedent." As we talk with Uroš Mahkovec, there is a respect for the sort of solidarity that can be achieved through the ACP-EU Cotonou Convention (2000-2020).

As an EU state since May 2004, Slovenia is one of twelve first-time contributors to EU-funded aid programmes for ACP nations under the six-year €22.682bn 10th European

Development Fund (EDF) which runs from 2008 to 2013 and comes on stream from 1 July 2008. Slovenia will contribute €40.827M. This is a big amount for a small country and is prompting internal reorganisation of its administration with plans to set up a specialist agency for development. Slovenia's only diplomatic presence is in Cairo. But there's an embracing of the new opportunities of Cotonou, such as opportunities for Slovenian businesses and individuals.

For Slovenia, the recent 'troika' mission to Fiji, 19-20 June, to assess the political situation and Fiji's commitment to mount new parliamentary elections in the wake of the military takeover in December 2006 by Commander Frank Bainimarama, demonstrates the power of dialogue enshrined in article 96 of Cotonou. The ousting of democratically-elected Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase, was deemed to constitute a breach of the 'essential elements' of the Cotonou agreement: human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law (see separate article on Fiji in 'Round up'), **D.P.** ■

* See article in this issue on ACP Ministerial meeting in 'Round-up'.

Websites: www.itf-fund.si; www.together-foundation.si

Keywords

Debra Percival; Slovenia; EPAs; 10th EDF; Cotonou; Fiji.

Slovenian NGOs want to extend expertise gained in their backyard. Rehabilitated mine victim, Albania. International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF).
© Arnie Hodalic

Co-operation EU – Réunion – Indian Ocean ACP

Hegel Goutier

E RDF funds totalling €35.4M, in addition to contributions from the French state and Réunion bring total funding for an operational programme for the 'Indian Ocean' to €47.3M. Beneficiaries are Réunion and the Indian Ocean islands of Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Comoros, who are members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific grouping.

This programme has three elements: *sustainable and environmental development*, aimed at improving expertise in these fields to develop innovative research and to support protection

against natural hazards; and *economic regional integration* to support Réunion's private sector in economic cooperation projects and to foster the exchange of know-how, notably in the fields of maritime security and the management of fish stocks. The third element is *fostering human development and international solidarity to ensure harmonious regional integration*, cultural and sporting exchanges and cooperation on training, education and integration.

Projects financed by the European Development Fund for the EU's ACP partners are also either

underway, or will be launched shortly. A total of eight projects amounting to €54M include a regional programme for the protection of plant life with the EDF contributing €4.85M of the total of €6.6M. Réunion, which is ineligible for funding allocated to ACP countries, is putting €1.24M into this programme, with the four ACP countries making up the remaining sum of €510,000.

Keywords

Hegel Goutier, Réunion, ACP, EDF, ERDF

Sebastien Falletti*

Gallus Quay, Ljubljana.
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Governance on the table in Ljubljana

“There are not so many conceptions of the principle of the separation of powers, the presumption of innocence or of freedom of expression!” With these words, European Development Commissioner, Louis Michel set the tone for the debates of the 15th EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA), held in Ljubljana from 17 to 20 March.

The agenda in Slovenia’s capital was governance, democracy and human rights – with the crises in Chad and Kenya and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) looming large in the background – and it sparked heated debate between MEPS and parliamentarians from the ACP (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) states.

One positive sign was the JPA’s success in reaching agreement on the pressing issue of Kenya. The successful resolution of the crisis and Kofi Annan’s mediation were welcomed. Parliamentarians from the four continents called on Nairobi to ensure that violations of election law were “impartially and rigorously investigated.” At the same time they welcomed the political agreement reached at the highest level of the Kenyan state in an emergency resolution. Kofi Annan’s mediation was “proof that Africans are able to provide their own response to crisis,” declared Peya Mushelenga, a Namibian MP.

> Failure over Chad

In contrast, Chad can only be described as a failure. The ACP camp, invoking the absence

of any Chadian representative in the assembly, finally refused to approve a compromise text condemning President Idriss Déby’s repression of the unarmed opposition. This action was strongly disapproved of by many of their European colleagues, who saw it as an attempt at obstruction on the part of Chad. Also, they suggested, proof of the over-cautiousness of certain ACP parliamentarians, particularly when questions of human rights and governance are on the table.

German MEP Jürgen Schröder described it as “disappointing that they rejected such a balanced text,” especially one that condemned attacks by armed rebels against President Déby as well as the actions of the French NGO *Arche de Zoé*. “The country’s lasting stability must involve a political opening up to all these internal components,” warned Louis Michel. With his usual passion, Commissioner Michel stressed that good governance is precisely what the ACP countries need for development, and also pointed out that a strengthening of the state was a key aim for the Commission: “Strengthening the public institutions is the priority of our actions,” the Commissioner explained, citing as proof the big increase in



The President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering.
© European Parliament

the share of direct budgetary aid for the 2008-2013 period under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF). This means over the run of the 10th EDF, 47 per cent of funds will be allocated directly to ACP state budgets, enabling them to improve their public services in key sectors such as education and health. This new approach also implies increased responsibility by national governments in areas like human rights and democracy as well as engaging in a genuine political dialogue with the EU.

The emphasis placed on the role of government was also intended to reassure parliamentarians engaged in negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). After the passion generated by this sensitive issue at the previous session in Kigali, Rwanda, in November 2007, the tension eased somewhat in Ljubljana, without fully dispelling concerns. "Conflict and contention has mired the whole EPA process", summed up Glenys Kinnock, co-President of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly, during the opening ceremony. Later, her ACP colleague, Wilkie Rasmussen, of the Cook Islands, drew attention to the consequences of European agricultural subsidies on the economies of poor countries and criticised the Commission's negotiating strategy.

> Full EPAs

However, Commissioner Michel looked to the future to convince both African and Pacific

countries to negotiate full EPA agreements modelled on the one already concluded by the Caribbean region. Following the signing of the so-called 'interim' agreements, in response to the WTO demands at the end of 2007, the European Union (EU) is now calling on the ACP countries to ratify the interim agreements and conclude EPAs. He also offered reassurance on the social consequences and the progressive nature of opening up to trade. "I am not a major champion of unfettered liberalisation", declared Michel, restating the EU's commitment to providing financial support for countries throughout the process of progressively opening up to world markets. His comments were backed up by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which welcomed the EPA's social chapter concluded with the Caribbean region and invited the African states to follow this example. Nevertheless, access to the marketplace is a "necessary, but insufficient condition for development", explained Gérard Dantin, the EESC representative.

To allow the ACP economies to progressively strengthen their competitiveness before taking the 'plunge' into full to global competition, the Commission is focusing on regional integration. Michel is preparing a communication on the subject for September and has invited the ACP parliamentarians to express their opinions as part of the current public consultation process. Under the terms of the EPAs, the ACP countries will open up 80 per cent of their trade in goods over a 15-year transition period.

However, the Ljubljana debates underlined that the subject was far from closed. "Many questions remain unanswered", stressed Ali Farah Assoweh, Finance Minister of the Republic of Djibouti and President-in-Office of the ACP Council. He went on to set out a series of conditions for signing an EPA, including protection of the most sensitive sectors of the ACP economies and additional financing to support the transition to free trade. The road to full EPAs will remain "long and painful", he forecast.

After this first meeting in one of the 'new' Member States that joined the EU in 2004, the assembly will be turning to new horizons for its next session. However, the subjects on the agenda are likely to remain much the same – governance, development and trade. Indeed, the MPs, NGOs and Commissioners still have much to do to prove that EU-ACP relations are also "a union between peoples", to cite Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament.

The next Assembly is scheduled for Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, November 22 to 28 2008. ■

*Brussels-based journalist

Keywords

JPA (Joint Parliamentary Assembly); ACP; EPAs; Chad; Ljubljana.

Observing the positives of **MIGRATION**

The benefits of migration and more research into migratory flows in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states to better incorporate migrants' interests into development policies, were at the centre of the second-only meeting of ACP Asylum, Migration and Mobility ministers in Brussels, on 29-30 May.

Many art works exhibited during Dak'art were related to the immigration matter, Angèle Etoundi Essamba, *Veil in the wind 3*, Dak'art 2008 'Afrique: miroir?'
Photo by Iside Ceroni

“It is our duty to erase the negative perceptions and to highlight the positive elements of migration,” said Sir John Kaputin, ACP Secretary General. The ‘ACP Group Brussels Resolution on Migration and Development’ adopted at the meeting will be presented to the upcoming Global Forum on Migration, in Manila, the Philippines, in October 2008. It calls for more research into why people move, including the connection with climate change and to urgently halt the dumping of toxic waste in ACP waters – a practice which induces migration. Improved management of asylum, migration and mobility by ACP governments is another recommendation.

The commissioning by the ACP Secretariat of a study by 2009 on best practices for the promotion of the integration of migrants in host countries is requested. Innovative solutions to illegal migration to arrest the ‘brain drain’ of skilled workers from ACP countries are also called for. ‘Circular’ migration – allowing greater flexibility of workers to enter overseas job markets and return to his or her country of origin with greater ease – should be taken forward, said ACP Ministers. The resolution also says governments should tackle the issue of migrants working without documentation and that ACP nations should ratify legal frameworks to tackle human smuggling.

Responding to journalists’ questions on the recent violence in South Africa directed at Zimbabwean migrants, Senator Elma Campbell, Minister of State for Immigration of the Bahamas, who chaired the Brussels meeting said: “We urge ACP states to implement legislation to combat racism and xenophobia and increase awareness of the phenomena.”

> ACP Migration Observatory

Aya Kasasa, in charge of Culture and Migration at the ACP Secretariat, told journalists that an ACP ‘Facility on Migration’ is being set up with €25M of funds provided by the EU’s 9th European Development Fund (EDF). In a first step, the ACP Secretariat’s tendering process is currently underway to choose a consortium to set up a focal Migration Observatory with a network of observatories in six ACP regions: West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Initially, its focus will be on migration between ACP countries rather than South-North movements. Migrants are often not incorporated into development projects.

The Observatory will comprise academic researchers, civil society, existing migrants’ networks and even individual migrants. It will collate

facts and research on migratory flows, the nature and degree of migration, existing projects for migrants, economic and social statistics and the effects of migration on poverty, trade and health. The aim is to provide new information and fresh research and to come up with initiatives for decision-makers. "We are not interested in duplicating efforts, but rather to build on the already existing research," said Andrew Bradley, ACP Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Human Development. Added Sir John: "as developing countries, ACP states have an active role in shaping the migration debate."

In a later phase, the Facility will look at strengthening both regional ACP bodies and national ministries on migration issues in 12 pilot countries; Senegal, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Angola, Lesotho, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, Papua New Guinea and Timor

Leste. Another of the Facility's components to come later is to build the role of civil society into discussions of issues affecting migrants.

Said Ndioro Ndiaye, Deputy Director General of the International Organisation for Migration invited to speak at the ministerial meeting: "... the EU's development aid should give more attention and more merit to the efforts of the ACP diaspora in EU Member States, their potential to multiply development aid by way of remittances, transfer of knowledge and professional experience."

Another invitee, Belgium's Minister for Migration, Annemie Turtelboom, welcomed the fact that the debate on migration within the EU had moved on since 2006 when, "Europe looked at migration from a defensive point of view. Those who think they can stop or interrupt this migration with repressive measures are mistaken." She said that in 2050 Belgium was on course to be short of 360,000 in its working

population. "If Belgium closes its frontiers to immigration, the shortage will be 984,000 persons, a shortage representing 23 per cent of its population," she told ACP Ministers.

She called for migration to be organised and managed in a way that is beneficial for all: migrants, the country of origin and the country of destination. "It's what I would call a triple win/win situation," Minister Turtelboom told her ACP counterparts. She said this was encompassed in the EU's idea for a 'blue card' for migrant workers. "The project to organise economic migration is an alternative to the illegal migration of migrants and is one of the measures to combat working in the black," she told ACP Ministers.

D.P. ■

Keywords

Migration; ACP Ministers; Debra Percival.



Babacar Niang, Illegal emigration, Dak'art 2008 'Afrique: miroir?', photo by Iside Ceroni.

Could MOZAMBIQUE become an African economic dragon?

On 27 February, the President of Mozambique, Armando Emilio Guebuza – on a visit to the Netherlands – delivered an address to the Dutch community to attract private investment. Over the past decade, successive presidents of Mozambique have paid regular tribute to their main economic partners who have played their part in making Mozambique one of the more attractive economies in Africa. Over the past few years, Mozambican exports have grown at an average rate of 10 per cent per year and the forecast for 2008 is 7 per cent.

Since the year 2000, Mozambique's economy has recorded an annual growth rate of 8 per cent and the country has benefited from increasing foreign direct investment, specifically in mineral resources but also in industry, agro-industry and services, whilst infrastructure building is still booming. At the same time, the country has implemented successful fiscal and monetary policies. This has brought down the inflation rate from 13 per cent in 2002-2004 to 9 per cent in 2005-2007. Mozambique is also striving to maximise agriculture and small enterprises. Changes to taxation and the banking system have been made in favour of small entrepreneurs.

The Ambassador of Mozambique to the Benelux and the European Communities, Maria Manuela Lucas, followed up a visit of her President to the Netherlands, focusing her speech in Utrecht on a sound financial industry in rural areas.

The Netherlands is a good example for Mozambique.

In his speech in Rotterdam, President Guebuza noted that "in 2006, [Mozambique's] exports to the Netherlands amounted to over





The cathedral of Maputo.
© Hegel Goutier

US\$1.4 bn against US\$6.5 million in 2001. Similarly, imports from the Netherlands increased from US\$9.4 million in 2001 to US\$423 million in 2006.” With US\$1 million invested in Mozambique in 2003, China ranked ninth in the table of top investors in the country. By 2007, it had climbed to sixth place with US\$60 million invested, but still some way behind top investor, the United States of America with US\$5 bn.

Over the past few years, Mozambique has grown in its attractiveness as an investment destination. It is one of the countries whose foreign investments have been guaranteed by the World Bank’s Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) since 1994. Among the sectors in MIGA’s portfolio are manufacturing, agribusiness, tourism, oil and gas and infrastructure. The tourism sector, for instance, registered a total of US\$144 million in 2006. And the unspoilt wilderness of the Niassa Reserve of Northern Mozambique has become a big tourist destination. The Mozambique govern-

ment is expecting large gains from this sector during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

The elimination of subsidies, reduction and simplification of imports tariffs and liberalisation of crop marketing feature among economic reforms. A large privatisation programme was implemented in the banking sector and in state manufacturing companies. New tax codes were adopted to lessen the impact of past inflation.

In the near future, Mozambique has the potential to develop big niches in various sectors. Only a small amount of its oil and gas reserves have been exploited so far and it has huge mineral resources. The government is putting a lot of emphasis on the development potential of agriculture, not only for consumption but also for energy. Estimations of the country’s bio-energy potential are around 40M litres of bio-diesel and 21M litres of bio-ethanol per year. The government is, however, fully aware of the need to balance such potential with farming to feed its people. Economic growth seems to have been unaffected by the 2007 floods in the country.

Could Mozambique soon become an African economic dragon? The answer is linked to another question. Despite the current growth rate, how long will it be to bring down the figure of 50 per cent of the Mozambican population still living in poverty? Mozambique’s government also seems to be fully focussed on this issue. **H.G. ■**



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Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Mozambique; economy; MIGA; Armando Emilio Guebuza; Maria Manuela Lucas.

A day in the life of DEREK WALCOTT

POET, DRAMATIST, ARTIST AND NOBEL PRIZE WINNER

Derek Walcott is a literary jetsetter. Today he's invited by the Sevottfonds Herman to give a poetry reading at Belgium's Universiteit Katholieke Leuven (Catholic University of Leuven). Next week**, he's off to the Calabash literary festival in Jamaica to read a new poem, 'The Mongoose', which makes jibes at another Caribbean writer from Trinidad and Tobago, V.S. Naipaul. Born in St. Lucia, Walcott was winner of the 1992 Nobel Prize for Literature for his re-working of the epic Omeros (1990) which puts the drama of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey in a Caribbean setting. He's also one of Boston University's most famous academics.*

Walcott published his first poem at the age of 14. The wrongs of 400 years of colonial rule in the Caribbean yet the celebration of the hybridisation of its cultures with a search for personal identity, are central themes in his work; a wealth of poetry and over 20 plays including, *Henri Christophe* (1950), *Ti Jean and his Brothers* (1958) and *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1967). The poem, *North and South* (1981) puts over the quest for identity:

*"a colonial upstart at the end of the empire,
a single, homeless, circling satellite."*

He was educated in St. Mary's College, Castries, St. Lucia and studied at the University College of the West Indies in Kingston Jamaica and also went to theatre school in New York (1958-1959). His early career was in teaching in the Caribbean, also as a journalist for *Public Opinion* in Jamaica and feature writer and drama critic for the *Trinidad Guardian*. His passion for the theatre was also precocious. Aged just 20, he set up the St. Lucia Arts Guild. In 1966, he formed the Trinidad Theatre Workshop.

> Painter

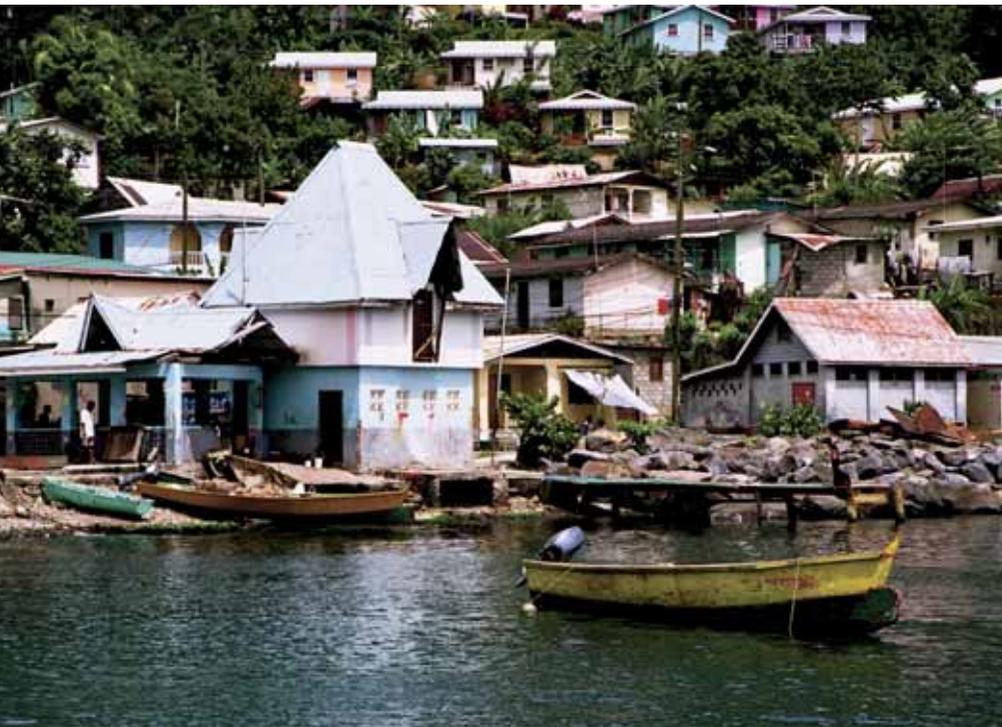
Following in the shoes of his amateur water-colourist father, he is now spending more time



Derek Walcott,
Parma 2001.
© Antonio Dalla Libera

painting, capturing the essence of St. Lucia's overwhelming natural beauty: "I was there two days ago and it was a terrific day... staggering," he tells us when we meet in Leuven.

It's in St. Lucia during time out from literary circuit that life comes close to any sort of routine: "After breakfast and doing some work, I go down for a mid-morning swim and back for



lunch and a nap. I never work late at night though sometimes late afternoons when I have theatre rehearsals.” The exhilaration of swimming is captured in one of his painting simply entitled, *The Swimmer*. It depicts a lone man wading into the sea as the waves rush in to batter his body. He likes the reality of a landscape or portrait rather than abstract art.

Having spent several years teaching creative writing at Boston University, he still has a base in nearby New York but now spends more time in St. Lucia at his home at the islands’ northern tip, the Cap, where there are views of the Caribbean Sea on one side and the Atlantic Ocean on the other.

> Rivière Dorée

He breaks off from our chat to suggest we look out of the window onto Leuven’s old square. The university dates back to 1425. Surprisingly perhaps, he doesn’t say anything about the magnificently rebuilt gabled buildings. At a guess, he’s probably more inspired by the sensory natural pleasures of St. Lucia and the Caribbean rather than the rows of café society below. He goes on to evoke one of his favourite spots in St. Lucia, Rivière Dorée, near Choiseul in the south, a tucked away fishing cove bathed in a golden light in the evening.

“I have a new book of poems which will come out next year. Generally it’s about what happens to you personally as a writer and what goes on with our life; what our losses and gains

are.” His voice is also melodious and draws you in. Interacting with Mr Walcott, there’s almost a feeling that you are in a play. At any moment, he might drop a descriptive gem.

Coming back to St. Lucia. What’s so special about the island where he was born?: “The St. Lucian topography, the sudden conical mountains and the sea.

To have that everyday in your life is a blessing.” He is clearly worried, however, about the effects of tourism on his island and the wider Caribbean: “When the place is small, when the race is different and when you have to be delicate about the history of a place, you can have a big threat. Right now, I have someone who is trying to build a set of condos next to my house. It’s been brought to my doorstep as it will be brought to many other peoples’ doorsteps.” He continues: “There are big hotels going up and the emphasis is smile and be happy, be courteous but this is dangerous and I’m writing about that.” Tourism is not a crime, he says, but he feels that developers and governments should give more to developing the Caribbean’s cultural wealth. “What you can do is to take the same industry and make people pay for what they are doing. For example, get a theatre built, a museum and a few scholarships. They are afraid to tax the tourist investor but if you don’t do that you have a transient economy.”

> “My beach”

He continues: “I used to go down to ‘my beach’ (Rodney Bay). You know all Caribbean

people have their own beach. Well, there’s a hotel there now. I feel displaced by the hotel which is a stupid feeling because I can swim anywhere else but I just feel that it belonged to me. I don’t think a hotel is a good enough compensation for what I have lost. This is a kind a metaphor for everything in the Caribbean. You cannot have a country with a shed for a theatre. I am very disappointed in the conventionality of Caribbean governments.”

We come back to his immediate plans: “I am working on screen plays at the moment. I am going to make a couple of movies - I hope. He says one is a screenplay of *Ti-Jean*, the other a domestic play set in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. “*Ti-Jean* is a fable about a boy and his two brothers set in Soufrière, St. Lucia. One brother is physically strong. The other one thinks he’s an intellectual, a big lawyer who questions everything. The moral is look out for the devil,” says Walcott.

This autumn he’ll be in London to direct the play of Irish poet, Seamus Heaney, *The Burial of Thebes*, at the Globe Theatre. He clearly enjoys the company and contact with others that theatre brings.

The following evening, we meet up again at the *Passa Porta*, a literary spot in downtown Brussels. After a reading from *Omeros*, he takes questions from a well-informed audience on Caribbean identity, the use of Creole in literature... He clearly relishes the public plaudits for his work but at one point, a look of vulnerability at its relentless dissection that an author of his stature is forced to submit to, comes across his face. He’s probably looking forward to the routine of those morning swims in the source of his inspiration, St. Lucia.

D.P. ■

* The Sevotefonds Herman was founded in 2004 as a tribute to the deceased professor of English literature, Herman Servotte to promote the study of English literature.

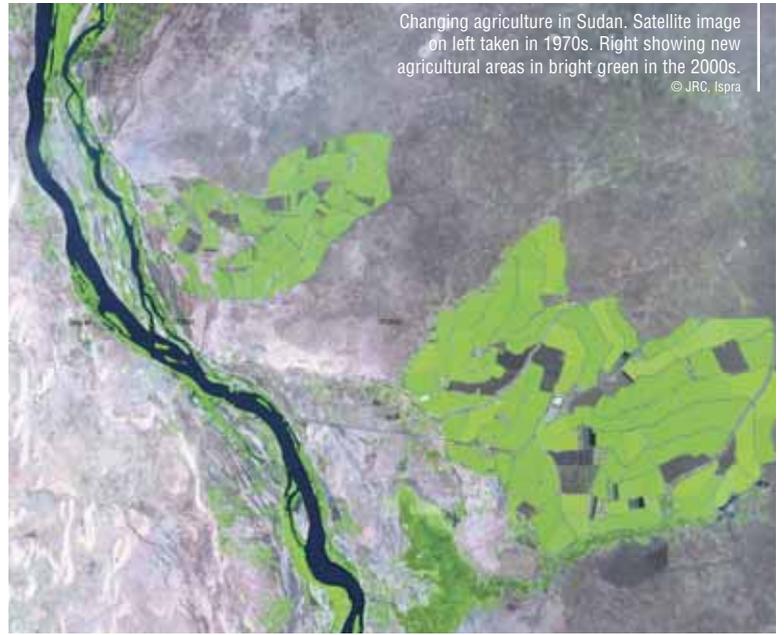
** The journalist met the poet in Leuven on 15 May 2008.

Websites:
www.fondshermanservotte.be,
www.passaporta.be

Top: Soufrière, St. Lucia.
 Setting for ‘Ti-Jean’ 2006.
 © Mark Percival

Keywords

Debra Percival; Derek Walcott; St. Lucia; Caribbean; Nobel Prize; literature.



Changing agriculture in Sudan. Satellite image on left taken in 1970s. Right showing new agricultural areas in bright green in the 2000s.
© JRC, Ispra

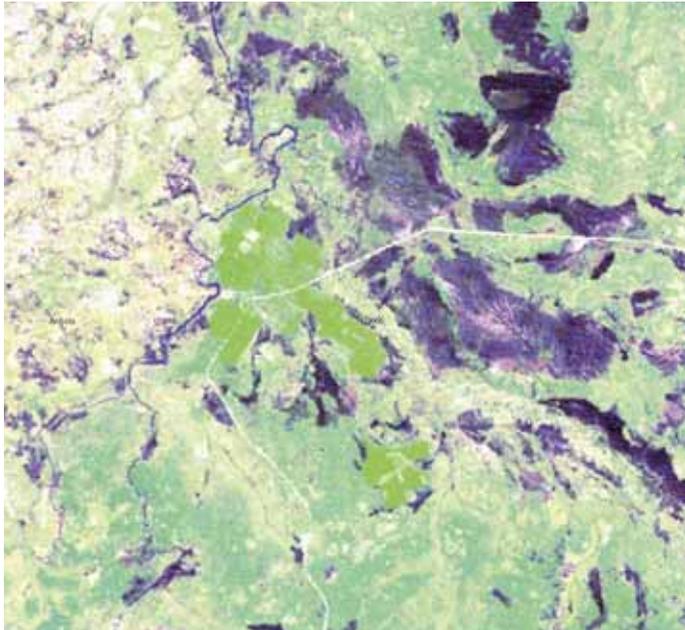
SATELLITES deployed for poverty eradication

The link between satellite technology and poverty eradication is not obvious. The European Commission's (EC) Joint Research Centre (JRC) is analysing very high resolution images to this end. A political impulse to pioneer such research came from the Summit of Africa and EU Summit of Heads of States in December 2007.

Disappearing trees, lakes, flora and fauna, expanding farmland, and fires are just some of the things that can all monitored by high definition images from satellites 850 kilometres above the Earth. In turn, this means better management of forests and avoidance of conflict, both of which lead to poverty eradication, says Dr. Alan Belward, Head of the Global Environment Monitoring Unit of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). The JRC team is looking at "how the optimal

use of satellites assists development." Research and statistics gathered by his team of 8-9 scientists, including an African trainee, headquartered in Ispra, Italy, is filling an information gap and helping donors and governments in planning and making decisions. Currently focussed on Africa, there is no reason why it cannot eventually be applied to the Caribbean and Pacific, says Dr. Belward. Satellite technology is nothing new. The first global satellite was launched in 1957 and the first observer satellite in 1972. It's only in the

last 10 years, however, that they have been used for agricultural forecasting and as a "development tool." Agreements the JRC has for satellite use include one with the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMESTAT), which collates meteorological statistics and monitors climate change. Broadly, satellite imagery can be used in four areas of development policy: protecting natural resources; humanitarian relief and development support; disaster reduction initiatives and



> Who's escaping tax?

And images of roads in forest areas can pinpoint logging activities, thus providing information to authorities of illegal logging and just who should be taxed. Dr. Belward stresses the need for African ownership of such statistics. These can be passed on to bodies such as the African Forest Observatory (FORAF) which has just opened new offices in Kinshasa under the Congo basin forest partnership and will further develop the monitoring of logging activities throughout the Congo basin.

Images analysed by the JRC show that since the 1970s, 50,000 square kilometres of natural vegetation in Africa has become agricultural land – an area one and a half times the size of Belgium, although this is just a fifth of the rate of loss in South Asia and a half of that occurring in the Amazon. Dr Belward says that the current rate of deforestation in Congo basin countries; – Cameroon, Gabon, Burundi, Republic of Congo is just 0.17 per cent which can be put down to improved management of forests.

Another image of Park 'W' stretching across Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger, picks out the clusters of farming activity on the park's perimeter. Infrared imagery shows where fires are burning. SMS or emailed messages can be sent straight to park rangers so they can check out the fires. The development of automatic alarm systems could have enormous potential for areas such as forest management, indicates Dr. Belward.

Threats to biodiversity can also be geospatially registered. The JRC is monitoring the disappearance of biodiversity in 741 protected areas in Africa, home to 280 species of mammals,

381 bird species and 930 amphibians. Information updated every ten days is collated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). A website has been set up to make public all results.

On top of conservation, satellites can be useful in humanitarian relief. Very high resolution imagery is able to monitor refugee camps in crisis areas such as Darfur. This helps in estimating the number of people hosted in the camp and in need of assistance. The JRC is also working with the World Bank and other institutions to develop methodology to observe and eventually prepare for risks such as earthquakes, aiming to eventually limit the amount of havoc they wreak.

Crops are also being monitored with agrometeorological models developed in over 30 countries vulnerable to crises and food shortages. Due to its recurrent food shortages and an absence of regional monitoring, the Horn of Africa is under particular observation. Monthly reports on crop conditions, yield, prospects and likely food shortages are issued between April and October, with information passed on to EU offices and UN partners.

D.P. ■

Top: Satellite images showing abandonment of agriculture in Angola. Left 1970s – note bright green patch in centre. By 2000s, this has disappeared. © JRC Ispra

Left: Images of Lake Chad now (top) and in 1963 (below), a more extensive body of water. © JRC Ispra

Keywords

JRC; Africa; forests; conservation; Debra Percival.

early estimates of crop yields and crop failure warnings.

Dr. Belward shows us high resolution images of Lake Chad in 1963 to compare with a more recent image. They reveal the lake's startling shrinkage. Land degradation and deforestation and loss of biodiversity can all be monitored in this way.



GHANA

*Dossier by Francis Kokutse,
Debra Percival, Hegel Goutier*

This issue turns the spotlight on Ghana, regarded as one of Africa's shining stars and which between 30 September-3 October this year will host the only sixth-ever Summit between the 79-member African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group in its capital, Accra. Ghana's lasting multi-party democracy, steady economic growth, increasing numbers enjoying an education and very active non-state sector, are just some of its widely recognised attributes. Highly-skilled Ghanaians in all sectors – to name just one, former Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), Kofi Annan – have made their mark internationally. The country's big diaspora, both within and outside the

continent, continue to send remittances home to further the country's development. Ghanaian peacekeepers are sought after for both regional and UN missions.

As current President, John Agyekum Kufuor, winds up his two terms in office in December 2008 when presidential and parliamentary elections will take place, we trace the country's history and what the political future holds. We look at whether it can continue to benefit from buoyant commodity exports despite the steep rise in two of its biggest imports; oil and foodstuffs and how European Union (EU) aid is helping it to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Image of Elmina from 'Elmina'.
Building on the past to create a better future' by E. van Steekelenburg
(ed.), Courtesy of KIT Publishers. Contact:
www.kit.nl/publishers

GHANA HISTORY

Modern Ghana, far from Ancient Ghana

There is strong symbolism. In 1957, when the Gold Coast was the first African country in line for independence from colonial rule, its leaders retrieved from the past the prestigious name of Ghana. As with ancient Ghana, the modern nation accumulated its wealth from gold. In fact, present-day Ghana has hardly any links with the Ghana of the past, which covered northern parts of today's Senegal and southern parts of today's Mauritania. Modern Ghana is located some 600 kilometres south-east. Not only is the location different, but only a few ethnic links exist between the populations of the ancient and modern Ghana.

It was probably on the eve of the first millennium AD that various clans of the Soninke people were gathered by Dinga Cisse to create the nation of Ghana. The real name of the country was the Soninke Kingdom, whereas Ghana was the title of the King. Arab writers retained it, however, for the state.

> Golden age and decline

Ancient Ghana was rich in gold mines, according to the descriptions of various Arab writers such as Al-Hamdani. It also became wealthy from trade in salt, copper and, on a smaller scale, slaves. Its capital, Kumbi Saleh, took advantage of its location at the end point of the Saharan routes trekked by Maghreb traders. These trading links brought Islam to the country. The Muslims living in Kumbi Saleh at first used to stay far from the King's Palace but later, some of them, the more literate, were appointed to the local administration.

For a multitude of reasons during the two first centuries of the second millennium, Ghana started to decline. The principal reasons were the long periods of drought and the opening of new routes to other gold mines discovered in Bure, in present-day Guinea. And Ghana was occupied by the Almoravid; it is not clear

whether they invaded the country with their army or whether their influence was gradual. Afterwards, the Sosso ruler, Sumanguru, took control of the country but in 1236 he was defeated by Sundiata Keita and four years later Ghana was absorbed by his Empire, Mali.

> Asante Empire

Archaeological digs indicate that modern Ghana was inhabited in the early Bronze Age, around 4000 BC. But at the beginning of the 10th century, the modern population of Ghana started to settle in the present location of the country. It was only at the end of the 17th century, however, that most of the ethnic groups constituting the Ghanaian nation had assembled, among them Akan, Twifu and Mande, the latter from the modern Nigeria (at the time the Hausa states). One of the branches of the Akan people, the Asante, was to play a prominent role in the constitution of modern Ghana. The Asante were more unified than the other groups and before the mid-17th century they rapidly expanded, establishing a strong nation. By the end of the 17th century, their ruler, Osei Tutu, was proclaimed Asantehene, the king of the Asante. The Asante conquered many other Akan states. Their empire gave sufficient autonomy to each minor state, yet the common interest was always safeguarded, resulting in a very well-organised state from the middle of the 18th century which was still solid at the beginning of the 19th century.

> British era

From the beginning of the 16th century, inhabitants of the Gold Coast, specifically the Akan, used to trade with the Portuguese, who arrived in 1471. Adventurers from most European countries tried to settle in the Gold Coast. The Dutch followed the Portuguese and later came the English, Swedish and Danish. The British

established the British African Company of Merchants in 1750. The slave trade outshone the gold in the Gold Coast with the establishing of the big plantations in the Americas. The West coast of Africa soon became the first provider of slaves to the American continent. In the 18th century, 4.5 million slaves were shipped from West Africa to America.

In 1844, the British signed a Bond with Fante chiefs. In 1873, they captured the Asante chief, Kumasi, and established a colony on the Gold Coast. Contrary to the French who built a vast colony under the administration of a governor-general, Great Britain opted for separate colonies with relative self-determination.

At the end of a long Anglo-Asante war, the British established a protectorate over Asante in 1896. The local administration was divided in two between the traditional chiefs in the native authorities and the people's elected representatives in the towns and municipal councils. In 1902, the Northern territories were proclaimed a British protectorate. The end of World War I led to a change in German Togo which passed to British control in 1919. During the Second World War, Gold Coast African forces fought in Ethiopia against Italian forces and in Burma alongside the British and Indians against the Japanese army.

> Towards Independence

The first nationalist movement to target self-government of the Gold Coast, if not its full independence, was the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) created in 1947 by a group of educated people whose Secretary General was the theoretician and nationalist, Kwame Nkrumah. After studies in the United States of America and in Great Britain, Nkrumah was one of the activists who participated in the 1945 Manchester Congress of the Pan-African Congress. In June 1949, Kwame Nkrumah broke with the UGCC, which he



considered too conservative, and put in place a genuine pro-independence organisation, the Convention People's Party (CPP). In the meantime, Nkrumah became one of the 'Veranda boys' (close to the ordinary people rather than the intelligentsia). He was arrested and detained and became one of country's more popular leaders. In 1950, the CPP launched a campaign of 'positive action' (non-violent action). Nkrumah was arrested again, along with many other leaders. Nkrumah became a symbol, a martyr, a hero. Whilst still in jail, in February 1951, he won a seat in the first legislative elections under the new constitution and his party, the CPP, a two-thirds majority.

The Asante community party, National Liberation Movement (NLM), which was established in 1954, opposed the CPP which demanded immediate independence and the assembly was dissolved in July 1956. The governor agreed to give independence if demanded by two-thirds of the representatives of the assembly. The CPP again won by a two-thirds majority. Prior to this election, a referendum was organised by the United Nations on the future of British Togoland (linked to the Gold Coast) and French Togoland. This referendum led to the reunification of the two parts of Togo under the French regime.

Independence of the new nation named Ghana was celebrated on 6 March 1957. The country

became a republic by referendum on 1 July and Nkrumah became one of the prominent leaders of the Third World. In 1964, Ghana was proclaimed a one-party state. Two years later, an army coup overthrew Nkrumah during a visit to China. The National Liberation party took power.

➤ Endless night of the Coup d'Etat

The Progress party headed by Kofi A. Busia won the 1969 elections and he became Prime Minister. But a coup organised by General Ignatius Acheampong brought the National Redemption Council (NRC), a military junta, to power in January 1972. The NRC was replaced in 1975 by another military junta, the Supreme Military Council (SMC), also led by Acheampong. A violent counter-coup was conducted by junior officers commanded by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings in June 1979. Many members of the SMC were executed and a purge of senior army officers carried out. Hilla Limann became President of the Republic in July 1979 but the civil administration was monitored by the 'June 4 Movement', a military group. A high level of inflation and the subsequently increasing cost of living made Limann lose the support of workers and the small section of the army that had backed him. Rawlings staged his second coup on the eve of 1981.

➤ Peaceful end

He remained chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council for 12 years before restoring a multiparty system in 1990 and organising elections which he won in January 1993. He left power on 7 January 2001 after two terms in office and was replaced by John Agyekum Kufuor who is still in the post.

Since the moment that Jerry Rawlings established a multiparty system, Ghana seems to have anchored its democracy and moved ahead with good governance. Its good reputation inside international institutions, as well as amongst investors, bears testimony to this.

H.G. ■

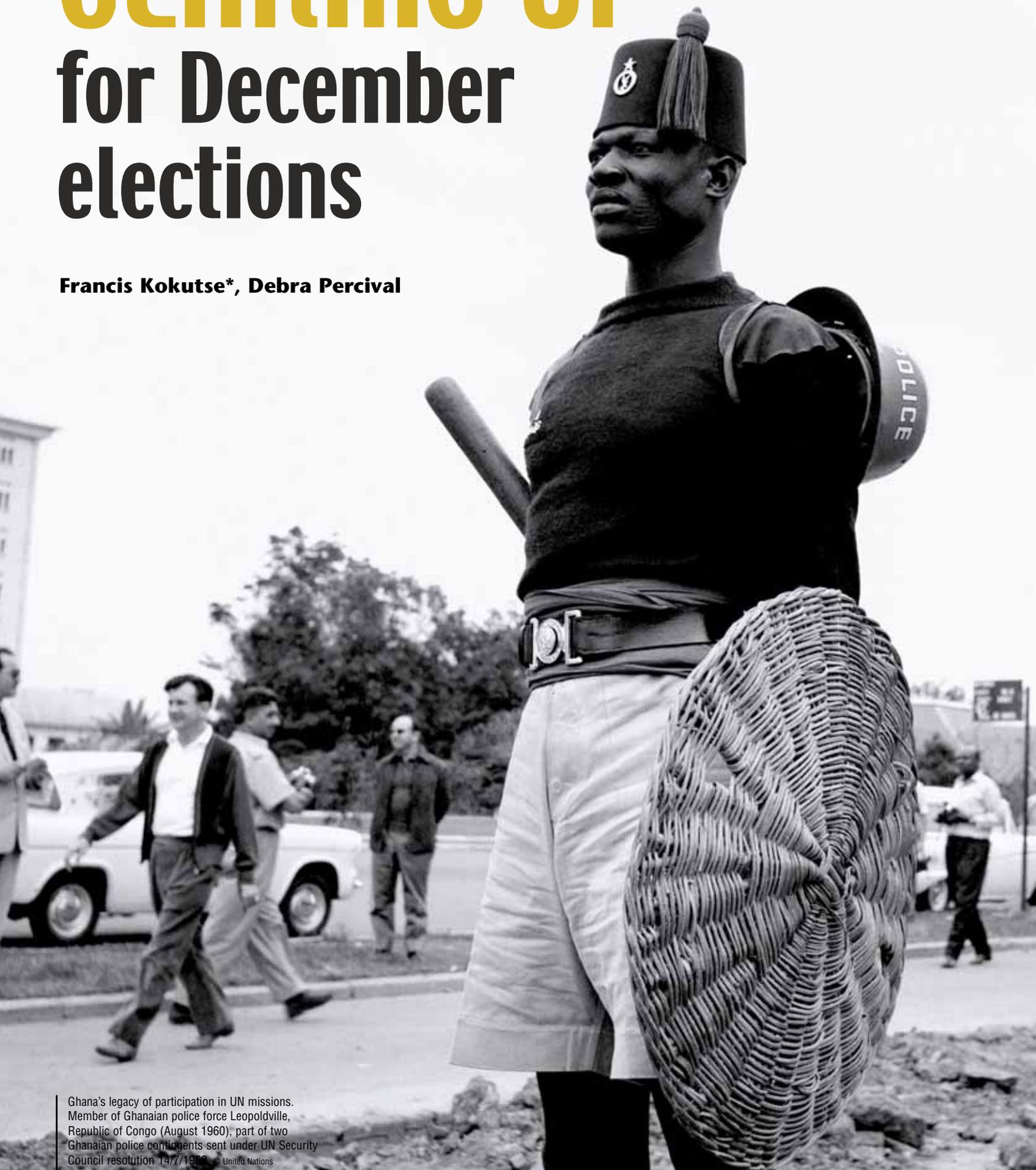
John Kufuor, President of Ghana and then President-in-Office, African Union (right). EU High Representative Javier Solana (left). Africa-EU Summit 2007.
© European Council

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Ghana; Gold Coast; Togoland; Dinga Cisse; Soninke; Asante; Kwame Nkrumah; Jerry Rawlings; Kofi Busia; Ignatius Acheampong; Hilla Limann; John Kufuor.

GEARING UP for December elections

Francis Kokutse*, Debra Percival



Ghana's legacy of participation in UN missions. Member of Ghanaian police force Leopoldville, Republic of Congo (August 1960), part of two Ghanaian police contingents sent under UN Security Council resolution 1477/1966. © United Nations

*Presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled for December this year and eyes are on a successor to incumbent President John Agyekum Kufuor, in office since January 2001 for the permitted two four-year terms. Ghana has consistently topped international rankings for Africa on economic reform, respect of political rights, civil liberties and press freedoms over the past few years.** During his period in office, the country has registered good economic growth. Criticism levelled by the opposition is that President Kufuor is simply a lucky man with the surge in commodity prices such as gold, in his favour. The opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) is pointing at cronyism in government and says that nearing end of his administration, President Kufuor no longer has full support of his New Patriotic Party (NPP).*



Robust growth rates have been registered since 2000, in spite of oil price hikes. Growth of real domestic product 2000-2005, was up 3.7 per cent to 5.9 was 6.2 per cent in 2006. This is put down to the strong performance of cocoa production and marketing, construction, gold, forestry and logging transport storage and communications, according to European Commission statistics. In the first two months of 2008, Ghana's Central Bank Governor, Paul Acquah says, merchandised exports for the first two months of 2008 amounted to US\$868 million, compared with US\$690.3 million for the same period in 2007. Gold has shone, says Acquah: "Gold exports were US\$404.4 million for the first two months of 2008 as against US\$263.71 million recorded for the same period in 2007." He says exports of cocoa beans and products have, however, dipped slightly, amounting to US\$227.4 million for the first two months of 2008 compared with US\$247 million recorded for the same period in 2007.

Whereas oil and food price hikes are causing widespread dislocation of economies globally, Kufuor recently noted that, "because of its innate strength and resilience, our national economy has managed to withstand the terrible shocks of the market."

That does not mean that the country has been spared from the effects of the global crises. According to Kufuor, over the past year, the nation's crude oil import bill had risen to US\$2.1 bn from US\$500 million in 2005.

> Calming nerves

The President recently said, "some dire effects of the escalating cost of oil include hikes in the ex-pump price of petroleum and swelling transportation costs which are affecting the distribution of food and general goods, and making life more difficult for citizens." But to counter this, "agriculture has done well over the past year as

a result of which local staples like maize, yam, plantain, cassava and cocoyam are available" and the government is to step up attention and investments to agriculture. President Kufuor has promptly calmed the nerves of Ghanaians over increasing food prices.

Import duties on rice and vegetable oil were removed

to bring the price of the staples down. The government's Deputy Information Minister, Frank Agyekum, says that Ghana living standards survey shows that these are highest level in eight in eight years, but Elvis Efriyie Ankrah, deputy general secretary of the opposition NDC, disputes this. He says that the poor standard of living "has been brushed aside with figures which do not reflect the true living standards of the people."

Others argue that given healthy commodity exports, Ghana should be having "field day" which is not the case. Agriculture is still low tech. There are land tenure uncertainties, limited access to inputs and poor roads. And the industrial sector is dominated by small firms with low productivity. Foreign direct investment was only US\$156 million in 2005 according to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (UNCTAD).

Tony Aidoo, a former NDC defence minister says that the ruling NPP "came to power at the time the economy was recovered and foundations laid for a take-off. In 1982, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), which metamorphosed to the NDC, registered negative eight per cent growth. This picked up to a positive seven per cent growth and stabilised at five per cent by 2000."

Aidoo says, "the government is fortunate to be in power during a boom time for commodity prices," adding that it continued to increase



Ghanaian troops amongst those on UN mission in Sudan 2006. © United Nations

decisions continue to be taken at the centre and this has come to negate any attempt at decentralising government.”

Looking ahead, some political observers in Ghana are already talking about the country going the Kenyan way - referring to the disorder that followed the mishandling of the elections in Kenya says Vladimir Antwi-Danso, a senior Research Fellow at University of Ghana’s Centre for International Affairs. He cautions that, “There are pockets of conflicts that can escalate if the politicians do not handle the elections very well.”

Agyekum agrees that the, “security of the nation is at stake and it is for this reason that the government has strengthened the Electoral Commission to enable it to organise credible and fair elections so that the gains that the government has achieved are not derailed by rancour and violence during and after the elections.”

President Kufuor on his part has promised that, “The Electoral Commission would be provided with all the necessary resources to enable it organise fair and credible elections.”

So far, the political parties have embarked on their campaigns without any hitch but this does not mean that the government has no problems to deal, says John Larvie. “President Kufuor does not seem to have firm control over his ministers. This stems from the way he has frequently reshuffled them,” he says.

And the NDC’s Ankrah said there seems to be a kind of schism between the presidency and the ruling party. “When the President expressed support Stephen Ntim at the last national delegates congress, the party members decided to vote their own choice. These were followed by the delegates deciding against Alan Kyermanten, who was the President Kufuor’s choice as his heir apparent. Now the party is against him for deciding to nominate Evans Atta Mills, the NDC’s presidential candidate, for a national award.”

At the last elections, the John Kufuor won 52.45 per cent of the vote and John Atta-Mills of the National Democratic Congress, 44.64 per cent in Ghana’s traditional two-party race. Ankrah added that discerning voters “would best go into the elections to pick whom they think is best to put things right in the country”. ■

*Accra-based journalist.

** In the most recent ‘Doing Business Report’ (World Bank, 2006) Ghana ranks amongst the top 10 reformers. In 2005, Ghana ranked fourth in Africa in the growth competitive index of the World Bank.

taxes and utility tariffs thereby making life unbearable for the people.” He adds, “This government has been characterised by cronyism, vindication, and tribalism at level never seen in this country before.”

He is referring to the members of a previous NDC government being tried and jailed under the country’s notorious ‘Causing Financial Loss to the State.’ Incidentally, this was a law that was enacted by the NDC whilst it was in power. Frank Agyekum points out that, “no one is in jail today that has not been through the court.” He adds that the government has continued to receive praise world-wide for its good governance. “The government has repealed the criminal libel law and today people speak their mind and this is supported by the numerous FM radio stations scattered all over the country with their phone-in segments that allow ordinary Ghanaians to call in to air their views.”

➤ Influential civil society

And civil society’s influence in decision-making is increasing. Farmers’ movements, Trade Unions and professional associations have always been on the scene but others such as ‘home town’ development organisations; women’s rights groups, welfare clubs, parent-teacher associations and faith-based organisations are giving the new vibrancy to the civil society.

Says Steve Manteaw, campaign coordinator of ISODEC, a social development and advocacy Non Governmental Organisation (NGO): “The only attempt at real opposition in the country within the past seven years has come from civil society.” Manteaw says parliament is weak because of those who make it up. “Some are hollow and have no research background to properly analyse issues critically.” He said he was approached by government to help build the capacity of the members of the House this year for instance, holding a training workshop for 30 parliamentarians on the budget.

According to Manteaw, ISODEC has been backed by the Churches in efforts to strengthen democratic practice. He mentions the Christian Council which has been involved in the Global Campaign Against Poverty and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, also doing a lot of work in the area of good governance.

Taking some of the shine Ghana’s model international image is slow progress in gender equality. Women are under-represented in public life and have weak entitlements to economic assets. There is legislation to protect the rights of women and children such as the National Gender and Children’s policy 2004 and Early Childhood Care and Development policy, but implementation is trailing say observers.

And decentralisation is also lagging

with the concerns over local capacity. Although the 2007 budget authorised a significant transfer of civil servants from Ministries departments and agencies to district authorities for implementation 2008, political reforms at local level are still an issue. One third of the members of District Assemblies and the District Chief Executives are appointed by the President rather than being elected. And chieftaincy related disputes about land inheritance and succession potential to lead to local conflicts.

“The government has for the past seven years not been clear with what it wants to do with governance at the local level,” says John Larvie, Programme Coordinator of the Centre for Democratic Development expressing a personal view: “Even though governance at the local level is supposed to be non-partisan, the government has tainted it with the appointment of District Chief Executives along party lines. Even the 30 per cent members of the district assemblies that the government has appointed have been chosen purely on party lines and

Keywords

Ghana; politics; President John Agyekum Kufuor; Francis Kokutse; Debra Percival.

PROVIDENCE, prudence and planning

Past and present, political stability goes hand in hand with a robust economy which has enabled good economic planning and growth. New oil deposits bode well for the future.

Of all the countries in the region, it looks like Providence has chosen Ghana on which to bestow its kindness. The country has experienced all sorts of pains but has remained intact. Like other countries in the region, it has had its fair share of disruptions in its political life with military interventions. Fortunately, it has remained the only country that has not faced any serious civil strife.

Benefitting the incumbent government of President John Agyekum Kufuor, growth has been registered in the economy which remains

robust. And with the recent discovery of huge oil deposits, there are signs that the country is on course for a giant leap. President Kufuor could not hide his dreams of a better Ghana when he said in a recent broadcast to the nation that the hike in global oil prices was but a challenging moment and that “the inconveniences of the moment can only be temporary. Let us therefore look confidently into the future with hope.”

Kufuor is right. With oil finds of more than 3.9 billion barrels, Ghanaians can be said to be blessed at this time of their development and this could be due to Providence smiling on the

people. Some analysts, however, disagree that it is all down to Providence. The country has since the 1960s been preparing for its future prosperity, they claim. “There has been a lot of work in that direction,” said Fred Sagoe, a former employee of the *Ghana National Petroleum Corporation*. “Prospecting for oil has been all over the country and it is just beginning to pay off. The country has also got a sizeable number of petroleum engineers who are working all over the world and so, it means the country was silently preparing for its future,” he added.



Business Area, Accra, Ghana 2008.

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A buoyant commodity trade.
© EC/T. Dorn



Nouakchott Opus incertum, artwork by Philippe Bernard.
© Philippe Bernard (www.afriqueinvisu.org)

► Kwame Nkrumah's legacy

Vladimir Antwi-Danso, a senior research fellow of the University of Ghana's Centre for International Affairs says "the foundation of the country's economy was laid during the first republic under the late Kwame Nkrumah." At the time, not many people realised that most of the policies being put into place would benefit the country later. There were those who criticised Nkrumah but his policies set the tone for the direction in which the country is moving today.

Antwi-Danso said that at the outset Ghana was a closed economy. An import substitution programme was put in place which at the time was condemned as a bad choice. However, it "brought about the construction of infrastructure which generated a high employment in the country," he said. A good example is the Volta Hydro-electric Project at Akosombo which is today the country's main source of power. In addition, Tema Port and its entire township which was part of Nkrumah's industrialisation plan, has remained one of the main legacies that Nkrumah left the country.

Antwi-Danso said the government at the time also embarked upon an accelerated educational programme through the Ghana Education Trust that it set up. This led to the building of more schools throughout the country. "The consequence of this is that the country has highly qualified human resources which it has even exported to some developed countries and is now benefiting from remittances," he said.

Governor of the Bank of Ghana, Paul Acquah, has confirmed the growth in remittances. Private inward transfers through the banks and

finance companies for the first two months of 2008 amounted to US\$1.380 bn which represents a 48.7 per cent increase over US\$927.9 million recorded for the corresponding period in 2007. "Of the total transfers at the end of February 2008, US\$275.5 million accrued to individuals, compared with US\$202.3 million in February 2007," Acquah told a recent press conference in Accra.

Whatever growth that the country is enjoying today has been sustained from the past. Some economic analysts say between 1970s and the late 1980s, the country went through some hard times. Much credit is hence given to former President, Jerry Rawlings, who was able to maintain political stability in the country at a time most of its neighbours were crumbling under all sorts of civil strife.

► Safe haven in Ghana

Jacob Fredua, a taxi driver in Accra recalls that, "at the time that Liberia and Sierra Leone were under fire, Rawlings was able to keep Ghana intact. When Togo was under fire under the late Gnassingbe Eyadema, Ghana provided a safe haven for Togolese. When the Ivorian decided to kill each other, it was our country that was used to find a solution to the problem in Côte d'Ivoire."

This does not mean that Ghana has not got any problems to deal with. There have been pockets of insecurity in some parts of the country. In the Northern, Upper East Region and lately, the Volta regions, there have been outbreaks of civil disorder but these have not disturbed the peace, although loss of life has resulted.

Antwi-Danso says that political stability that has given Ghana an edge over her neighbours. This has enabled the country to grow. "A mas-

sive injection of capital is largely responsible for lifting the the country up," he added.

He is right. When Ghana went through a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the mid-1980s, foreign capital was used to revive an ailing economy. "The current regime which has been in power for the past seven years has been able to continue with the rebuilding process through prudent economic policies," added Antwi-Danso. The present government has also been able to generate substantial foreign investment by declaring the country a Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC). This provided multilateral debt relief. "About US\$6.2 bn of debt was written off through the HIPC status declared by the country," said Antwi-Danso.

Thus, locally generated funds that might have gone into debt repayment were used to instead to finance infrastructure projects hence generating jobs within the economy. This has enabled the country to maintain its growth and control inflation up to this year when the global increases in oil prices and related food crisis affected some of the modest growth recorded over the past six years.

Notwithstanding this, Antwi-Danso says the government has also been faithful to economic wisdom. He gives credit to the "the Bank of Ghana which has also been up and coming with its monetary policy." **F.K.** ■

Keywords

Francis Kokutse; Ghana; Politics; President John Agyekom Kufuor; Food crisis; Oil.

New EU SUPPORT used for governance and transport

A continued focus on budget support, governance and establishing Ghana as a transport hub are all prominent under the six-year €367M 10th European Development Fund spending package drawn up between the EU and the government of Ghana (2008-2013).

A €175M sum is earmarked for General Budget Support. The EU is one of several donors which are channelling development funds directly into the government's budget to aid,

for example, economic reforms and private sector development.

Since 2003, donors providing this sort of aid have come together in a Multi-Donor Budget Support (MDBS) forum. They currently num-

ber ten: the EU, France, Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank. MDBS parties regularly monitor budget aid and discuss benchmarks for

Accra beach.
© Igino Schraff



Ghana in figures*



Land area: 92,100 sq. miles

Independence: 6 March 1957

President: John Agyekum Kufuor (New Patriotic Party)

Population: 23.1million

Main exports: cocoa, gold, timber, bauxite, aluminium, manganese ore

Main imports: foodstuffs, fuel, capital goods

Value of exports: US \$4 bn

Value of imports: US \$8 bn (2007)

Life expectancy at birth in years: 59.7

Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births): 76

GNI: US \$12.8 bn

GNI: per capita US \$510

UNDP index: 135 out of 177 (2007-2008 United Nations Human Development Report)

National legislature: 230 members elected by universal suffrage every 4 years. Next Presidential and Parliamentary election due in December 2008

Main political parties: New Patriotic Party (NPP), National Democratic Congress (NDC), People's National Convention (PNC), Convention People's Party (CPP), United Ghana Movement (UGM) and National Reform Party (NRP).

Sources: Government of Ghana, European Commission, World Bank, UNDP, CIA

* Statistics for 2006 unless otherwise stated

funding eligibility by measuring aspects such as the government's progress in applying stability-oriented macroeconomic policies, public finance reform and meeting poverty reduction targets. The EU is expected to provide two separate budget aid programmes under the 10th EDF, each of three years' duration.

> Governance

The €95M sum earmarked for governance will help move decentralisation forward. Funds to this area will in part be budget support and part project aid, indicate European Commission officials, financing projects such as feeder roads, water and sanitation installations. This funding will tie in with the 2000 microprojects mounted under previous EDFs, mainly in education, health and water. A recent evaluation found that the involvement of District Assemblies was crucial to the success of such projects.

Monies set aside for governance will be used to strengthen civil society (€8M) and non-executive governance institutions (€4M) so they can both engage in dialogue with local government and act as a watchdog. The funding under the 10th EDF will especially target grassroots and rural organisations. Funding might also eventually go to non-executive governance institutions, such as the Ghana Audit Service, to help strengthen its links with parliament.

> Transport

A €76M sum is set aside for transport. The transport sector is seen as key to poverty reduction. The EU has given its backing to the drafting of a National Transport Integration Plan covering ports, harbours, railways and roads. With a new focus on regional integration, the 10th EDF will look at upgrading and construction of trunk roads to boost Ghana as a regional transport hub. The rehabilitation of trunk roads in Western Ghana is targeted, but new construction here will only be carried out following social and environmental evaluation. If there is insufficient evidence of the benefits, then attention may be turned to other trunk roads such as the continuation of the Eastern corridor, indicate EU officials.

> Trade and conservation

Of the €21M remaining, a €9M sum is expected to go to trade facilitation, Ghana having recently initialled an interim partnership agreement with the EU. Funds are expected to help the country be more competitive in non-

traditional exports and might also be channelled to improve customs documentation €8M of the remaining sum is earmarked for natural resource management, including the strengthening of key regulatory bodies involved in natural resource management and also for backing of the EU's Forestry Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) scheme to curtail illegal logging.

And €2M of the total budget is earmarked for migration, the diaspora and security.

One such project, indicate EU officials, could be the compilation of a directory of Ghanaian professionals, posting details of their respective businesses with easy-access email addresses. Technical assistance for improving the capacity of the police and migration agencies in law enforcement is also earmarked.

Five per cent of Ghana's population is part of the diaspora, with an estimated one million Ghanaians residing in Africa (cited in *Twum Baah* 2005) and 189,461 in the migration database of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, not including Germany. Other studies suggest there are 600,000 Ghanaians living in the UK and the European Union alone.

The diaspora is also a substantial foreign exchange earner through both remittances to Ghana and tourism. Many Ghanaians are highly skilled and work in the health sector overseas. Construction in Ghana is a leading growth sector and is partly financed by remittances. The law has recently changed to allow double nationality for Ghanaians and extend voting to Ghanaians living abroad. In 2006, a Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations was also created. There is also a further two million for a technical cooperation facility.

In addition to the focal package known as the 'A' package, a further €6.6M for the first two years of the 10th EDF are budgeted in a 'B' package covering unforeseen needs such as emergency assistance, internationally-agreed debt relief initiatives and support to mitigate adverse effects of instability in export earnings. As part of the West African regional organisation, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Ghana will also benefit from the EU's 10th regional indicative programme for the West African region and is eligible for further financing both under the EU's Energy and Water facilities and the EU-Africa partnership on infrastructure. **D.P.** ■

Keywords

Ghana; EDF; Budget aid; Governance.

A PIVOTAL role in the region

Ghanaian flag from 'Elmina. Building on the past to create a better future' by E.van Steekelenburg (ed.).
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Ghana may not be as big economic player bigger on as its neighbour but is, however, successfully punching above its weight in regional fora.

There must be something about Ghana that has given the country a leading role in West Africa even though it is not a big economic player. The people pride themselves as very peaceful and this has been reflected in the fact that the country has escaped all the traumas of civil wars suffered by her neighbours.

In April this year, *African Business*, a pan-African magazine published in London, ranked Nigeria third in a list of African countries with the most 'top' companies on the continent. Thirty Nigerian companies featured among Africa's 'Top 200.' And the magazine's regional statistics for West Africa are even more revealing. In the magazine's ranking for the 'Top 50' companies in West Africa, Nigeria heads the list with 45 companies, whilst just two Ghanaian companies featured. What's more these, *Standard Chartered Bank* and *Ecobank Ghana Limited*, are not indigenous Ghanaian-owned companies.

Given this, it would be expected that Nigeria rather than Ghana would play a leading role in the regional scheme of things in West Africa. The opposite seems to be the case. An Accra-based analyst, Jos Anyima-Ackah, says whilst Ghana can boast of economic stability and growth under a sustained democratic system, this cannot be said of Nigeria.

Anyima-Ackah has observed that Ghana has laid claim to the centre stage of business investment in the African continent and sub-

region which Nigeria has not been able to match. These facts worry some Nigerians who see their country as a giant with no bite.

Vladimir Antwi-Danso, senior research fellow of the University of Ghana's Centre for International Affairs says, "the reason why, in spite of the lack of big business players, Ghana still attracts serious business is because of the perception that Nigeria is a corrupt country. It does not mean that there is no corruption in Ghana. It exists but in a subtle form whereas in Nigeria, it is widespread and this has helped Ghana to provide a lead role in the sub-region which it does by example."

➤ Ghana's leverage

Throughout the country's history, it has provided a safe haven for most of its neighbours. During the Nigerian civil wars, it was at Aburi, a small town outside Accra that the warring factions brokered their peace. Ghana has provided refuge for fleeing Togolese, Ivorians, Sierra Leoneans and Liberians during the civil wars in their various countries. This is what has provided Ghana some leverage over the other countries in the affairs of the regional grouping, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

According to one Nigerian journalist, Laide Thomas, "apart from the peace that Ghanaians take for granted themselves,

Ghana is the only country in the region that has the ability to make things move.

There is uninterrupted water supply in most towns across Ghana and electricity too, so when Ghanaian leaders talk about what should drive a country, the other leaders listen."

It is not surprising that Antwi-Danso says, "Ghana has become a destination for the establishment of business." Already the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has decided to site the body's Central Bank in the country. The West Africa Monetary Institute is based in Ghana and all this has come to prove that "Ghana indeed plays a pivotal role in the ECOWAS agenda." The role it continues to play has gradually turned the country into a trade centre in West Africa. Tema Port outside Accra has become the transit base for land-locked countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger and this is "because the country has opened its doors to the movement of goods and services."

F.K. ■

Keywords

Francis Kokutse; Regional co-operation; Ghana; ECOWAS; finance.

GHANA friendly to a fault

Some Ghanaians complain that they are friendly to a fault. This has been translated as 'Akwaaba' in the local Akan language, meaning 'welcome'. It is reflected in the unconditional welcome when you arrive in any home in Ghana. This sort of friendliness is the nectar attracting foreign visitors like insects.

To prepare for the sudden interest in the country as a tourist destination, the authorities have embarked on an ambitious plan to attract at least 700,000 visitors by the end of next year. They have cause to be hopeful because since 2005, when the country recorded a total of 450,000 visitors, the figures have gone up annually, says E. V. Hagan, a Director at the Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations.

In 2006, there were 500,000 visitors and last year a total of 600,000 were recorded. As a result, Hagan says the government is trying to use the sector as part of a national effort to reduce poverty by encouraging people to create jobs through training in skills to enable them to generate revenue for themselves.

The sudden interest in Ghana as a tourist destination is not by accident. Wilhelm Koch, a German on vacation in Accra said, "the country was recommended to me by a friend who two years ago spent four weeks here. This encouraged me to pay a visit and to see what he means by friendly people." Koch says, "I am

not disappointed with my visit because the people are very nice people and you forget you are away from home. What is missing is a coordinated plan to make tourism very fulfilling."

Hagan says the government is, "using the next four years to improve facilities at all tourist attractions in order to arrive at this goal. As a result, we are developing all tourist attractions in the country in order to make them accessible to visitors."

> Development of tourist attractions

Twenty-one tourist attractions have been selected for development. These include the old slave market site at Assin Manso and the final crossing point for slaves at Assin Praso. In addition, the biggest tree in West Africa, the site at Akim Oda, Salaga Slave market and the Wli waterfalls, are all to be made more attractive to visitors.

In spite of all these efforts, Osah Thompson-Mensah, an analyst at *Ecobank* in Accra says

the country has much more to do to be able to achieve its aim of a better tourist sector for the economy.

"Existing hotels charge too much for the services they provide which is anyway not top-class," said Thompson-Mensah. In addition, the facilities are not available to meet the needs of visitors. These are areas that agencies involved in tourist development should look at."

But the country's stability and the high international profile are in its favour. Thompson-Mensah said, "it is important that investment in the sector increase so that the country can take advantage of the benefits of tourism."

He said it is clear that Ghana's tourism has a good future: "What is left is to ensure that the challenges that the sector faces should not hold it back."

F.K. ■

Keywords

Ghana; Tourism; Francis Kokutse.



Waiting for fishermen
© Igino Schraffi

Nana Kobina Gyan Square, Elmina from 'Elmina. Building on the past to create a better future' by E.van Steekelenburg (ed.).
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Restoring the PAST for the FUTURE

In restoring part of Ghana's past in both Elmina and Ussherstown-Old Accra, the EU has played its part in boosting tourist arrivals in Ghana. The Elmina project has been a "life saver", says one resident.

A €2M project under the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) began in 2004 as part of the 'Elmina' 2015 strategy: Building on the past to create a better future'

Derived from 'La Mina' in Portuguese meaning 'mine', Elmina is a key town in Ghana's past and was at the heart of West Africa's gold trade in the 16th century. The castle of St. George d'Elmina dates back to 1482. The Dutch took over control of Elmina from the Portuguese in 1637, making the town their Gold Coast headquarters and by the end of the 17th century, a centre of the slave trade to plantations in the Americas.

Up to the 19th century, it thrived through food production, fishing and service industries such as transport and storage. The Dutch eventually abandoned the slave trade and in 1872 sold their possessions on the Gold Coast to the British in exchange for rights to Bengkulu in Sumatra, Indonesia. Elmina town was bombarded by the British because of the refusal of the King of Elmina to accept Britain's new rule. Accra became the centre of British colonial administration and Elmina's importance diminished.

> New lease of life

Both the castle and fort of Elmina are World heritage sites of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and are much visited by Ghana's diaspora in tracing the suffering endured by their West African descendants. To celebrate 300 years of Ghanaian-Dutch diplomatic relations, the 'Elmina 2015 project - Building the Past to create a better future' was launched. In 2002 and in consultation with the Dutch, local people, including church leaders and hotel owners and many others, drew up some 80 projects to give the town a new lease of life.

Ninth EDF financing went to 10 areas: repair to the entrance and upper terraces of St. George's castle; renovation and landscaping of Fort St Jago; tourist facilities in Elmina; the renovation of 15 historic houses; construction of staircases to St Joseph's and Java Hill; a face lift of Nana Kobina Gyan Square; renovation of the 19th century chapel and community hall; renovation of the Dutch cemetery and surroundings; expansion of the Catholic museum and renovation of four Asafo posts.

Not only is Elmina now firmly on the tourism map, but there have been many economic spin-offs in both the public and private sector such as bars, bed and breakfasts and fish processing. This revival is traced in an illustrated brochure, freshly published by the EC's Delegation in Accra. Quoted in the publication, Christopher Ewusi, manager of the Elmina tourist office, says with 15-20 visitors a day Elmina is receiving double the number of tourists in 2007 and local people rent the spruced-up facilities in the square for big family events like weddings and funerals.

€305,100 (around 400,000 Ghana Cedi) of 9th EDF monies have gone to restore Ussher Fort-Old Accra, also on UNESCO's heritage lists. It is another reminder of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. **D.P.** ■

www.encounterelmina.com
www.delgha.eu.europa.eu

Keywords

Ghana; tourism; UNESCO; Debra Percival.

Réunion

Distilling cultures, evaporating prejudices

Report by Hegel Goutier

Réunion has one of the most ethnically mixed populations on the planet. Most notable of all, however, is the most unusual religious mix, where an individual can be a member of two religions for example Catholic and Tamil or Catholic and Muslim. This spiritual mish-mash is linked closely to the island's history.

Today, the island is engaged in economic development to secure its future. 30 per cent of its energy already comes from sustainable sources and it aims to be the first country in the world to make that 100 per cent. What's more, it is a very beautiful island with fabulous beaches (excellent surfing) and high mountains, at times covered in snow. The people are also extremely friendly and hospitable. However, rest assured... there is no such thing as paradise on earth!

The history of Réunion is of an island that initially had no indigenous population, the earliest inhabitants only arriving in the 17th century. This initial community consisted of French and Madagascan men accompanied by Madagascan women, the latter in insufficient numbers in proportion to the men. This is why ethnic mixing – or *métissage* – is present in the very beginnings of the island's population.

> A history of women

For a long time after the initial colonists, few women arrived on the island as it was viewed as inhospitable and could only be reached after a hazardous sea voyage. The men, the settlers and those were initially their slaves and later hired labour, had to make do with the few available women. The diverse origins of these women and their backgrounds of different religions – Catholicism, Madagascan faiths, Hinduism and later Islam – were part of the mix from which has emerged a *pot pourri* of cultures. This mixing produced an exceptional physical beauty in the island's population, an

ease in human contacts and a relative religious tolerance if not complete openness.

> A sharing of the gods

Most of the country's Chinese are Catholics who at the same time practise certain rituals of their country of origin. The dual Muslim and Catholic faith also exists, although it is rarer today. Prisca, a young Indo-European, is one example. More Europeans than Indians work in the hospitality industry, she explains: "It is normal; everybody is of mixed race here. I am three-quarters European and I grew up with two religions. A *Réunionnais* who is not mixed at all simply does not exist, even if somebody believes that is what they are."

Fatura, a third generation Indo-Muslim, considers herself a Muslim but does not reject the legacy of the Christian education long imposed by the island's schools. She has no hesitation in inviting in a man who is taking a picture of her lovely home, to share Sunday afternoon tea with herself and her three daughters and their daughters. In many places that would be seen as scandalous. Fatura owns a lingerie shop in town and is a perfect example of the kindness and hospitality of the *Réunionnais* as well as the spirit of openness in religious practices.

The most beautiful testimony to this mixing of faiths is probably the more than 500 chapels dedicated to Saint Expedit that are dotted around the island, in front of which Tamils and Christians alike come to perform their devotions. They are all the same. The saint is Christian but the decor and symbolism of the colours are Indian.

This faith is also very different to the exploitation of religion found in many very poor countries where hope is the only social security. There is no abject poverty on Réunion and the poor receive some social assistance.

> The positive knock-on effects of assimilation

One important element in understanding Réunion is the extreme 'assimilationism' of the French administration on this island over a

long period. After slavery was abolished (1848), when the colony had to employ the services of labour recruited from Southern India and the Bombay region, China and, somewhat later, Vietnam and elsewhere every effort was made to avoid these distinct cultural communities taking root. The French language, the Catholic religion, and the Napoleonic Code were points of reference imposed on all. Also imposed were French or Frenchified names, including family names. Today this presents quite a headache for genealogists. This forced assimilation has probably contributed to the open attitude found on Réunion both to relations between 'races' and in religious practice. The consequences of political events are ultimately often independent of any moral judgment.

> The Zoréoles

It was not until the middle of the 20th century that religious freedom was fully recognised. Now, the latest arrivals on the island have mixed very little: virtually not at all in the case of the Pakistani and Chinese merchants and less than average in the case of the Zoreys, even if 'Zoréoles' – children of Zoreys and Creoles – are not that rare.

Christophe Tézier, Editor-in-chief of one of Réunion's two leading newspapers, believes that "the mixed race harmony is very real. Mixed race marriages are commonplace. Even if there are very closed Pakistani and Chinese communities and a degree of isolation on the part of certain Arab women and the occasional white family."

But, overall, Réunionnais society is probably unique, causing Paul Vergès, President of the island's Regional Council, to say that, "Réunion has gone beyond the stage of cultural diversity and is now an *intra cultural* society. The whole population is aware that various cultural elements from Africa, Asia and Europe have been integrated." **H.G.** ■

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Zoré; Paul Vergès; La Réunion; Zoréoles.

City of Saint-Denis, Tamil temple. Catholicism, Madagascan faiths, Hinduism and later Islam – are all part of *pot pourri* of cultures 2008. © Hegel Goutier

HISTORY

City of Saint-Paul. Statue of the Virgin.
To avoid cultural community distinction: French language, Catholic religion and Napoleonic Code were imposed on all, 2008. © Hegel Goutier

Réunion has been officially inhabited since around 1663 when the first real colonists arrived. Many of the first inhabitants of the island were deported from Madagascar in 1646 by Jacques de Pronis, head of the French India Company's trading post, for having criticised the misappropriation of funds to give to a Madagascan mistress.

However, the island was not completely virgin territory. Arab sailors, most probably Egyptians, had arrived in the 12th century and on the first nautical maps, it was known as 'Dina Morgabim' or 'Mghrebin'. Later, the Portuguese visited the island when exploring the Cape of Good Hope route to the Indies. The first traveller to name the island was Pedro Mascarenhas on his return voyage from Goa between 1512 and 1516. This is where the name the Mascarene Islands, which Réunion shares with Mauritius and its sister island Rodrigues, comes from.

Sailors made it a regular port of call, appreciating the beauty of its flora and the diversity of its fauna. In 1638, Captain Goubert established French sovereignty on the island then called 'Mascarin' in French, in the name of Louis XIII. Four years later, the French India Company obtained a ten-year concession from Cardinal Richelieu (who formed the company) with Jacques de Pronis appointed as head of the trading post based at Fort Dauphin, Madagascar. In 1649, Captain Roger Lebourg took possession of the island in the name of the King and renamed it 'Bourbon Island'. He found the exiles - who had been presumed dead - in good health and rescued them.

> Refuge of the mutineers

In 1654, Flacourt, who succeeded de Pronis, adopted the old ways of doing things by removing anyone standing in his way.

This time the victim was Antoine Couillard, together with seven French volunteers and six Madagascan servants. They were confined to Bourbon Island for four years before escaping by boat. Then in 1663, Louis Payen, together with a companion and ten Madagascan servants,

arrived on the island. They were true colonists and established the beginnings of farming and cattle rearing. Later, Etienne Regnault, governor of Bourbon Island, arrived with around 20 colonists in 1665. Madagascans were also dispatched there as part of the takeover of the island.

The colony developed very slowly in the beginning. The introduction of coffee plants,

however, brought from the Yemen in 1715, resulted in a much faster growth. Also during that period, the French India Company had become a virtual state within a state, controlling the entire Bourbon Island economy and trade between the colony and its homeland and making huge profits in the process. This was the time when the notorious Olivier Le Vasseur, known as 'La Buse', was one of many pirates sailing the waters of the Indian Ocean. In April 1721, it was said that he captured 'Vierge du Cap', a ship that had been damaged in a cyclone, and stole a large amount of gold, diamonds and precious stones which he supposedly buried near the town of Saint-Gilles. Le Vasseur was sent to the galleys in Bourbon in 1727, but today still it is said on the island that every so often some local landowners become incredibly rich through excavation in this area!

The coffee crop provided a major economic boom for almost a century. After coffee production declined, it fell back on the spice trade, introduced by Pierre Poivre in 1767.

> Bonaparte Island

The French Revolution then arrived. The 'Black Code', (Code noir) which had been in force since 1685, still only gave slaves the same status as personal property and in contrast to the West Indies, there was no opposition to slavery on the Bourbon Island in 1789. The February 4 decree on the abolition of slavery which was implemented in the West Indies, especially in San Domingo (Haiti), was ignored on Réunion. Instead, it brought about a 'union' created out of a desire for independence. This lasted until the reintroduction of slavery by Napoleon in May 1802. To mark this event, the island changed its name in 1806 to become 'Bonaparte Island'.

The English, who had since arrived in Mauritius and Rodrigues, succeeded in conquering Bonaparte Island in 1810, after several attempts before they eventually handed it back under the Treaty of Paris of 1814 (which actually took place in April 1815). At this point, the island took back



its Bourbon title with France having been restored to a monarchy again. Both Mauritius and Rodrigues remained under English control.

> Monoculture of sugar cane and a period of despair

During the 19th century, agriculture was based on a single crop - sugar cane. This led to the population almost doubling in size between 1848, the year when slavery was actually abolished, and 1869. After a period of great prosperity, there was a sugar crisis in 1860. Cyclones, cholera and social problems meant desperate times for those on the island. From 1880, France lost interest in Réunion. This benefitted Madagascar. Attempts were made at diversification from sugar to vanilla and other fragrant plants, principally geraniums. Eventually, Réunion became the leading global exporter of essential oils.

> Civil commitment

Despite having no military conscription, many Réunion islanders signed up for action during the First World War. There were 15,000 volunteers, of which 3,000 died. During the Second World War, the local authorities sided with Vichy leading to an English blockade. The island was liberated in 1942 by the Free French Forces. Yet the country was still underdeveloped.

The Réunion Communist Party led by the Vergès family and the railway union, fought to establish the island as a French local administrative area. A strategy drawn up by Réunion, Martinique (with Aimé Césaire as flag-bearer), Guadeloupe and Guyana ended with the adoption of the law on regional government on March 19, 1946.

The 1960s saw a great deal of modernisation. Réunion made up lots of lost ground and today

looks like a modern European society with its road networks, telecommunications and other 21st century infrastructure.

Réunion is France's only region with a single 'département'. A project is currently on the table to divide the region into two 'départements', supported by the Communists and a right wing party, with St Pierre as the capital of the second 'département.' Paul Vergès, who was re-elected in 2004, currently heads the Regional Council of the 'département' which manages the island's development plans with Nassimah Dindar of the UMP party as head of the 'département's' General Council: one is a Communist, the other a Muslim woman. **H.G.** ■

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Dina Morgabim; Mghrebin; Mascarene Islands; Madagascar; Bourbon Island; Paul Vergès; Nassimah Dindar.



Terms for understanding REUNION'S HISTORY

Creoles: 'Gros Blancs', 'Petits Blancs' and 'Cafres'. Gros Blancs: white landowners (descendants of rich plantation owners). Petits Blancs: poor rural whites living in the highlands). Cafres (Creoles with African ancestry): Réunion black people (from the Arabic kafir: infidel). They are distinct from the non-Creole blacks of Comores and Mahorais. Between blacks and whites, there is a range of skin tones which reduces tension considerably between the two groups. The Creoles make up two-thirds of the population.

Malbars: Indians (Hindu) who arrived in the middle of the 19th century as 'workers' on the sugar cane plantations. They make up 20 per

cent of the population. They are mainly Tamils from the Madras region and are principally plantation workers. Some have acquired significant wealth.

Zarabes: Around 5 per cent of the population. Muslim Indians, mainly from the Gujarat region (north of Bombay). They arrived at the beginning of the 20th century. They control almost half of the island's economy: businesses, textiles and the automotive industry.

Chinese: They arrived between 1860 and 1870, and again in the second decade of the 20th century. They mainly originate from the Canton region. Small businesses, groceries

and increasingly mass-market goods. They make up just 3 per cent of the population. Catholics and other faiths.

Zorèys: Executives and officials from mainland France, experts and specialists usually on short or medium-term assignments. Around 6 per cent of the population.

The 'Gros Blancs' and the Zarabes are at the top of the social pyramid. The 'Petits Blancs' and non-Creole blacks are at the bottom. **H.G.** ■

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Creole; malbar; zarabe; zorèy.

Montgaillard. Headquarters of the
'Conseil Régional' 2008. © Hegel Gouffier

Réunion's nest egg is **HIGH TECHNOLOGY.**

Surprisingly perhaps.

Speaking with Paul Vergès, President of the Regional Council

Paul Vergès is true to form. His culture and way with words come across during press conferences. He is noted for his public speaking that leaves even his critics spellbound. Today he addressed his great concern about the current situation on Réunion, describing his country as being, "on state of alert no. 1" in view of the general situation the planet finds itself in. His solutions require investment in technology of the future – to which Réunion is committed – as well as co-development strategies with the country's Indian Ocean neighbours.

He started off by captivating his audience with a polished dialectic on the connection between various protests around the world, the global effects of the Clinton-Obama duo,

the upcoming elections to the European Commission presidency*, world demographics, the increased frequency of tornadoes in the United States and other states in turmoil caused by climatic change – the floods in Burma being the most recent example – and the price of raw materials and oil. Then he turned attention to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states and the European Union (EU) and economic globalisation.

"Confronted by this, Réunion must develop quickly but at the same time it is currently bearing the full brunt of global phenomena". Farmers on Réunion fear that the EPAs will bring competition with both their neighbours

and also partners of the co-development strategy proposed by Vergès. The private sector is anxious about the abolition of the current 'dock dues' that allow the island's municipalities to levy a special tax on imported products. And what about the famous 'Train-Tram' project designed to revolutionise mobility on the island that is very vulnerable to the sharp rise in energy and raw material prices?

Paul Vergès gave an exclusive interview to *The Courier* providing an insight into his development strategies for the region.

What margin of manoeuvre do you have in light of your analysis of the global issues which weigh upon such a small territory as Réunion?

One thing that's obvious is the humility of our population and land. In putting together our development strategy, we have taken on board fixed global trends. One of these is demographic growth. We too have experienced this. Our population has risen from 300,000 in 1946 to over 800,000 today. We will soon reach the million mark. Then there is climate change. People admire our beaches, unaware that 50 per cent of our coral reefs are dead and that soon there will be no more beaches at all for our pleasure. The third major element is trade. Sugar cane and sugar are Réunion's principal products. As a result of agreements between the European Union and the WTO, sugar prices will fall by 36 per cent by 2013. What will we do after that date? We export to the value of €400,000 and import to the value of €4,300,000, all of which is crippled by the cost of transport.

So what are your strengths?

We are located in the tropics. The 21st century will be the century of space and sea. On one hand, like French Guyana, we enjoy the most favourable location for the conquest of space. One third less energy is required to launch a satellite from here than from the US. On the other hand, we are surrounded by sea, the starting point of all climate change. Here there are opportunities for research and innovation into fishery resources and biodiversity for instance. Réunion is an EU's most remote regions and a French overseas department. We have benefited from structural aid and transfers in terms of education. We have used these resources to provide technical training and university education. We are taking technology and knowledge as far as possible. One of the 10 French cyclotrons used in cancer research is based here. We have been hit by Tchikungunya fever, but have set up a research centre on emerging diseases.

We are going to install a satellite system to monitor environmental changes within a diameter of 2,500 km allowing us to forecast climate disasters such as drought and coastal erosion as well as monitor sea temperatures at various levels and harvests.

We have got the French Parliament to pass a bill making adapting to climate change a national priority. When you look at the "Grenelle de l'environnement", you see that France today is at the same stage in its thinking as we were a decade ago. At this time we already wanted to be independent in terms of energy. We anticipated the Kyoto provisions. Here on Réunion we will be the first country in the world to meet 100 per cent of its own

energy needs. We are already at 30 per cent, which is three times the EU average, due to hydropower and biomass in particular.

We have embarked on research on the Antarctic swell that breaks on our shores. Portugal is to date the only other country doing this. We are going to study the dynamism of ocean currents and install the equivalent of wind turbines on the seabed. Two parallel trials are being conducted, one in Brittany in France and another elsewhere in Europe. We are using another form of dynamism, the temperature difference between the seabed and the surface, from 5 degrees to 20 degrees.

There is also a way of using the flows of drinking water that circulate at a depth of 100 metres. We have such water. In Hawaii it is already bottled and sold. We have sent a mission there to see how we could do the same.

How do your Indian Ocean neighbours fit into the co-development strategy that you are promoting in light of Réunion's assets?

The situation that is staring us in the face means that we have to confront globalisation. We must transform European Union (EU) and African, Caribbean and Pacific relations. But how can we strengthen our integration into the EU and at the same time into our geo-economic environment? We have developed a co-development strategy. This cooperation does not involve a developed country establishing contacts with developing countries. When Madagascar had 4 million inhabitants, Réunion had 250,000. Today Madagascar has 19 million and Réunion, 800,000. By 2025, we will have a population of 1 million and Madagascar, 30 million. By around 2050, the population of Madagascar will have climbed to 43.5 million, which is eleven times the figure in 1940. We will therefore have on our doorstep a country more populous than France in the mid-20th century.

The French Maritime Research Institute has estimated that 97 per cent of the catches made by large trawlers in the Indian Ocean are by countries outside of the Indian Ocean (Europe, the Pacific). But we are experiencing major population growth and thus have a great need for protein. The EU's duty is therefore to help the Indian Ocean countries develop their fleet. To come back to the local situation, together with our neighbours Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles and Comoros, we want to develop fishing activity that is able to meet the protein requirements of the 40 million Madagascans we will have by the middle of the century. **H.G. ■**

* Article 14. 1 Lisbon Treaty

"The European Parliament shall, jointly with the Council, exercise legislative and budgetary functions. It shall exercise functions of political control and consultation as laid down in the Treaties. It shall elect the President of the Commission."

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Paul Vergès; EPAs; technology; Réunion.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

THE SHADOWS OF THE SUN

Réunion's biggest social problem is the high level of unemployment which currently stands at 30 per cent. According to the sociologist, Laurent Médéa, this explains why young people are sometimes disillusioned. Assistance from France makes up most of the island's income. Companies are often financially supported by aid from France and the European Union and this frequently makes them uncompetitive. Another blight, often denounced by the local press, is the black economy – drugs, poaching and gambling.

The Chaudron anti-corruption riots in 1991, to protect the freedom of radio and television, are an example of popular discontent. The result was a 'clean-hands' operation and a number of local political leaders were sent to prison. Almost all of the political groups were affected by the campaign of Camille Sudre, who led the fight for transparency and was then elected President of the Regional Council in 1992. His election was invalidated owing to procedural issues, but his wife, Maggie Sudre, was elected in his place in 1993.

Réunion has 63,000 welfare recipients and 100,000 illiterate citizens out of a population of 800,000. **H.G. ■**

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Sudre; Laurent Médéa.

City of Saint-Denis. Museum Léon Dierx,
Installation. Photo: Hegel Goutier

How LONG will it LAST?

Gilbert Pounia and his group Ziskakan are still worshipped in Réunion

Ziskakan? From Creole means “How long will it last?” That’s the question artists asked themselves some thirty years ago when the pillars of popular culture were looked down on and the Creole language was banned in schools. Maloya music and dance were dismissed by the major production studios and the drum was cursed and seen as something close to savagery. Pounia is an iconic figure in his homeland, but he rarely uses “I” in conversation giving, modestly, the credit for everything he has achieved, created and changed to “one” or “we”. It’s more than mere modesty; it’s real style.

Pounia explains that Ziskakan is a musical wave that comes from about everywhere – India, Asia and Europe. As he says himself, “As with all of the islands, our culture is born of rape and violence, but what has emerged is nevertheless something beautiful, the fruits of suffering. In fact, different kinds of suffering side-by-side, which have combined together. Ziskakan is a reflection of this country.”

Ziskakan is more than just a group of artists. It is a movement. Established around 30 years ago, Pounia’s group began by playing local music - Sega and Maloya. This type of music used to be barely tolerated and was almost banned but thanks to widespread action has reached out to more and more Réunion islanders: “Our culture is no longer clandestine.” Three decades ago, it was a big deal to see the large drum up there on an official stage. It was seen as provocation.

In the beginning, the group played its gigs in the sugar-cane fields but Pounia and his friends went on to teach their music to the people and to raise their awareness of the outside world. They showed slides, for example, of the fight against apartheid in South Africa. As he explains, “the music gave backing to our cause, as did speaking in Creole, *even to say ordinary everyday things like the mountain is beautiful.*” The language itself was a victim of a kind of ostracism. Only the perseverance and enthusiasm of Ziskakan and other groups that followed in its wake countered and overcame this exclusion.

From the outset, Ziskakan worked in lots of different areas – the broadcasting and distribution of music, the editing books of poetry and traditional stories and the adaptation of traditional popular works for the theatre. Pounia himself quickly took advantage of independent radio at the first opportunity to give everyone the opportunity to express them-

selves, and to remove the gag which existed at the time on popular culture. He helped discover artists such as Joby Bernabé from Martinique, Toto Bissainthe from Haiti and Patrick Victor from the Seychelles.

The desire for a new approach to the country's deep-rooted artistic folklore came to a head at a conference held on Réunion culture by Ziskakan in 1981. Then, after the left took power in France, the movement which was already in full swing, steadily gained momentum. As Pounia recalls, "When the left took power, lots of the groundwork had already been done. The victory of the left nevertheless gave lots of hope."

So, had Ziskakan actually mounted a political experiment? "Yes, it's more the Jimmy Hendrix's experience," jokes Pounia. "We are no more than guitar players. So we have continued to do our thing, to play our music, work in Creole and create more and more beautiful images in this wonderful language that is so rich in them."

It is true that politicians flocked to Ziskakan after 1981. Prior to that, only the Communist Party dared approach. But from that point on, production studios opened their doors to him. As Pounia explains, "Philippe Constantin of *Polygram* liked our work and was the first to

produce it on a large scale. His interest in us was surprising because I don't fit into a mould and I did not want to format my music as three-minute tracks for radio."

Thirty years on and Ziskakan is still enjoying the same level of success in Réunion. Pounia is still worshipped here. The great French actor, "our friend", Richard Bohringer, is filming one of their storytelling performances, *Ti Jan*, created in Creole and adapted in French. Ziskakan also edits and produces for artists from in and around the Indian Ocean, such as the poet, Michel Ducasse, and the writer, Shenaz Patel, from Mauritius. Ever the creator, he is about to edit a book on Madagascan philosophy. **H.G.** ■

Last record of ZISKAKAN: "BANJARA", Ziskakan, May 2008, Banjara.
<http://www.myspace.com/ziskakan>
 Contact France: lesboukakes@hotmail.com,
 Réunion: mkm.wazis@wanadoo.fr

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Gilbert Pounia; Ziskakan; Creole; Richard Bohringer; Toto Bissainthe; Joby Bernabé; Patrick Victor; Michel Ducasse; Shenaz Patel; Réunion.

TEIXEIRA DA MOTA, Réunion's first mother, and other stories

Oratory of Saint-Expedit 2008.
© Hegel Goutier

Comments by Patrice Louaisel* assembled by Hegel Goutier

After the misfortunes of Louis Payen and his companion who saw the two women they had brought with them to the island run off with Madagascan fugitive slaves, Etienne Regnault attempted to import women from France for the first 20 settlers in 1665. As no normal Frenchwoman was eager to make such a long trip into the unknown, candidates were recruited from the Salpêtrière, a home for orphans, delinquents and prostitutes in Paris. But of the 20 who set sail for Réunion, only two arrived to the Indian Ocean, the others died or stayed in the African stops.

Then in 1678, a further 20 women were sought in the Portuguese colony of Goa in India. The 'recruiters' came across Teixeira da Mota, an Indian woman with 11 daughters, all fathered by a Portuguese man. All of them, mother and

daughters, agreed to emigrate and they became the island's first mixed race inhabitants. With them, the genealogical line of the Técher (de Teixeira) was founded. Subsequently, virtually every boat brought women from India. When slavery was introduced, around 1690, slave women were also brought from Africa.

St. Expedit venerated by the Christians and, unexpectedly, by the Hindus

Genuine freedom of religion began in the late 19th century. Then the island saw the construction of mosques, pagodas and other non-Christian places of worship and religious mixing soon followed. Catholicism had been imposed on a generally illiterate population. On Réunion, the symbolism of colours is very strong in the different religions. For

Catholicism, white and blue are noble colours, while red is evil. Yet red is the colour of Karli, the principal Hindu goddess.

As the church did not like the devotion of Catholics to St. Expedit, often invoked to do harm to others, it had the chapels devoted to this saint painted red. This produced an unexpected effect as the Hindus were attracted to the red, viewed by them as a holy colour, while the Catholics lost none of their loyalty. An attempt at censorship that truly boomeranged. ■

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Keywords

Réunion; Teixeira da Mota; St Expedit; Karli.

TOURISM

SNOW and FIRE in the tropics

It is hard to believe that so few people were prepared to settle in Réunion when it was first colonised because it was considered an unviable place to live and of little interest. How different is the opinion of today's visitors to the island who don't hesitate for a second to use 'tourist-like' descriptions such as 'paradise' and 'country of contrasts'. And these are no exaggeration.

Réunion resembles a circle, with a circumference of around 200 kilometres. It boasts curved beaches and inlets, often with pools protected from the waves by rocks. Several hundred metres away, majestic waves test the courage and skills of even the most experienced surfers. Away from the sea and deep into the mountains you can feel a chill in the wind blowing through the foliage of a temperate country.

And although it only snows once every 20 years, when it does, it falls on the *Piton des Neiges* – 'the Snow Peak'. The last time it snowed, a year ago, it almost started a stampede as people took the day off to go and see the white covering, only to be turned away by the police who feared landslides.

› The Peak of Burning Fire

There is fire as well as snow in the mountains. The *Piton de la Fournaise* (the Peak of the Burning Fire) is an active volcano and the lava from the last eruption – around two years ago – still glows in some places. Visitors must not miss out on a visit to the church of Saint Rose which is surrounded by a huge flow of lava from an eruption in 1977 that miraculously failed to destroy it. Today, in commemoration of the event, the hardened lava has been conserved to provide a place of prayer for pilgrims.

Every corner of Réunion is worth visiting, starting with the capital, Saint-Denis. It has a mix of French, Indian and Creole influences competing for attention in the same view.

There are beautiful Creole *cases* (houses), gingerbread-style villas, elegant buildings and magnificent places of worship, including mosques, Tamil temples, Chinese temples and churches. The 'Hauts de St-Denis' (up the hill) is full of quiet little streets tucked away between stylish buildings – like the university – dominating the waterfront.

Along the 'Côte sous le vent', the west coast, picturesque rural areas seem to be sheltered from the hustle and bustle of modern life. Saint Paul, a village with a watermill is a place where time seems to have stood still. Further along the road are beautiful stretches of beach, Saint-Gilles-Les-Bains being one of the most popular. Head to the highlands to find yourself enveloped by the scent of geraniums. If you keep climbing, you reach the three peaks that

make up the 'Pitons des Neiges' with their many waterfalls like the *Voile de la Mariée*. Visitors should take the time to admire Sainte-Suzanne with its sugar-cane fields stretched out in the shadows of the exquisite Tamil temples before the mist and rain sweep in from Salazie.

> Fantasia

If you are looking for vanilla the Bourbon variety is said to be the best in the world - you have to go to the south-east of the island around Basse Vallée. And on the way there, you can take advantage of the opportunity to see the region's many lava flows in the region. The beautiful scents and colours of nature are to be found almost everywhere. There is a fantasia of tiny pink and white flowers of antigone, all types of fern, vetiver, hibiscus – which includes vanilla – not forgetting the

magical, captivating aroma of ylang-ylang. All this travelling around will leave you with a good appetite and for culinary specialities, you can stop in Saint-Paul, near to the mill, and try tenrec, a relative of the hedgehog.

This is cooked in a stew or served as a curry, accompanied by local wine from the hillsides of Cilaos, or mineral water from the same area. The *tibars* (*small bars*) along the road are of a very high standard and clean and well worth a visit. Another original curry is *bichiques*, a round-mouthed fish that produces the Réunion equivalent of caviar and – although quite expensive – a must to sample.

H.G. ■

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Piton des Neiges; Piton de la fournaise; Bourbon vanilla; tenrec; bichiques.

The lava of the 'Piton de la Fournaise volcano' 2008.
© Hegel Goutier

Almost €2 bn from the EU to BOOST REUNION'S ECONOMY

Bridge 2008.
© Hegel Goutier

European Union (EU) resources have made a major contribution to the economic upturn of Réunion. The EU's European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will alone provide around €1 bn between 2007-2013, in addition to other forms of support. For the period 2000-2007, the total amount of European structural funds allocated to the island under the ERDF, the European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) and the European Social Fund (ESF) together came to €1.7 bn. The EU is contributing a 62

per cent slice with France including Réunion providing the remaining 38 per cent.

The programmes to be carried out with the European funds were drawn up with the region and France together within a single strategy document. They include plans to improve competitiveness of persons, the improvement of economic competitiveness with particular emphasis on the development of an Indian Ocean economic pole geared to research, CITs (information and technology projects), tourism, financial engineering and assistance for companies. The creation of infrastructure for hydraulic technology and

fishing, the improvement of the territory's competitiveness through transport networks in particular, housing construction and compensation for the disadvantages of being an outermost region and a remote, small-sized island contending with climate difficulties, will all attract funding.

H.G. ■

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Réunion; ERDF; EAGGF; FIFG; ESF.

Sandra Federici*

AFRIQUE IN VISU: photographers

meet each other ON-LINE



The history of African photography is closely linked to the history of Bamako's Rencontres africaines de la photographie, which have brought it to the attention of the public at large. The Bamako Biennial and the research led by Revue Noire have launched major personalities such as Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé.

These authors have been introduced in the art market by art collectors and dealers, who have been able, on the one hand, to create a big interest in them but, at the same time, have strengthened the Sixties-Seventies image of African photography, defining it as a studio photography devoted especially to the representation of the human figure. It is worth emphasizing that in the last editions, Simon Njami's direction has opened the Biennial to stylistic innovations and international participation and has tried to reach the local public through the 'off' program.

> New ways of promoting African artists

But Bamako is not the only showcase for African artists. In the last two to three years new ways of "launching" African photographers have emerged. Most of them are blogs and websites in which the photographers can autonomously publish their photos, biographies and artistic statements.

Furthermore, the process does not employ a vertical structure, with the dealer/curator/collector (most of the time Western) choosing an author, saving him from oblivion and bringing his/her artworks into the market: the blog structure works much more like net, like a continuous exchange among nodes of a non-hierarchical and unlimited platform. This is a small rev-

olution that the Internet has brought to the African art system, to its capability of self-definition and self-promotion, even if from an economic perspective the results will be only visible in the mid and long term, in contrast to the power of classic market operators.

One of the most active and dynamic projects is *Afrique in Visu*, which started in October 2006 in Mali, in partnership with the École de Photographie de Bamako. The organisers are the French researcher Jeanne Mercier and the photographer Baptiste de Ville d'Avray. The lack of structures, training and of strong and coherent cultural policies are the main problems that this project aims to face by organising workshops and artists' residencies in Africa and creating a strong web community.

> Creative communities and the Internet

Besides the forum, what seems to work quite well is the gathering of information on young African photographers and on the most important initiatives like exhibitions, workshops and lectures (there are approximately 2500 site-visitors per day). Regularly the focus is on one author's personal website in particular, trying to taking him out of the huge World Wide Web and stimulating remarks about his works. Furthermore, the website includes a very interesting portfolio of images taken in Africa by

African and non-African artists: *Hip hop & société* (in Brazzaville) by Baudouin Mouanda; *Architecture sans architecte* (Mali) by Alioune Ba; *Brazzaville au quotidien*, by the Collectif génération Elili ...

"Our main goals are the achievement of professional self-training through the exchange of information and know-how" says Jeanne Mercier "and good visibility especially in the African context, that necessarily crosses African borders. Moreover, we work on their nomination for festivals or residencies. Thanks to *Afrique in Visu* many authors have been contacted by magazines asking for their pictures or for ad hoc photo-reportages."

Do authors have easy access to web services? "Most of the authors do not have computers and a private internet access account. Many of them digitally edit and publish their pictures at the media centers located inside the French cultural centers, in cyber cafes, or in art and photography schools." The digital divide is still very big but, anyhow, these authors' energy and their ability to figure it out allows them to reach the international scene.

* Director of the Italy-based journal *Africa e Mediterraneo*

Keywords

Photography; blog; internet communities; *Afrique in Visu*; the Bamako biennial.



Mary Angela Schroth*

Ndary Lô, Green wall, Dak'art 2008 'Afrique: miroir?', photo by Valentina Peri

Contemporary culture in Senegal: Dak'art 2008 'Afrique: Miroir?'

As in all art biennials, the appointment in Senegal for Dak'art, the only pan-African project for contemporary art in the world, is an extraordinary one not to be missed and a wonderful excuse to visit one of the most stimulating cultural centres in Africa. Created by the renowned Senegalese poet, intellectual and founding President Léopold Senghor, who started up at the 'Festival des Arts Nègres' in 1966 to promote modern Afro-centric culture in direct confrontation to European colonialism, Dak'art was revived in the late 1980s.

This year's edition, entitled 'Afrique: Miroir?' ('Africa: A Mirror?'), was open from 9 May to 9 June and was bigger and more interesting than ever. It included not only artists from all over Africa but also parallel projects involving African design, fashion, and music as well as conferences and debates covering a wide range of international cultural projects, including new media.

➤ 130 exhibitions for a Senegalese project

The official 'vernissage' at the Musée T. Monod (IFAN) was inaugurated by President Wade himself, who eloquently defended the importance of contemporary culture in Senegal as a tool for both international cooperation and national development. Indeed, this project is Senegalese, funded and organised by a Steering Committee headed by Ousseynou Wade and presided by new entry Gérard Senac, collector and art patron, director of Eiffage, one of Senegal's important companies and sponsor

of Dak'art. Included in the group are Gilles Hervio, Head of the European Commission Delegation, Thierry Raspail, Director of the Biennale de Lyon in France, Goran Christenson of the Malmö Museum in Sweden as well as many African specialists and artists such as Abdoulaye Konaté, Sithabile Mlotshwa of the Thamgidi Foundation, art professor Maguèye Kassé, and agit-prop maestro Issa Samb.

With more than 130 exhibitions throughout the city and the outlying regions, the exhibition was divided into the 'in' official sites (IFAN, the National Museum of Art, and the newly-restored Galerie Le Manège) including some 35 established artists such as Fathi Hassan and Ndary Lô, as well as a myriad of 'off' situations curated by long-time resident Mauro Petroni. An extraordinary new architectural complex created on the Cornice was the site for an important retrospective for the great Senegalese master Iba Ndiaye. Equally interesting this year was 'Regards sur cours', where some 50 private courtyards (including the villa of George Soros!) on the Island of Gorée opened to the public for

the week-end, each hosting an artist. A parallel action in the Gorée atelier of celebrated artist M. Dimé showing young Dakar video artists linked to free Dimension, an international platform linking artistic communities to social justice was stimulating.

> **A truly international venue**

This year, the base of operations was a hospitable ‘village’ constructed at the ex-IFAN where journalists and public could meet and greet, see a series of videos and participate in the various encounters with such notables as curator and writer Simon Njami (creator of “Africa Remix” director of the ‘Rencontres africaines de la photographie’ in Bamako, Mali), the Angolan Fernando Alvim (organizer of the Pavilion of African Art at last year’s Venice Biennale), and Salah Hassan of the Forum for African Arts. Equally interesting were contacts with Senegal artists and journalists such as famed cartoonist T.T. Fons, creator of ‘Googoorlou.’ The art villa, Ker Thioissane, hosted an interesting festival entitled Afro Pixel based on the participation of African artists using Internet and digital media. Elio Grazioli of Milan and ‘Lettera 27’ headed a debate on the creation of WikiAfrica Art conceived for Wikipedia.

Dak’art is a truly international venue and there were exhibits by artists from Spain, Germany, France, and the Canary Islands as well as Israel in the many venues. Of course, Senegal and its artists were important protagonists; one of the most qualified exhibits was a one-person installation and performance by V. Diba at the gallery of Joelle Le Busy Fall. As in previous years, the extraordinary fashion designer, Oumou Sy, organised not one but three separate fashion shows with young Senegalese designers – as well as her own work – all in her space Metissacana. The ‘Théâtre Nationale Daniel Sorano’ produced an original production of Wole Soyinka’s ‘La Mort et l’Ecuyer du Roi’, and the various nightclubs such as Just for You and Pen’Art were destinations for those who wanted to end the night with local music and dancing. ■

*Art expert and director of the Art Gallery ‘Sala 1’ in Rome (Italy).

Keywords

Mary Angela Schroth; Dak’Art 2008; contemporary art; Senegal.

DAK’ART 2008 AWARDS:

Grand Prix ‘Léopold Sédar Senghor’:
Mansour Ciss Kanakassy
Ndary Lo

Minister for Culture and Historical Heritage Award:
Nkosikhona Ngcobo

European Union Award:
Johann Van Der Schijff

Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie Award:
Jems Robert Kokobi

Culture France Award:
Guy Bertrand Woueté Lotchouang

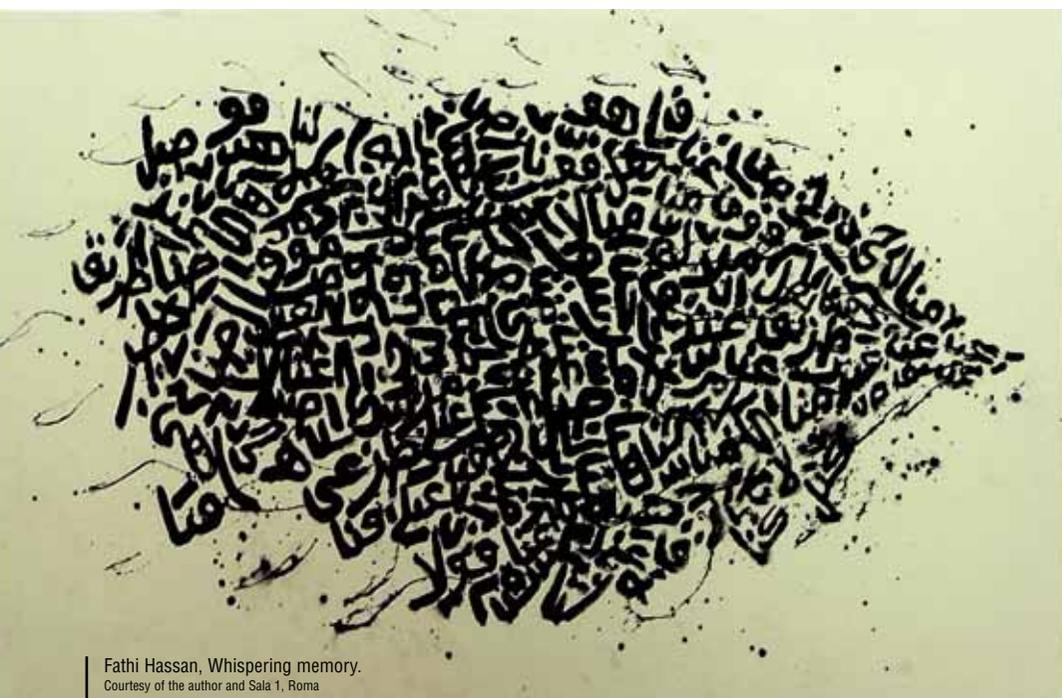
Award from the City of Dakar:
Amadou Kan Sy

‘OFF’ AWARD FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION:

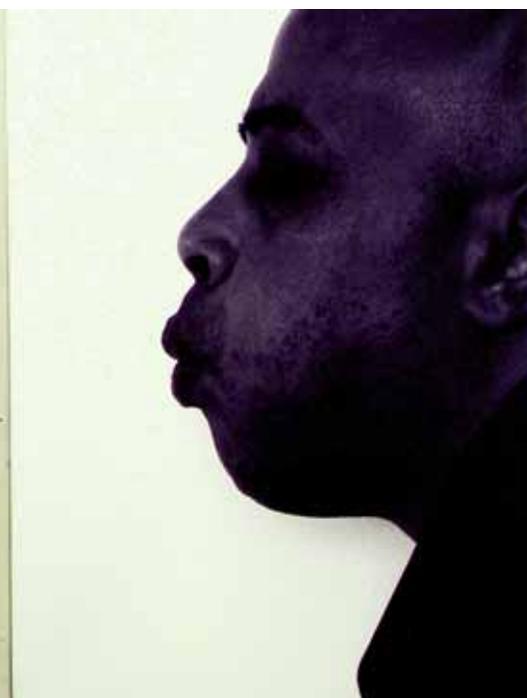
First: Mbaye Ndoye, painting
Second: Mamadou Faye, design
Third: Ibrahima Niang (in art Piniang), video

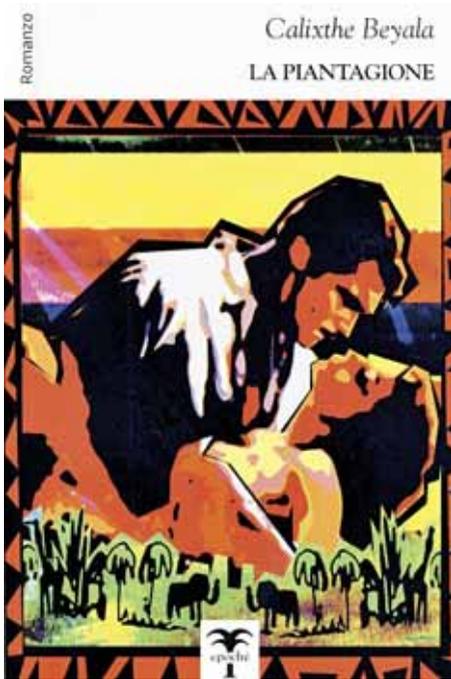
Special mentions (IN/OFF):
- Saïdou Dieko, photo
- Ousmane Mbaye, design

Ciss Mansour “Kanakassis”, *The De-Berlinisation Laboratory*, Dak’art 2008 *Afrique: miroir?*
Photo by Valentina Peri



Fathi Hassan, Whispering memory.
Courtesy of the author and Sala 1, Roma





THE PLANTATION*

Putting Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh, the unforgettable stars of *Gone with the Wind*, on the front cover of an African novel may seem a rather surprising editorial decision. However, by choosing to illustrate Calixthe Beyala's novel *La piantagione* (translated from *La plantation*, Albin Michel, 2005) with one of Hollywood's most famous kisses, the Italian publishing house *Epoché* is simply alluding to one of the central themes of the book by the novelist from Cameroun: the destiny of a young white African girl, Blues Cornu, who is faced with the collapse of a privileged world built on the spoils of racial discrimination. Like Tara under the yoke of the American Civil War (1861-65),

Joshua Massarenti

Applying the same standards to the ANTI-HEROES of Zimbabwe

The Italian edition's cover of *The Plantation* by Calixthe Beyala.

the Cornu family also has to deal with a change in the course of history. In the year 2000 in the Zimbabwe of a "president democratically elected for life" (his name is not given), the bells are tolling for the rich white farmers who have been asked to leave the country to allow black Africans to take their place. And like Scarlett O'Hara, Blues decides to defend her land rather than devote her life to men as she is convinced that "tomorrow will be another day". But the similarities stop there. While in the Hollywood production, the blacks only have minor parts, *La piantagione* does not give the main roles to whites. Admittedly Beyala, recognised for her fight against the racism of the Europeans, this time takes their side. But we cannot count on his good intentions in a portrayal full of anti-

heroes. The disaster of Mugabe's despoilment of white landowners has clearly persuaded the writer not to create a Manichean world. "No character," she said, "is completely good. Everyone is made up of lightness and dark." In *La piantagione*, Calixthe Beyala has avoided the pitfalls of racial identity to produce characterisation of men and women united by their connection to the African continent. ■

* Article written following the recent publication in Italy of the latest novel by Calixthe Beyala, *La piantagione*, Epoché, 2008 (*La plantation*, Albin Michel, 2005).

Keywords

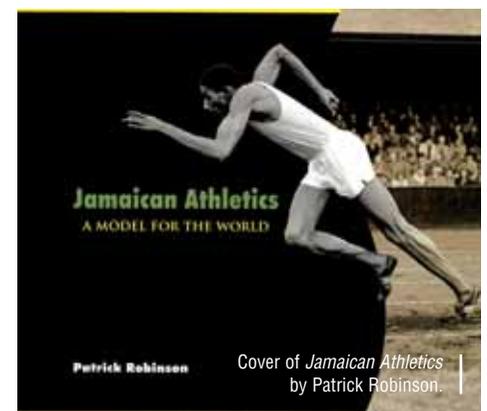
Calixthe Beyala; Zimbabwe; literature; racism.

Jamaican Athletics: A model for the WORLD

Since 1948, Jamaica has won seven Gold, twenty-four Silver and nineteen Bronze Medals at the Olympic Games. In this Olympic year, a timely book by Jamaican Patrick Robinson looks at what has made Jamaicans such exceptional athletes. "What has been achieved is with few or no resources," said Robinson at his publication's Brussels' launch of *Jamaican Athletics: A model For the World*. Robinson is a judge at the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague but a keen sports-follower. Robinson said the system that has evolved in Jamaica through the

Interscholastic Championships (CHAMPS) is at the heart of success at the junior level. At senior level, prior to the 1970s, many budding Jamaican athletes used to head for the United States. The College of Arts Science and Technology (CAST), to become the University of Technology (UTECH), filled the void. "I see a tremendous opportunity for Jamaica to become a hub for athletic and serve as a global athletic centre," said the author. D.P. ■

Jamaican athletics - a Model for the World by Patrick Robinson.



AFFECTIONATELY PROVOKING

Photo of Dany Laferrière.
Courtesy of Edition Grasset.
© D.L.-C. Beauregard

Dany Laferrière once responded to us: “I wrote books to sleep with girls and to make money. I have slept with lots of girls and I have made lots of money, but I am not going to spend the rest of my life as a writer.”

The successful writer of *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* (*How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired*) is back. After provoking both laughter and tears and a romanticism that is not all tears, crinoline and lace, in a series of works from *L'odeur du café* (*An Aroma of Coffee*) to *Charme des après-midi sans fin* (the charm of endless afternoons), he turned his attention to other projects such as screenplays including *Vers le Sud* (*Heading South*). He puzzles the reader.

Firstly, he makes you believe that he only talks about himself. “What else is there of importance in life,” he told us. In *Je suis un écrivain japonais* (*I am a Japanese writer*) – where the central character uses the first person “I” as in an autobiography – he recounts an official of the Japanese administration asking him to confirm that he was actually writing a book on Japan: “I only ever write about myself.” His response came after a Japanese dancer threw herself from a window at his home. The Canadian mounted police also launched an enquiry into the incident.

The author (the central character) admittedly freely talks about himself and his life in Haiti and Canada: firstly about how he came to write his new book entitled, *Je suis un écrivain japonais*. To get an advance of ten thousand dollars from his publisher, he came up with title off the top of his head.

He then started writing. He visited some shady places like the café Sarajevo with its red-hot Japanese dancers, almost perverse, almost deities. He focussed on Basho (1644-1694), whose work he had vaguely touched on in the past, adopting his poem *La Route étroite vers les districts du Nord*. He literally enters into the book. Or rather this cunning monk and vagabond poet takes him over. His ramblings about Basho and the Japanese of the ‘Baisers Incorporation’ in Sarajevo will be costly. What suspense! When Laferrière speaks about himself, he gets to the very essence of things, love and death. He especially talks about you in poetic slam with a jazz staccato ecstasy like a sensual pleasure that both soothes and makes you shudder.

To keep the suspense of my adventure with the author, I wanted to talk about the book with him without firstly having read the final pages. So? Beware of Dany Laferrière. Excuse me whilst I finish my reading. **H.G.** ■

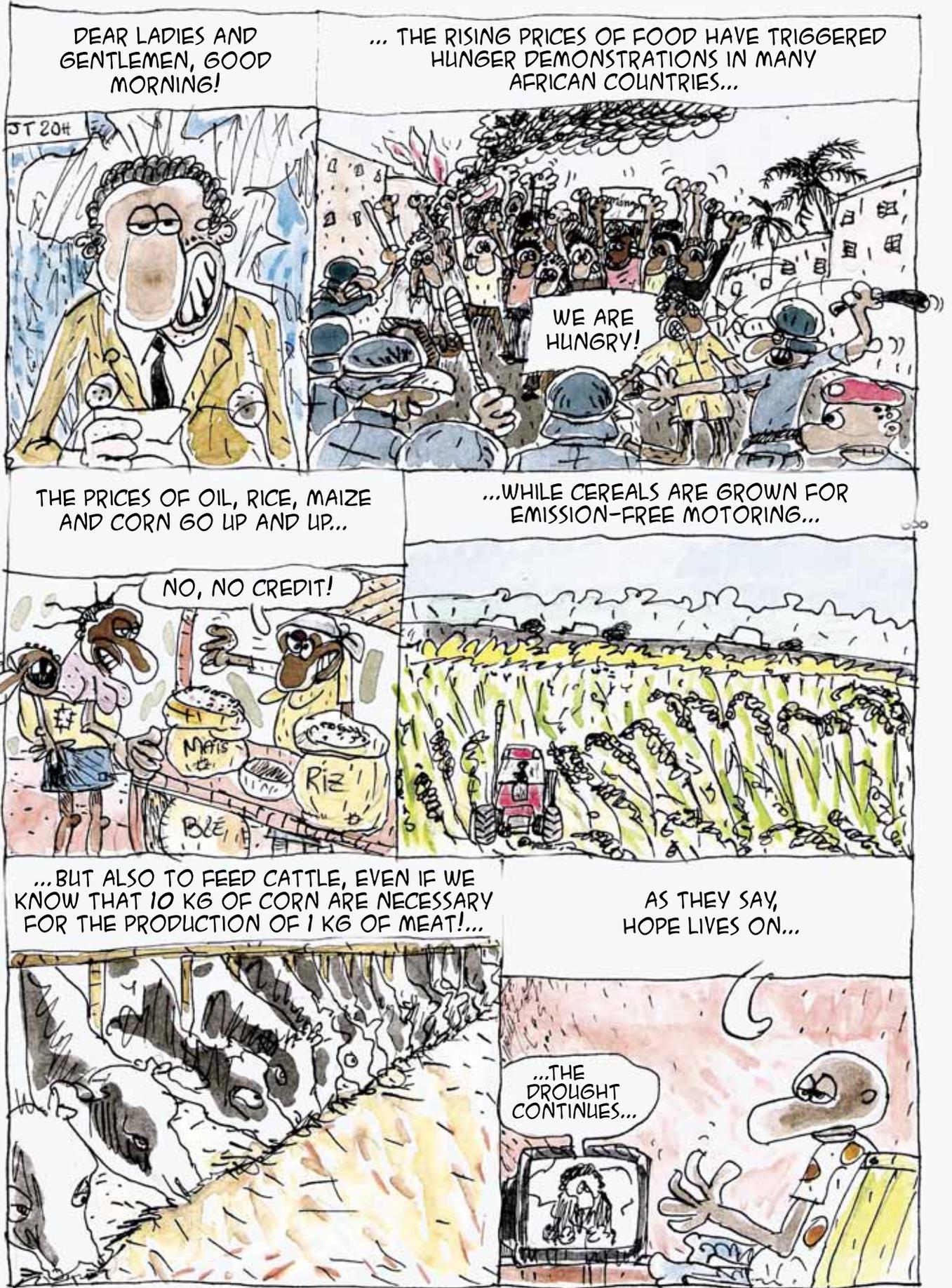


Je suis un écrivain japonais, Dany Laferrière, 268 p, 2008 Editions Grasset, Paris France.

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Dany Laferrière; Haïti; literature; Japanese.

WE ARE HUNGRY! **By Didier Viode**



DEAR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GOOD MORNING!

... THE RISING PRICES OF FOOD HAVE TRIGGERED HUNGER DEMONSTRATIONS IN MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES...

THE PRICES OF OIL, RICE, MAIZE AND CORN GO UP AND UP...

...WHILE CEREALS ARE GROWN FOR EMISSION-FREE MOTORING...

NO, NO CREDIT!

...BUT ALSO TO FEED CATTLE, EVEN IF WE KNOW THAT 10 KG OF CORN ARE NECESSARY FOR THE PRODUCTION OF 1 KG OF MEAT!...

AS THEY SAY, HOPE LIVES ON...

...THE DROUGHT CONTINUES...

Words from Readers

We are interested in your point of view and your reactions to the articles. So do tell us what you think.

I found the articles on Timor Leste Report very useful. I did research into Timor a while ago, and this reading has helped me a lot. I am convinced that the support for the development of rising countries is the best way to help. Thanks for the publication.

Yurithzi

I find the articles published on Special Issue 1 ('50 Years of ACP-EU Cooperation') very

instructive. Unfortunately, in my home country, to my knowledge, there are no publications on these topics and in general people hardly know anything about Africa. Even now that we are officially part of the EU, I do not think there are any initiatives for assistance to ACP countries and, to my mind, the reason for this is that, leaving aside the arrogance of certain politicians, people are used to considering the country as a beneficiary of assistance pro-

grammes and find it difficult to realize that we can be a donor and can actually 'export' our experience in project implementation. In any case, I think that the first and probably most important step is to get to know ACP countries.

Rumyana Dobreva

Thanks for everything you are doing.

Crescent Mwebaze

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email: info@acp-eucourier.info - **website:** www.acp-eucourier.info

Calendar

August – December 2008



August 2008

- 19-21 Annual Pacific Forum Meeting, Niue

September

- 1-4 High level forum on aid effectiveness, Accra, Ghana
- 8-11 13th Session of the ACP Parliamentary Assembly African, Caribbean and Pacific parliamentarians meets, Brussels, Belgium
- 12-13 Forum for Media and Development, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- 15-18 4th Meeting of ACP Finance Ministers, Brussels, Belgium

October

- 2-3 Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government, Accra, Ghana
- 16-18 African Diaspora Summit, South Africa
- 27-30 Second Global Forum on Migration and Development, Manila, Philippines

November

- 15-17 Strasbourg venue for European Development Days 2008, Strasbourg, France is the location for the third edition of European Development Days (EDD). The annual forum, organised by the European Commission's Development Directorate.

Local authorities and development is the theme of this year's event. www.eudevdays.eu.

- 24-27 6th Session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly Bi-annual meeting of ACP parliamentarians with counterparts from the European Parliament, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
- 29-3 Conference Financing for Development: Monterrey consensus review, Doha, Qatar

December

- 4-5 Heads of ACP Regional Integration Organisations, Brussels, Belgium
- 11-12 88th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers, Brussels, Belgium ■