

THE COURIER

N. 13 N.E. – SEPTEMBER OCTOBER 2009

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



REPORT

Niger. Land, politics: Light and shade

DOSSIER

Tribes and Democracy. The apparent clash

DISCOVERING EUROPE

Lithuania looks more East than South



Editorial Board

Co-chairs

Sir John Kaputin, Secretary General
Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
www.acp.int

Mr Stefano Manservigi, Director General of DG Development
European Commission
ec.europa.eu/development/

Core staff

Editor-in-chief

Hegel Goutier

Journalists

Marie-Martine Buckens (Deputy Editor-in-chief)
Debra Percival

Editorial Assistant, Production and Pictures Research

Joshua Massarenti

Contributed in this issue

Elisabetta Degli Esposti Merli, Sandra Federici, Lagipoiva, Cherele Jackson,
Francis Kokutse, Souleymane Saddi Maâzou, Anne-Marie Mouradian, Andrea
Marchesini Reggiani, Okechukwu Romano Umelo and Joyce van Genderen-Naar

Project Manager

Gerda Van Biervliet

Artistic Coordination, Graphic Conception

Gregorie Desmons

Public Relations

Andrea Marchesini Reggiani

Distribution

Viva Xpress Logistics - www.vxl.net.be



Cover

Design by Gregorie Desmons

Back cover

Brazier, Niger, 2009. © Marie-Martine Buckens

Contact

The Courier
45, Rue de Trèves
1040 Brussels
Belgium (EU)
info@acp-eucourier.info
www.acp-eucourier.info
Tel : +32 2 2345061
Fax : +32 2 2801406

www.acp-eucourier.info

Visit our website!
You will find the articles,
the magazine in pdf
and other news

Published every two months in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese

For information on subscription,

Go to our website www.acp-eucourier.info or contact info@acp-eucourier.info

Publisher responsible

Hegel Goutier

Consortium

Gopa-Cartermill - Grand Angle - Lai-momo

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not represent the official view of the EC nor of the ACP countries.

The consortium and the editorial staff decline all responsibility for the articles written by external contributors.

Privileged partners



Cultural centre promoting artists from countries in Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and cultural exchanges between communities through performance arts, music, cinema, to the holding of conferences. It is a meeting place for Belgians, immigrants of diverse origins and European officials.

Espace Senghor
Centre culturel d'Etterbeek
Brussels, Belgium
espace.senghor@chello.be
www.senghor.be

THE COURIER

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

Table of contents

THE COURIER, N.13 NEW EDITION (N.E)

PROFILE

- Jospeh Ma'ahanua, Ambassador of the Solomon Islands to the EU 2
Karel De Gucht, EC Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid 3

EDITORIAL

TO THE POINT

- Climate change could be good news for Africa 6

ROUND UP

DOSSIER

- Tribe. Vague word, yet concrete reality* 12
Race and tribe put to the test of science 13
A long history of manipulation and loss of credibility 15
Botswana, an example of how democracy integrates tribes 17
Maggy, 'The Madwoman from Ruyigi', a truly exceptional person 18
Tribal culture in the face of democracy 20

INTERACTION

- Focus on financial crisis at DevDays 21
EU Report on development to fight the fragmentation of effort and lack of resources 22
Mid-term talks step up 23
African gas for Europe 24
Second South Africa-EU Summit 24
Africa's ICT sector: as dynamic as ever 25
Grasping Eritrea 26
Breaking the myth of aid. Dambisa Moyo's remedies 26

CIVIL SOCIETY ON THE MOVE

- Crossing Borders and Frontiers 29

TRADE

- Is a deal on services of interest to the Pacific? 31
Brighter prospects for sub-Saharan Africa 32

ZOOM

- Makingson Delivrance Nespoulos, stonemason
The Haitian who is giving a 2nd life to France's great monuments 34

OUR PLANET

- The sun of the Sahara to help Europe? 36

REPORT

- North and South meet in Niger*
The long road to democracy 39
Demographic growth represents one of the greatest challenges facing the country 40
An important, underexploited agricultural potential 42
The price of fame 43
The great crossing 44
Reinforcing food safety 45
Escaping the 'uranium monoculture' 47
Niger's population has always been able to step back when faced with political crises 48
Women in Niger 49
Centrifugal forces and 'joke kinship' 50

DISCOVERING EUROPE

Vilnius

- At the EU's most easterly edge at the centre of Europe 51
An ever-changing city 53
Pasts and present intermingle 54
Lithuania's development policy looks east 55
Culture live hits Vilnius 57

CREATIVITY

- Africa at the head of design 59
Swaziland: investing in culture 60
Kenya: the winds of change 62

FOR YOUNG READERS

- Tribes and democracy 63

YOUR SAY/CALENDAR

64

Debra Percival

“An enriching experience”



© Debra Percival

Joseph Ma'ahanua is the Ambassador of the Solomon Islands to the EU and was in the Chair of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors, February-July 2009. The post rotates every six months between ACP regions. He explains how this was a busy time for his small Pacific country and is the first to acknowledge the help given by the ACP Secretariat and sub-Committees in the workload.

The sealing of €2.7bn of intra-ACP funds under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) and the convening of both ACP Trade Ministers and a joint Ministerial meeting with the EU had enabled, “the energy to be put back into the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) processes which had more or less come to a halt,” said the Ambassador.

For the ACP, some of the issues that still need to be dealt with under the EPA process include the fear of splitting existing trade groups in Eastern and Southern Africa. And concrete EC pledges of aid for trade under the EPAs were vital, said the Ambassador. The disappearance of export taxes under EPAs is an issue for many regions. “The Solomons, for instance, rely on export taxes for 40 per cent of overall government revenue. If we were to agree to an EPA, how do we re-coup the fiscal deficit?” asked Ma'ahanua.

More vocal ACP participation in political dialogue with the EU under Cotonou Convention clauses 96 and 97, triggered when an ACP state is deemed to have flouted the “essential elements” of the Cotonou Convention, has moved ahead under his chairmanship. “The way it is now is that it is as though these member countries are put in a court and answer to a judge,” said the Ambassador wryly. “We prepare ourselves before going to consultation meetings, but if the EC Commission or Council President decide you are not there, then that’s a problem,” he said. The ACP would do more work in the autumn to get “ACP participation up to the level we expect,” he added.

And the ACP’s proposals for the second five-year mid-term review of the Cotonou agreement were drawn up under his chairmanship. Amongst other proposals, the ACP wants climate change inscribed as in its own right (see article in this issue on the review).

The first-ever ACP fisheries ministerial meeting, set to become an annual event, is another highlight of the Ma'ahanua chairmanship: “A lot of ACP countries rely on fisheries. In the Pacific, we consider fisheries resources as our gold.”

Plans for a change in management of the ACP, when the current five-year term of the incumbent Secretary General Sir John Kaputin ends, have also been put in place. The new SG, is to come from West Africa and will take over in February 2010.

In the Chair for the 34th anniversary of the ACP group, has Ambassador Ma'ahanua a view on the longevity of the ACP group post-Cotonou? “I think that group solidarity and unity for the ACP will always remain. We have to adapt to the dynamics of the situation. If we have EPAs, there are challenges. When they launched the process for the negotiation of Cotonou, there

was talk of an umbrella agreement with different agreements for different regions. Who knows? It might be a scenario that comes up in 2020 [when Cotonou expires], or we might opt to follow the current arrangement.”

Marie-Martine Buckens and Joshua Massarenti

Karel De Gucht, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid

“Better governance is the key to improving aid”

You were appointed a few weeks ago. What are your priorities for European development policy?

We are facing many challenges which particularly affect the developing world and which I have made my priorities. First, the developing countries have been hit very hard by the economic and financial crisis and we must help them towards recovery as we can't afford greater social and political instability in the world. The second important upcoming challenge is to get an ambitious international agreement on climate change in Copenhagen that takes into account the concerns of developing countries. In the field of European development policy itself, there are also many challenges we have to face: the European Union has to stick to its commitments in terms of Official Development Assistance and the economic and financial crisis can't be used as an excuse not to meet our targets. I am convinced that it is in our interest to raise our aid volumes, as planned, to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Aid effectiveness and aid transparency also have to be improved. I will make sure that the Code of Conduct on Division of Labour adopted by the EU member states two years ago is more widely implemented than it has been until now. At the same time, we will only make aid better if the developing countries themselves improve their governance. Regarding

the geographical aspect of our development policy, I will particularly pay attention to countries or regions facing political instability or difficult electoral processes.

On 9 November, Europe will celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, an historical event which opened the way in Africa for free elections and democracy. Twenty years later, and following the recent events that have shaken the continent (Gabon, Guinea-Conakry, Niger, etc.) what is your take on good governance in Africa?

First, I warmly welcome that good governance and democracy is one of the major themes of the European Development Days since it is a very crucial aspect of our development policy. Free elections are the key to a legitimate, reliable government. But democracy is much more than holding multi-party elections. It also implies promoting a free press, an independent civil society, lively debate and an open cooperation with the international community. Last but not least, it requires active and well informed citizens to support it. And in fact when these elements are missing, elections can prove to be more of a factor of instability than a factor of stability. Nevertheless, this should not keep us from our efforts to promote governance, to help countries to set up credible and reliable institutions and to encourage countries in

Africa that have chosen the path towards democracy.

The international conference on climate change which will take place in Copenhagen in December 2009 has been defined as crucial for the future of our planet. What is the European Union ready to do for ACP Countries on this issue?

As I mentioned before, the impact of climate change on developing countries is one of my highest priorities. Those least responsible for the climate change problem, and the ACP countries belonging to this group, will be hit the earliest and the hardest. It is obvious that humanitarian assistance provided by the European Commission in many countries is partly due to droughts or hurricanes which are demonstrations of climate change. As the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, developed countries have a special responsibility to tackle climate change. The European Union has taken a leading role. In September 2009, the European Commission put forward an initiative which would provide international financial assistance to the least developed countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Their financing needs are estimated as €100bn a year by 2020 and assuming an ambitious agreement in Copenhagen is reached, the EU could contribute to this financing up to €15bn a year. Financing and the sharing of the costs



© European Parliament

of climate change will be the key issues in Copenhagen. We have no choice but to make the upcoming Copenhagen conference a success and part of the success will be that the concerns of the low income countries are taken into account.



Makingson Nespoulos, painting "Virginie, la fille au coeur sur la main"
(Virginie, the girl with a heart in her hand).

© Photo Hegel Goutier (see also "Zoom" rubric, pages 34-35).

Bashing the crisis



This year the European Development Days (EDD) will once again be a celebration and testing ground for development. However, this time much will need to be done to find solutions to combat the effects of the economic crisis in poor countries and its attendant damaging impact on growth, social development and action against climate change.

As usual, many ideas for a better use of development aid will no doubt emerge from the EDD, and the debates on the subject will be heated, particularly between the representatives of institutions and non-governmental organisations. Indeed, many NGOs will have in mind Dambisa Moyo's corrosive book, 'Dead Aid', which demystifies so-called 'public aid' by demonstrating that you cannot develop a country while complaining about the rifts that exist between the experts who make their living out of the aid process.

All the same, light still shines beneath these patches of grey as seen in several articles in this issue. First, Africa has never been as dynamic as it is today in matters related to information and communication technologies. Second, the continent has even profited from the current economic crisis with increases in the price of raw materials. Third, we can expect that the forthcoming G20 will favour significant loans to the continent.

Furthermore, the light of the Sahara Desert also shines brightly. There, an ambitious project to capture the region's energy using solar panels and 'export' it to Europe makes the eyes of many European investors shine brightly at the prospects of very real fortunes to be made. However, while attractive at first sight, the project is a minefield

of potential risks, including an increase in global temperatures and the degeneration of underground water deposits.

The cost of this huge project is estimated at hundreds of billions of dollars. As the German philosopher Emmanuel Kant said, "Everything that has a price does not have a value."

This issue also contains a special report on Niger, a country between North and South, where black and Arab people meet. A country where the president once pushed through the democratisation of his country but who later infringed his own constitution so that he could stand again in the elections. A move that brought about considerable racial tensions and cast a shadow over his relations with Western partners...

The special report of this issue of The Courier is 'Tribes and Democracy'. It would seem that these two words are a long way from being similar in their meaning, in particular the word 'Tribes', which is often replaced by the terms groups, communities, ethnic groups or nations and covers a very different reality today. We then turn to the history of Lithuania, a country that has been mistreated by outsiders for centuries. The sad history of the country includes episodes when the sons of the nation attacked the Jewish minority at regular intervals. Now, today, despite all that has happened in its history, this nation of limited means is making huge efforts to come to the aid of its Eastern neighbours and also has plans to help the ACP.

Hegel Goutier
Editor-in-chief

Marie-Martine Buckens

Climate Change could be Good News for Africa

Interview with Youba Sokona

The compensation that poor southern countries are entitled to claim from the industrialised world responsible for the increase in greenhouse gas emissions could allow them to put in place a carbon-free energy economy. Provided, warns climate expert Youba Sokona, that the results of negotiations on climate to be held in Copenhagen this December are fair and open.



Youba Sokona. © oss

Youba Sokona knows what he's talking about. An engineer and former teacher at the National Engineering School of Bamako, Mali, he is regularly asked to take part in strategic think-tanks by international organisations and the Secretariats of the Conventions on climate change, biodiversity and combating desertification. More than that, since 2004, Youba Sokona has been in charge of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS – www.oss-online.org).

In Copenhagen discussions, southern countries will need to make sure that industrialised countries recognise their climate 'debt'. Do you think that they will succeed?

To some extent, yes. Some industrialised countries still question the timescale of the accumulation of the greenhouse gases

(GHG). However, it is difficult to convince the main emerging countries (such as India, China, Brazil and South Africa), to make commitments on reductions. Then of course there is the position of the United States, which still poses a problem.

In any event, there are no easy solutions to the problem of climate change – just that we must drastically reduce GHG. Adaptation is not a solution; it is only there to help. And not everything that is being proposed is in the form of a reduction. For example, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) allows northern industrialised countries that invest in the energy rehabilitation of projects of southern countries to gain carbon credits: it is not a solution. It only allows them to buy time. Furthermore, these mechanisms do not represent much in terms of reducing the greenhouse gas effect. Whether considering

the CDM, or emissions trading, the Kyoto protocol hasn't curbed emissions. Quite the opposite, in fact they have increased.

According to estimates, in 2030, we should have reduced GHG emissions by 80 per cent compared to 1990. This reference date is crucial, since some countries are already putting forward reductions without referring to a particular year.

But for the southern countries, particularly those in the ACP, what can they do?

Since the ACP countries did not really participate in the increase of greenhouse gases, the implementation of adaptation mechanisms are fundamentally important. Yet, structurally, it is difficult to make the difference between adaptation measures and measures that encourage development.



Dried clay soil in Zinguinchor Region, Senegal. © Reporters



^ Dried clay soil, Zinguinchor Region, Senegal. © Reporters
Flood waters in Mozambique. © Reporters

However, this differentiation is very important indeed.

Industrialised countries have committed to devote 0.7 per cent of their GDP to development. We must make sure that this commitment is transparent and that it does not become just a general “holdall” for measures of development and adaptation.

Therefore, we would need additional financing, provided that ACP countries correctly evaluate everything they must put in place, both short and long term. But this is a challenge as, to date, there hasn’t been a single serious survey that would allow country by country comparisons, or listing what to do to face these changes.

Any analysis would need to be in three parts: in the short term, the implementation



Kliptown Floods in South Africa, 1970. © Drum Social Histories/Africa Media Online

of procedures allowing a review of national strategies, covering the entire climate component; second, in the medium term (or five years from now) an evaluation of the necessary financial resources. Third, assessing the measures necessary in 10 to 20 years and integrating them into national sectoral strategies.

Much has been said on the subject of climate and development. Much of it results in a lessening of the trust of developing countries towards their industrialised counterparts. This is something that we must avoid at all costs.

Do you think that southern countries, particularly African countries, are well prepared for the Copenhagen negotiations?

No. Unfortunately, African countries are waking up too late. Many regional organisations have asked for our advice, but very late in the day. However, alongside the CDM – the mechanism which must be revised – it is essential to focus on the Adaptation Fund that has been implemented, and whose Board will meet in Bonn before the Copenhagen conference to establish its criteria. We shall have to be careful that the mechanisms respond to our needs.

This having been said, do you feel that Africa enjoys an advantage: that it will not have to convert a non-sustainable economy that it does not possess...

We benefit from one advantage: our basic infrastructure is not in place. So, let us take this opportunity to create our infra-

structure within the scope of a sustainable or even carbon-free economic model. We must promote and defend this approach. But, the question is, will we have the opportunity to defend it? Sometimes I wonder. Indeed, I have the impression that northern countries don’t really like the emergence of strong southern institutions. For example, for many years, I have defended the idea of creating criteria, techniques and tools for southern countries, allowing them to adapt to climate change. Along with other scientists, we have even created a project that could be cofinanced by Europe. But, we were told that although the project was interesting, it was not eligible for action.

Coming back to the CDM, since 1998, I have argued that this mechanism was not designed for poor countries. It is a mechanism that should be used in emerging and developing countries with high revenues, such as South Africa. The transaction cost of this mechanism is too high for poor countries, particularly for less developed countries (LDCs). In no case should this mechanism be turned into a so-called adaptation mechanism. On the other hand, we could imagine a global fund for the environment at the service of the sustainable development of poor countries to help them implement a carbon-free economy. Basically, what we need to do is pose the question: how do we reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) without producing greenhouse gas?

Keywords

Youba Sokona; Climate; CDM; Adaptation Funds; Copenhagen; ACP; Africa.

Anne-Marie Mouradian

A former anti corruption judge heads the Development Parliamentary Committee

She was expected to head the Committee on Civil Liberties and Justice or the Committee on Budgetary Control in the new European Parliament. However, since last July, Eva Joly (Greens/EFA), elected on the Greens – Europe – Ecology list, presides over the Development Committee, where she replaces Spaniard Josep Borrell Fontelles.

As soon as the former French magistrate and anti-corruption judge was invested in her new function, the tone was given.

Questioning the *BNP Paribas* bank on its presence in tax havens such as Cyprus, Luxembourg and the Cayman Islands, she called for the “creation of a committee of inquiry in charge of defining the role of tax havens in development issues.” Eva Joly justifies her request by the fact that, in their “Africa workgroup”, her colleagues and herself have “all too often seen the *BNP Paribas* involved in financial set-ups on petrol that would allow the Heads of States to release funds in their own accounts opened in tax havens.” She will also fight so that “development is not sacrificed due to the financial crisis or climate change.” One of her colleagues predicts: “Eva Joly will be an efficient and formidable President.”

Out of the four Vice-Presidents of the Committee, French woman Michèle Striffler (PPE, France) is alone in taking her first steps as an MP. As for British conservative Nij Deva, he celebrates his ten years’ presence, whereas Romanian, Corina Cretu (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats) has been a member since her country joined the EU in 2007. Italian singer Iva Zanichchi (PPE, Italy) entered in 2008. In contrast to the European Parliament as a whole which saw more than 50 per cent of its members re-elected, the Committee on Development has been largely reconstructed. We should note the loss of several heavy-

weights, amongst whom the lively Luisa Morgantini, Marie-Arlette Carlotti, Thierry Cornillet... The determined Glenys Kinnock – MEP since 1994 and Co-President of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly since 2002 – resigned from her functions on 5 June to become Secretary of State for European Affairs in the British government; she was also elevated to the House of Lords. Belgian socialist Véronique De Keyser, is back for a third parliamentary term.

The first task of the new Commission was to audition Karel De Gucht, the new European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid designated to replace Louis Michel MEP. Answering Véronique De Keyser who asked him whether his “legendary outspokenness” would not lead the EU into “uncontrolled diplomatic ‘faux pas’”, the former Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs insisted on putting his reputation into perspective: “in five years, it only happened once – with Kabila” he affirmed, assuring the Committee that he is capable of controlling himself “and still able to tell the whole truth”.

The new European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid passed his first oral examination with flying colours, as he answered the questions of MEPs on subjects ranging from the financial crisis and climate change to Human Rights, Economic Partnership Agreements and the financing of Development policy. Louis Michel appreciatively said: “he fully masters the subject.”

From top to bottom

Eva Joly © EP
Iva Zanichchi © EP
Nirj Deva © www.nirjdeva.com
Corina Cretu © EP
Michèle Striffler © EP



ACP Secretary General calls for “eminent persons” group

Pacific discusses role and future in ACP Group

Addressing a press conference at the 40th Pacific Islands Forum on 6 August in Cairns, Australia, Secretary General of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States, Sir John Kaputin, called on Pacific ACP leaders to provide effective leadership by proposing an ACP “eminent persons” group.



Sir John Kaputin. © ACP Secretariat

Pacific's leaders at the 40th Pacific Islands Forum. © Pacific Forum Secretariat

Sir John said the group of leaders would “make concrete proposals and recommendations on the future of the ACP Group to the next Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government”.

Highlighting the group’s potential and duty to combat poverty, he added that the ACP “can, and will make a difference to the lives of so many”.

“In this regard, the 15 Pacific ACP States can make an invaluable contribution and change the concept of development cooperation”, he added.

He continued: “We need to revitalise our relationship with our principle partner, the

European Union, and simultaneously, develop expanded relations with other global role-players to the benefit of our countries, and indeed the people. I believe that an eminent persons group from the ACP would be able to provide sound advice to our leaders.”

In the lead up to the forum, Pacific ACP governments and representatives from regional organisations discussed EU funding and trade relations in the region. Chaired by the Premier of Niue, the Hon. Toke Talagi, leaders expressed appreciation at the signing of the 2008–2013 10th European Development Fund Pacific Regional Indicative Programme between the European Commission and the Pacific region on 15 November, 2008.

Of the €95M allocated by the EC for the programme, €85M has been earmarked for two main focal areas: €45M for Regional Economic Integration and €40M for Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and the Environment. €10M has been allocated for organisational strengthening and civil society participation.

The preliminary meeting and subsequent forum were attended by Pacific ACP leaders and representatives from the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga and Vanuatu, Kiribati, Palau and Timor Leste.



EU Funds to support research for Africa

Malarial Mosquito. © Reporters/Sheila Terry (Science Photo library)

Up to €63M will be allocated to African research projects in 2010, aiming to improve health conditions as well as water and food security. This special initiative aims to reinforce the research base of the continent, allowing it to contribute to its own development.

This research initiative for Africa covers some of the scientific and technological areas listed in the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership agreed on by the European Commission and the African Union Commission in December 2007. The financing will be based on a call for proposals officially presented on 18 September 2009 in Brussels to all potentially interested parties. EU Commissioner for Science and Research Janez Potočnik said: “With this ‘Africa call’ we are turning words into actions. The EU-Africa Strategic Partnership is harnessing the potential of science and technology to meet the water, food security and health challenges of Africa. It is getting researchers from Europe and Africa to work together in the true spirit of this Partnership. We are working not only for, but with Africa.”

This call for proposals is the first one entirely dedicated to the research initiative for Africa under the EU’s Framework Programme for Research (FP7) granted

with a budget of €50.5bn for the period 2007-2013. The call for proposals brings together several funding themes under FP7: Health (€39M), Environment (€17.5M) and Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology (€6.5M). The projects selected will include all of the above scientific and technological research fields but will also take into account broader socio-economic factors such as migration and resettlement, urbanisation, health care systems, variation of food and energy prices and so on.

The ‘Africa call’ is structured around two major issues:

•‘Water and Food Security’: projects selected will strive to ensure both safe drinking water and good sanitation and hygiene. They will aim to revitalise agriculture, promote more sustainable production systems and ensure food security. They will also address Africa’s vulnerability to the expected climate change impacts by setting up early-warning and forecasting systems

to address risks such as drought or vector-borne diseases.

•‘Better Health for Africa’: projects selected will focus on reducing the malaria disease burden, improving early diagnosis and treatment of the most frequent infection-related cancers, improving maternal and newborn health, assessing migrant health and addressing the shortage of healthcare personnel.

> Collaborative research and capacity-building

All projects will involve local stakeholders. Depending on the project, at least 2 or 3 partners must be established in an African country. The projects selected will foster capacity-building through the promotion of academic research and training, the setting up of networks, and the building of sustainable capacity for health research. **M.M.B.**

Tribe

Vague word, yet concrete reality

Masai. © Reporters/Photonostop

A dossier by Hegel Goutier

Therefore, what does the word tribe mean or not mean? Is it only linked to tribalism? In other words, does he or she who claims to be part of a tribe make or focus every choice – particularly political – according to this belonging? More than that, is that view incompatible with democracy and fair governance; is it more incompatible than other links: social class, where you live (urban or rural), educational standards, or religion?

Essentially, the word ‘tribe’ is not an issue and only takes on a negative connotation in the languages of African or far eastern tribes. For instance, in Swahili, tribe translates into ‘Kabila’. In English, the verb ‘kabili’ means ‘to face towards’ (Teach Yourself, by D. V. Perrott, Ed Hodder & Stoughton UK 1999); in French, facing forward, facing to, leaning towards, aiming at, being well disposed to, having a tendency to and more rarely, ‘affronting’ (Swahili-French dictionary by Alphone Lenselaer, Ed Karthala, 1983). A

Swahiliphone will feel no qualms in using it towards his community.

► Tribe in the ancient European world

When the city of Athens was still a kingdom, its population was divided into four tribes (phylai) that were more like subdivisions, in principle ethnic, of people that were meant to descend from the same ancestors. The same would have applied to the twelve tribes of Israel. A vague reference to the word tribe appears in ancient Rome and finds its origins in ‘tri’ (three) for the three social classes of society. However, etymologists such as Alain Rey and his team (Dictionnaire historique de la Langue Française Le Robert) dispute this, since Roman society was divided not into three but into four social groups. All the same, numerous encyclopaedias refer to this etymology.

Many reference books display a form of embarrassment for the term. Or they give a warning with a special note, as in the case of the Concise Oxford Dictionary (2006): “In the historical context, the word ‘tribe’ is broadly accepted... however, when used to refer to traditional societies today, the word can be problematic, because it is associated with past attitudes of white colonialists towards so-called primitive or uncivilised peoples. It is therefore generally preferable to use alternative terms such as ‘community’ or ‘people’”. This clear explanation does not question the ‘tribal’ content but the prejudices turned against it. The ‘Nouveau Petit Robert de la Langue Française 2008’ uses the participle ‘supposed’ with the aim of safeguarding its neutrality: “Groupe social et politique fondé sur une parenté ethnique réelle ou supposée, chez les peuples à organisation primitive” (social and political group founded on a real or supposed ethnic kinship in people living in primitive social organisations).

We could add that many extremely practical words, devoid of any negative connotation, originate from the word 'tribe': attributing, contributing, retribution, tribune, tribunal, or tribute. Most dictionaries explicitly propose the alternative terms of 'ethnic group', 'group' or 'community', not because they are more precise but because they are less charged with the prejudices of the colonial era.

All these thoughts contribute to a certain reality. Whatever word is used, there is an underlying prejudice. Consider that we rarely hear about Flemish, Catalan or Basque ethnic groups, instead the highly-rated term 'ethnic group' is being broadly

used to define populations from Africa, the Pacific, Indians in America or other areas. In the last category, we find expressions that the media keep trotting out when referring to Afghanistan and its buffer zone with Pakistan: "Pashtun, Baloch, Mehsud, Hazara tribes or ethnic groups or ethnic areas"; or still, "Uyghur and Zhungeer tribes facing the Han ethnic group" during the civil conflicts in China last June.

Moreover, 'ethnic group' is a phrase too greatly linked to genetics not to prove embarrassing. When the word does not remain vague as in: "The whole of individuals brought together by a certain number of

characteristics of civilisation, particularly the community of language and culture... The French ethnic group encompasses Walloon Belgium, French-speaking Switzerland, Canada", states Le Petit Robert.

The word 'tribe' cannot be used in terms of democracy, just as long as the sense of belonging of one part of a nation is respected while failing to recognise the rights of the other.

Keywords

Tribe; ethnic group; community.

Race and tribe put to the test of science

A tribe usually has a relatively limited population, whose members go back to common ancestors or would be ethnically close, with the same culture and language or similar languages. Eventually, a tribe would also share a primitive system of organisation. However, in terms of the ethnic, linguistic, social and political perspective, a community, an ethnic group or a nation is something completely different, although this is not the opinion of scientists, for whom race and tribes are not concepts of biology.

"Ethiopia participated in the creation of what we now consider the three monotheist religions". © Reporters

Primitive organisation? Well, very early on tribes in what is now Ethiopia participated in the creation of what we now consider the three monotheistic religions. Elsewhere, tribes from Nigeria created such basic techniques for human development as the development of iron. Furthermore, the first pharaohs developed their knowledge and techniques in Nubia (now Sudan). Limited population? Not necessarily. Witness the Yoruba tribe that can be found in Nigeria, Benin, Ghana and Togo. In Nigeria alone, its current population is estimated at more than 30 million (half the population of France) and the entire tribe – wherever they are – speak the same Yoruba language.

> **Human beings: too nomadic to be from one race**

From the biological perspective, African tribes are no more genetically united than any other community around the world. Interestingly, one does not claim to belong to a tribe just by blood, but also by adoption or marriage and often by the simple fact of residence.

No human community lives in isolation long enough to become a genetically homogenous group and this is the reason why biologists are virtually unanimous on the fact that a pure race of people never occurred anywhere. Any living animal or plant is usually situated at the end of a branch that started off

from the phylum (also known as branching) – that of mammals and birds for instance – that is divided successively into classes, orders, genders, species and races. This classification was mostly based on phenotypical characteristics, otherwise known as outward appearance.

So, it would seem that race does not actually exist in mankind. The human species is as one. Jacques Ruffié (1921-1924)*, a haematologist, geneticist and anthropologist, demonstrated that phenotypes such as the colour of our skin are too superficial to reveal a kinship between an individual and a population and between one population and another. Only certain serum proteins (blood serum) allow this. Ruffié’s initial research was conducted on Basque and Pyrenean populations. They led to replacing scientifically the notion of race with that of population.

Amongst other things, they demonstrated the advantage of crossbreeding, and therefore mixed origins. Ruffié and many biologists later insisted on the fact that the differences between so-called racial groups are cultural, not biological. For Ruffié, what is valid on this point for races is also applicable for tribes or for any community throughout the world. **H.G.**

* ‘De la biologie à la culture’, Flammarion, coll. Nouvelle Bibliothèque scientifique, Paris 1976 ; *Traité du vivant*, Ed Fayard, coll. Le temps des sciences, Paris 1982 (English version: Pantheon Books, New York, 1986).

Keywords

Tribe; race; ethnic; language; nation; nomades; Africa; Jacques Ruffié; Hegel Goutier.

Ruffié on races and tribes in *De la biologie à la culture* (From biology to culture): “Races do not exist in mankind... modern anthropology has demolished, both literally and figuratively, the notion of race”. “For the whole of the populations studied (that we can consider as a sampling of the human species in its whole), more than 85 per cent of variability occurs within tribes or nations; 7 per cent of the variability separates tribes or nations belonging to the same traditional ‘race’; 7 per cent of the variability separates traditional ‘races’ (yellow, white, black). In other words, individuals of the same group differ much more between themselves than tribes or ‘races’ between themselves. The variation is higher at individual rather than at racial level. This demonstrates the little emphasis we must place on the concept of human races on the biological perspective”.



“The first pharaohs developed their knowledge and techniques in Nubia”. © Reporters



Basque people. © Reporters
On right © Reporters





A long history of manipulation and loss of credibility

Djenné mosque. © Reporters/Photononstop

The history of Africa, and therefore the history of its tribes prior to colonisation, was the subject of very few studies during the colonial period. This is most probably due to the oral character of most cultures to the South of the Sahara, meaning that there is little written record. However, the avoidance of historical recollection continued beyond the colonial era.

> The glory days of tribes

Between the 13th and 16th centuries, great empires were being created in Africa. The territories of Ghana, Mali (or Songhai) had a system of political organisation comparable in many ways with that of many European countries at around the same time. Today, the Empire of Mali stands as one of those that have retained the most tangible traces of technical development, such as the architecture of such cities as Jenne or Segou. There was also a political balance between the tribes and the populations, both black and white (of Arab origin), who had managed to create more than a history: a common mythology. All descend from the same Snake God. There is nothing stronger than a myth to create a nation!

Mali's white Touaregs (there are also black Touaregs who were not slaves) call themselves 'Kel-Tamashek'* – in abbreviated form, 'Tamashek' -. Or, those who speak 'Tamashek'; nothing more than the language they shared with their former Bella slaves (also known as Kel-Tamashek). All the peoples of Mali have had representatives at the head of the Empire, distinguished by a relative absence of rancour or animosity between different tribal groups.

At the end of the first millennium, the Empire of Mali was already very rich. Indeed, in 1087 the writer Al-Bakri described countless details about its organisation, such as matrilineal succession, the role of dignitaries and its capital city: Koumbi Saleh (re-discovered in 1914 in what is now South

Mauritania). Aboubakar II came to power at the end of the 13th Century, having sailed to the West at the head of fleet of 2,000 men who, it is said, reached the Americas.

Much later, at the end of the war that raged between this country and Morocco (which it succeeded in occupying in 1584), the Touareg were part of the spearhead of its liberation against the Touareg from the North and re-conquered the city of Timbuktu.

> The imaginary Barbarian

Eventually though, the slave trade and subsequent colonisation undermined the value of the culture, the past and the historical memory of the people. Indeed as slaves they were described in contemporary accounts as sub-human or even as non-human. At the time, of course, slavery was regarded as a moral or religious imperative. How else would it have been possible to justify, in the name of Christianity, that a Son of God should commit the abject action of enslaving one being to another?

Thus begun the creation of what Laënnec Hurbon** called the 'barbarisation of the barbarian'. For example, if the victim submits to slavery, it justifies that he does not possess the shamelessness of a human being.

> Manipulation

Many anthropologists feel that colonisation deliberately encouraged tensions and feuds



Belgian Senate. © Reporters

between tribes that had not existed before, according to Amselle, of the Bété ethnic group in Côte d'Ivoire. The increase in tension between farmers (Hutu) and breeders (Tutsi) in Rwanda and Burundi were also possibly increased by colonisation***.

John Lonsdale****, an outstanding professor of African history at Trinity College, Cambridge is sure that in Kenya: "Ethnic economies were as complementary to each other as competitive, each with a different specialisation. But such inter-ethnicity - which was not without its frictions - was facilitated by the absence of any central power that might arrange groups in hierarchical relations. Therefore, sustained tribal rivalry could not exist under such decentralised, under-populated conditions. It wasn't until European rivalry imported the modern idea of the state in the late 19th Century that these areas became driven by self-interest".

Later, the English used for Indians, mainly on the 20 per cent of fertile, cultivable lands situated in the area mainly inhabited by Kikuyu tribe (then 20 per cent of the total population) around the capital city Nairobi. This marked the beginning of a history, whose tragic continuation recently took place.

After independence, politicians also stirred ethnic tensions. However, this is hardly the sole privilege of Africa, as the same thing has taken place elsewhere, particularly in the former republic of Yugoslavia and in former Soviet territories, where it caused thousands of deaths. Ethnic tensions are also seen in

strong democracies like Corsica, Ireland, Belgium or the Basque region of Spain.

The problem of Kenya lies in the weakness of its parliamentary structure, whereas in Ghana or Benin, the opposition parties hold a more important place in Parliament and the opposition can watch over government.

➤ Necessity of the institutional representation of minorities

On independence, in most African countries, the institutional representation of tribes (ethnic, cultural, religious) was written off. European democracy or European-style democracy - in societies that are the cultural heirs of the old continent such as the United States, Canada, Australia or New-Zealand - created institutions where every community is equally or equitably represented. It is usually the Senate, as in the case of the United States. In some countries, we find a superposition of geography and the ethnic group, such as in Belgium. In the Senate, the Flemish - representing more than 60 per cent of the population - have the same number of Senators as the Walloons. Moreover, in Parliament, a law deemed as 'fundamental' may not be voted in without a certain percentage of votes from each community. There is also the example of the Swiss cantons or the German Länder. The basis of this high chamber is to give a guarantee to the various groups (ethnic, religious, cultural) whose members have a sentiment of strong belonging in parallel to their citizenship.

The 'one man, one voice' without any compensation in a multi-lateral, multi-ethnic, multi-religious or simply multi-regional society presents a risk of democratic exclusion for minority groups. And this is true even without discussing bad governance and authoritarianism. The member of a community will not vote for someone, even reputed competent or honest, of another community unless he has the guarantee that his own interests are institutionally protected.

Recently, university professors as well as a plethora of distinguished political figureheads - including Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Barack Obama - have taken the view that tribes should be considered by the Africans as democratic institutions. Countries such as South Africa or Botswana, where this integration is being put into practice, are reaping the fruits of this initiative. **H.G.**

* See 'Les Kel Tamashek noirs', néologisme politique ou aberration sémantique ?' in 'Allaghen Ag Alla / Démocratie, exclusion sociale et quête de citoyenneté : cas de l'Association Timidria au Niger' by Mahaman Tidjani Alou, Journal des Africanistes 70 (1-2) 2000.

** Laënnec Hurbon, *Le barbare imaginaire*, Ed Payot, Paris France. Also see Julie Hearn, *Kenya and the myth of 'African barbarism'* (www.spiked-online.com).

*** Au cœur de l'ethnie: ethnies, tribalisme et État en Afrique (Editions La Découverte, Paris 1985; reed. 1999).

**** Co-author of *Unhappy Valley: conflict in Kenya and Africa* (James Currey, 1992) and (as co-editor) of *Mau Mau and Nationhood* (James Currey, 2003) *Open Democracy* http://www.opendemocracy.net/author/John_Lonsdale.jsp.



Three Chiefs Monument, Gaborone (Botswana). © Reporters

Botswana, an example of how democracy integrates tribes

Botswana is a model of parliamentary democracy, particularly in the way that its parliamentary institutions deal with the tribal system. These are the conclusions of a recent report by the French Senate.*

The report says Botswana's constitution is very stable – in fact it has hardly been amended at all since its creation in 1966, guarantees every fundamental liberty and prohibits every form of discrimination – particularly racial. The Assembly itself elects the President and the Presidential mandate is limited to two terms. Although the President may dissolve the National Assembly, the latter may adopt a motion of no confidence against the government, leading to his or her resignation or the dissolution of the Assembly. Since the country's independence in 1965, every election has been trouble-free.

The fact that there has been no change in the party in power in Botswana is due to the fragmentation of the opposition parties and the tradition of seeking consensus on important issues, says the report. Indeed, long before the British arrived, traditional tribal assemblies were extremely democratic. "The Chiefs were not bound to respect the point of view of the majority, but their decisions were rarely turned down or unpopular because any despotic chiefs could be dismissed."

➤ The Chamber of Chiefs

Eight traditional chiefs of the main tribes are amongst the 15 members of the Chamber. The deputy chiefs of tribes, other than the main ones, also elect four members. The Members of the Chamber of Chiefs must not have actively participated in politics during

the five years prior to their election, neither may they be members of a political party.

The Chamber of Chiefs must be consulted for any revision of the Constitution and in all the texts concerning family or private law, land ownership, and some aspects of civil law. This Chamber may also take up and investigate any issue that it deems pertinent. The legitimacy of the chiefs is still strong as each chief regularly consults his tribe in the course of traditional assemblies. The motto of the Chamber of Chiefs, inscribed in their debating chamber is 'Kdodi Ke Kgosi Ka Bathe' (the chief is chief by the people).

In its conclusions, the report explains that the Chamber of Chiefs allows for a controlled transition to modernity because it "preserves the solidarities and traditional allegiances, while avoiding a tribal fragmentation of the nation. It ensures the expression of the Chiefs... in an authentic parliamentary democracy. Furthermore, it gives due consideration to the interests of people like shepherds and farmers, which are nowadays often neglected over those of the urban classes in many developing countries." **H.G.**

* Report of the French Senate France-Africa Friendship Inter-Parliamentary Group: Botswana, an example for Africa, 1999.

Keywords

Botswana; Tribe; French Senate; Hegel Goutier.



Against fratricidal hatred in Burundi

Maggy, 'The Madwoman from Ruyigi', a truly exceptional person

Marguerite Barankitse. They call her Maggy, or more affectionately, Oma (the German for grandmother) and some even pronounce the name of Sister Maggy as they would a saint. She's personally declared war against fratricidal hatred. Her weapons? Heroism, courage, intelligence, tenacity, and her legendary organisational abilities. Just don't tell her how great she is, or she'll unleash her most terrifying weapon – a crystal clear laugh tinged with softness and sympathy. Something specially dedicated to you, whoever you are. Why? Because you are what she loves most – a human being.

Meet her once and you'll never forget her. This remarkable woman began by adopting children, many of whom had witnessed their parents being killed. That's how it was on the 24 October 2003 in her hometown, Ruyigi, where Tutsis like her were killing Hutu refugees. Two days before,

the opposite was happening (Hutus killing Tutsis) in other areas of the country and some members of her family were amongst the victims. Maggy used her body to shield "her children", her pupils. Maggy was repeatedly hit then bound to a chair. Her clothing was torn and a child was killed before her eyes, his head then flung onto her lap.

As soon as she managed to free herself and escape, the 'Madwoman from Ruyigi' – a title given by her fellow Tutsis, who were in awe of the energy of this champion of the causes of others – confronted death countless times that day. But she succeeded in saving 30 or so children and adopted them all. Still today, she is there when things go wrong – whatever



has created in Burundi – which include the very first, the Maison Shalom (www.maisonshalom.net) – have been awarded dozens of prizes from around the world for their humanitarian work.

We met her for the first time in Burundi and we asked if it was true that the Hutu and Tutsi tribes were creations of colonisation? She replied, laughing: “if tribes did

not exist, how could we know who to kill when we are going to kill?”

We met again when Maggy Barankitse was in Brussels for three days on her way to Stockholm – which currently holds the presidency of the EU – to share her advice and offer advice to with Swedish political and development representatives. She was staying with friends who have created a foundation* that supports her projects.

About being both notorious and respected through her nickname of Sister Maggy

Yes, I’ve been a sister to everyone I meet. Now the ‘mummy’ is 53 years old. I realise that, in a country still plagued by fratricidal hatred, we need a sanctuary, a space where people can dream. Faced with the misery that I encounter each day, I just say no. You see, we are all princes and princesses created in the image of God. My dream is to consider every person I meet like the dearest person ever.

On her many adoptions

Well, I didn’t adopt them all, although it’s true that I did at the beginning. I was a teacher and I had a challenge facing me, so I legally adopted seven children: four Hutus and three Tutsis. I wanted to show my Burundian brothers and sisters that it was possible to live all together in harmony. Sadly, when war broke out in 1993, I had to take on 25 children when I witnessed the massacre of their parents. In all, 72 people were murdered before my eyes. Then, 12

years of civil war gave me another 10,000 children to care for...

Now, we are helping 50,000 children and we have just bought a large hospital facility with a 120-bed capacity. We already had a mother and child protection centre, where we welcome mothers who are either extremely poor, malnourished, or stricken with AIDS. As I believe it is crucial to educate children about what peace means, we have created a cultural centre with a cinema, library, swimming pool and a garage facility where we reintegrate former child soldiers.

On the necessity of insisting, or not, on the children’s ethnic background

It’s ridiculous to put the blame of belonging to a tribe onto anyone. That’s not where conflicts lie. They lie in the use that politicians make of ethnic belonging. Being part of a tribe is enriching. I am a Burundian Tutsi from the Banyarwanda clan** and I was born in Nyamutobo. Denying where you come from is also to deny your identity.

Tensions between Hutus and Tutsis before the independence

In the village, some children didn’t know which tribe they belonged to, but the trouble began around 1972 when they started killing intellectual Hutus. Ethnicity was used as the excuse, without the shadow of a doubt, and Hutus were set against Tutsis. They made use of the ignorance of people. But today, things have changed and people are starting to see clearly and beginning to understand that we must all work together in this blessed region of the Great Lakes. There are so many riches here, and we are like beggars sitting on gold ingots. The day we awaken, the day the region wakes up, the world will be astonished. **H.G.**

* The “Fondation Jean-François Peterbroeck” (contact: rue d’Angoussart 60, B-1301 Bierges – Belgium) financed 50 per cent of the construction and fitting out of the hospital recently built by Maggy’s organisation.

** Hutus and Tutsis consider themselves being from the same clan, the Banyarwanda. A clan is supposed to be part of a tribe or an ethnic group. Some specialists refer to the Banyarwanda as an ethnic group. Thus, researchers consider that Hutus and Tutsis are not tribes.

Read the well-documented and well-written book by Christel Martin, *La haine n’aura pas le dernier mot. Maggy, la femme aux 10 000 enfants*, Ed Albin Michel, 222 pages, 2005 Paris.

Keywords

Marguerite Barankitse; Burundi; Hutu; Tutsi; Twa; Tribe; clan; Banyarwanda; conflict; Hegel Goutier.

side the victims are on, and she still throws herself between the killers and the children, adopting hundreds of them.

She has put in place an exceptional system of organisation to raise each child, care for them and give them an education. Moreover, she raises each child according to his or her religion, Protestant, Moslem, whatever, even though she herself is a devout Catholic. She teaches “her children” to be well-organised so that this huge family can become self-protecting and self-sufficient. In future, thousands more children will be taken in, and an agency to find family links for children will be formed. In addition, she has also set up major sustainable development projects. Today, there are more than 50,000 children referred to as ‘The Children of Maggy’ and the various centres that she

Lagipoiva Cherelle Jackson*

Tribe ceremony in Papua New Guinea. © Reporters/Eureka Slide



Papua New Guinea. A tribe meets to discuss the death of their sacred bird, the blue Bird of Paradise (1930s). © Reporters/Mary Evans Pictures

All over the Pacific, traditional hierarchy and structures have been maintained. In the initial Pacific cultures, systems were already in place to ensure peace, justice and substance in the governance of a tribe, group or community.

► Samoan Integration

Samoa has long been an intriguing democracy case study due to the success of the integration of cultural democracy and the imposed system of democracy.

According to Dr. Graham Hassall, Professor and Director of Governance at the University of the South Pacific, the Samoan system like others in the Pacific has been successful because it ensured the voice of the people.

He believes that there is a strong linkage between people agreeing to fol-

Tribal culture in the face of democracy

low certain leaders, and the leader then serving the community, protecting, allocating resources, solving disputes, etc.

► Fijian Conflict

In Fiji, the traditional tribal system, governed by the Great Council of Chiefs (Bose Levu Vakaturaga in Fijian) has been severely undermined and ignored. The Council was established in 1876. All of the chiefs belong to one of three confederacies: Kubuna, Burebasaga, and Tovata. For the most part, the boundaries of the confederacies correspond to the boundaries of the provinces. During the colonial era, meetings of the Great Council of Chiefs were held every year or two. In 1963, this function of the Council was abolished as indigenous Fijians obtained the right to elect their representatives to Parliament.

In Fiji, there is another cultural representation to leadership and that is the House of Chiefs, a larger body which includes all hereditary chiefs. Fiji's first Constitution, adopted upon independence in 1970, gave the Council the right to appoint eight of the twenty-two members of the Senate.

The Council was suspended in April 2007 by Commodore Frank Bainimarama, instigator of the December 2006 military coup. On August 5, 2008, it was announced that the Great Council of Chiefs was ready to reconvene.

► Solomon Islands Challenge

According to Michael Kwa'ioloa, of Kwara'ae in Solomon Islands, his country

does not have caste or class divisions. In Melanesia (Solomons, Papua-New-Guinea and Vanuatu) they have what is called the 'Big-men' system and in certain parts, the chiefly system. The country also has different tribal groups found on the different islands.

According to Kwa'ioloa, in the past Solomon Islanders lived under a system of equality of wealth based on exchange. "Furthermore, Western ideas of economics convinced Solomon Islanders educated overseas to behave naively, contradicting the traditional religious and cultural values of cooperation which suit the people of the country best."

The ethnic groups of the Solomon Islands reflect the natural division of the islands. It was only in the late twentieth century that ethnic relations became politicised, resulting in violence.

► Collective conscience

There is a collective cultural conscience in the Pacific that identifies each island. In time, the value of tribal culture and traditional hierarchy became diluted in the bid to become successful democratic states, although not all have been successful cases. The common trait is that tradition is still the rule of law.

* Samoan journalist.

Keywords

Fiji; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Dr. Graham Hassall.

Focus on financial crisis at DevDays

The impact of the financial crisis on ACP countries will be at the centre of the fourth edition of European Development Days 2009, which opens in Stockholm (Sweden) on 22 October for three days

The effects of the global financial crisis on developing countries are becoming clearer. In its communication, "Helping developing countries to overcome the crisis", published last April and endorsed by the EU Council of Ministers and the EU-ACP Joint Council in May, the European Commission forecast that foreign investments could fall by 80 per cent and emigrants' remittances by 40 per cent. World commerce is slowing down and the economic growth of these countries could fall by 5 per cent or more. This situation, says the Commission, will plunge a further 100 million people into poverty in 2009, and these people will join those already affected by the explosion of food and fuel prices. It is also clear that developing countries will be the worst affected by the global recession, even though they bear the least responsibility for it, just like climate change, the Commission reports. In Africa, economic growth could reach 3.4 per cent in 2009, against 5.2 per cent in 2008, or even a loss that would represent almost double the Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the continent.

➤ Accelerating and enlarging flows of aid

"We must take action immediately and the aid must have a direct effect", underlines the Commission. How? Principally by accelerating the payment of aid, as well as by regrouping it and redefining priorities. If need be, the Commission aims to redefine its support programmes to reflect the new needs and emerging priorities. The European Investment Bank should concentrate on anticyclic actions in priority areas, encompassing infrastructure, energy, the climate and the financial sector. The revitalisation of agriculture in developing countries, particularly ACP countries, also figures on

the list of priorities of the Commission. This includes the implementation of the €1bn 'food facility', €314M of which has already been paid out in favour of the 23 countries (http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/food-security/food-facility_en.htm) considered as being most under threat. The Commission also set itself a new objective: investing in "farming corridors" that would ensure relations between markets and production areas. On the climate issue the Commission also offers new financing to help reforestation and to transfer the technologies of

developing countries. Funds for this would be taken from the profits of an auction sale of the emission quotas of EU countries.

On the commercial front, the Commission proposes to reinforce export credits, credit facilities and guarantees, "determining modes of commerce stimulation". **M.M.B.**

Keywords

Financial crisis, developing countries, European Commission, Flex vulnerability, Marie-Martine Buckens.





© Marie-Martine Buckens

A MECHANISM TO FINANCE SOCIAL SERVICES

This year, the economic crisis could plunge 100 million more people into poverty in developing countries, underlines the Commission. Women, children, the elderly and those with disabilities make up the groups most at risk. The Commission feels that, to guarantee this very vulnerable group some protection, it is vital to ensure a continuous flow of aid in the key areas of health, education and decent work. The EC underlines that the social crisis has an economic cost that could damage the public financing of social services. Therefore, the EC has offered to put in place a support mechanism for social spending and to devote €500M of the European Development Fund (EDF) to the ACP countries most affected by the crisis. This financing will be implemented through the existing Flex system (a form of 'rapid payment' to help ACP countries come to terms with the fluctuations of export proceeds) and based on former losses of export proceeds, and by a new ad-hoc Flex system – which must still be formally proposed – based on vulnerability. This 'vulnerability Flex' will be based on such parameters as the forecast of export losses, financial flows and the decline of transfers.

On this last point, the EU ministers of foreign affairs, who met in Brussels on 18 May, are said to be particularly concerned by the negative impact of the crisis on emigrants' remittances to their home countries. This is because these funds, according to some estimates, far exceed the aid of industrialised countries. Thus, the ministers "are very pleased at the work that is currently being conducted in international circles (...) particularly in view of the development of an institute for the African emigrants' remittances".

Research on development

EU Report on Development to fight the fragmentation of effort and lack of resources

The current state of development aid is not well known because of the fragmentation of effort and the lack of resources, according to a European Commission report to be published shortly. In its drafting, the European Commission has assembled a body of researchers in the area. The soon-to-be-published European Report on Development (ERD) will bring together their conclusions. The so-called 'fragile' countries that suffer from a lack of data are particularly targeted. Better knowledge of these countries' situations may help build better development policy making and address conflicts, security threats, weak governance or unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, say EC officials.

A common set of criteria to analyse the

situation of various State members of the EU is one of the main targets of the research conducted. The European Report on Development was prepared in close cooperation with other donors and developing countries. The European University Institute (EUI) coordinated the work.

Special emphasis is put on the EU's response to fragile situations with a focus on the definition, reasons for and determinants of a particular country's fragility, the role played by the agricultural sector and the general responses of the international community in such situations and in particular, the various approaches adopted by the EU.

The Courier will feature the report's conclusions in-depth upon its publication. **H.G.**

AID EFFECTIVENESS AND PREDICTABILITY

Supporting Zambia's fight against poverty.

Zambia has put in place a sizeable programme to improve the efficiency of its poverty-focused initiatives and advance towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The European Commission has recently pledged €225M to Zambia under the signing of a so-called 'Millennium Development Goal' contract between the government of Zambia and the European Commission.

The resources will be used to improve service delivery in the social sectors, structural reforms for better job creation and growth to aid the poorest in society and public finance management.

Zambia is the first beneficiary of the MDG contracts that are to be signed also with six other African countries – Mali, Mozambique, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Rwanda.

Mid-term talks step up

The autumn months in Brussels will see talks step up between the ACP and EU to pave the way for the 2nd five-yearly review of the Cotonou agreement (2000-2020). Joseph Ma'ahanua, Ambassador of the Solomon Islands to the EU and former Chairman of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors, said one important issue for the ACP group of nations was to bring climate change into the Convention. "The situation is that over time we have tried to deal with climate change issues, but it has always been seen as part of trade and development. What we have to do is try to deal with it as an environmental issue in its own right," said the Ambassador in an interview.

Equally important, he said, was to "cater for developments to come in the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)" currently being negotiated between the EU by a number of ACP states. "The development support provided by the European



Dryland nera Manatuto, Timor-Leste. © UN Photo/Martine Perret

Community related to EPAs must be commensurate with the costs that ACP states will incur in adjustment to EPA implementation and other related costs," ACP Secretary General, Sir John Kaputin, told an audience at the University of Wollongong, Australia in July. But for the EC, the current €22.682bn (2008-2013) financial package is not up for review before its expiry in 2013.

CONCORD, the European NGO confederation for relief and development says in a

recent policy paper that the Cotonou review is an important opportunity to "test some of the suggestions that have been made for the involvement of non-state actors in both consultations around decision-making and implementation of the cooperation agreement," enshrined in Cotonou. **D.P.**

Keywords

Mid-term Review; Cotonou agreement (2000-2020); Joseph Ma'ahanua; Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs); Sir John Kaputin; CONCORD.



African gas for Europe

Pipelines in Obrikom, Nigeria, 2006. © Reporters/AP

By 2015, Africa could become the EU's preferred gas supplier. That is the date when the Nigeria-Niger-Algeria trans-Sahara gas pipeline should be operational. Supplying Nigerian gas, it will also confirm Algeria's position as a gas hub for Europe.

The Algerian company *Sonatrach* and the *Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC)* submitted the feasibility study for the project to the European Commission two years ago. On 3 July this year the project became official with the signing, in the Nigerian capital Abuja, of an intergovernmental agreement between Nigeria, Niger and Algeria to build the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline (TSGP). The pipeline will be 4,218 kilometres long, bringing gas produced in the Niger Delta, a hydrocarbon production zone in southern Nigeria that often experiences serious vio-

lence, to southern Europe, by way of Niger and Algeria. Delivery should begin in 2015, at the rate of 30 billion cubic metres a year. Calls for tenders for the project, expected to be worth \$US10bn, should be launched before the end of the year.

A number of oil companies, such as *Total* of France, the Anglo-Dutch *Royal Dutch Shell*, *Eni* of Italy and Russia's *Gazprom*, have already expressed an interest. *Gazprom* and the *NNPC* have already agreed to invest at least \$US2.5bn in exploring and developing Nigerian oil and gas deposits and in

building the first section of the pipeline.

Gazprom's presence in Africa is not without significance. At present the EU imports around a third of its gas supplies from Russia, about 150 billion cubic metres a year. Brussels has now decided to diversify its gas suppliers, a fuel which will meet a growing share of Europe's energy consumption. **M.M.B.**

Keywords

Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline; TSGP; Nigeria; Algeria; Niger; Gazprom; Total; Eni; Shell; EU; Marie-Martine Buckens.

Second South Africa-EU Summit

The second South Africa-EU Summit held in Kleinmond, South Africa 11 September took stock of global issues such as climate change and the financial crisis. It also addressed the internal situation in various countries of the continent – Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Sudan and Somalia. South Africa's President, Jacob Zuma, chaired for his country and European Development Commissioner, Karel De Gucht, for the EU. The state of EU-South Africa

trade and aid relations was also reviewed. An EC-funded €100M Employment Creation Fund to increase job opportunities and develop skills in the South African economy was launched.

The EC's total bi-lateral aid package for South Africa is €980M covering 2007 to 2013. For this year (2009-2010), it includes a major budget support programme for primary education (over €122M) as well as a

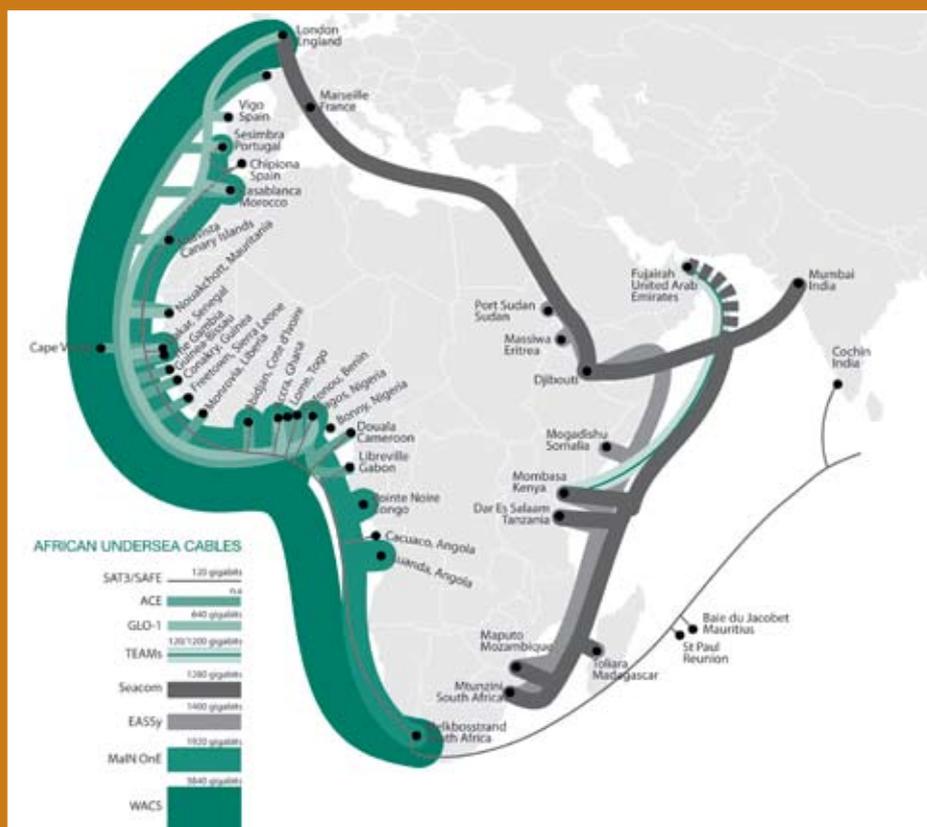
financial window to enable South African students and academics to attend European Universities under the Erasmus Mundus scheme (€5M), and a programme for Youth Empowerment through Culture and Sport (€10M). A full report on the meeting will appear in issue no. 14 of *The Courier*. **D.P.**

Keywords

South Africa; European Union; Kleinmond; Jacob Zuma; Karel De Gucht; Employment Creation Fund; Debra Percival.

Africa's ICT sector: As dynamic as ever

As the global economic crisis continues to destabilise regional economies, Africa has been the most spared as far as investments in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector go, says Laura Recuero Virto, economist for the Africa and Middle East Desk at the Development Centre of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The need to implement and tap the potential of ICTs in Africa is as pressing as ever.



Map of current and future underwater fiber optic cables in Africa. © Steven Song, www.manypossibilities.net.

► The rise and rise of ICTs in Africa

Virto explains that the success of this sector can be attributed to the significantly lower operational costs and salaries which are typically found on the continent and higher gains from network deployment. A testament to this success is the 48 per cent rate of growth in Africa for French telecommunications company *Orange*, compared to 28 per cent elsewhere. Growth rates are higher in Africa, “because there is a large potential market, and Africa remains one of those areas in the world where you do have a very large population that still remains unconnected”, says Virto.

She adds that largely due to saturated home markets, growth for various European telecommunications companies is now coming from Africa. Moreover, in contrast to smaller companies and sectors with fewer capacities, large companies such as African giant *MTN*, have large cash flows to react to and survive the crisis and to consolidate and find new markets.

Tapping into this potential, African governments in countries like Ghana, Botswana

and Rwanda are also increasingly engaging the ICT sector and private investors, for example by creating ‘technological parks’ geared to integrating new technologies in business activities.

Surpassing mobile phones, Virto notes that submarine fibre optic cables including SEACOM and ACE (Africa Coast to Europe) are currently receiving the most ICT investment in Africa. Deployed along the east and west coasts, they are aimed at creating significantly rapid Internet links between the regions and the rest of the world.

“The biggest question here is how to move from voice to Internet, and this is the second revolution that Africa is facing”, notes Virto.

► Mobilising international cooperation

The EU continues to be an active partner in developing Africa’s ICT sector, through the EuroAfrica-ICT project and conference series as well as the EU-Africa Partnership on Infrastructure, managed by the European Investment Bank. Infrastructure projects include the €173M East African Submarine

Cable System (EASSy), to be completed in 2010 and connecting 22 coastal and landlocked African countries regionally and worldwide, through enhanced telecommunications networks.

“Growth rates are higher in Africa,”

As ICTs circumvent market bottlenecks and ‘spillover’ to sectors such as agriculture, where African farmers can now check market prices via mobile phones, Virto insists that Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and other cooperation strategies need to more explicitly engage the major role of ICTs.

“The fact that ICTs are growing so much is not because of ICTs themselves but because of the impact they have on other sectors, and consumers realise this,” says Virto. **O.R.U.**

Keywords

Africa ICT; economic crisis; SEACOM; ACE; EASSy; PRSPs; Okechukwu Romano Umelo.

Grasping Eritrea

Interview with Eritrean Ambassador to Belgium, H.E Mr Girma Asmerom



With criticism against Eritrea surfacing in various media across Europe over the last few months, *The Courier* gives the floor to Girma Asmerom, the country's Ambassador to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg. We seek his response, but also to find out more about the general situation in his country. We began with a question about the lack of image suffered by Eritrea.

Ambassador: Suffering is a very elastic word, but there is deliberate distortion from different circles, for whatever motive, against Eritrea. But the reality in Eritrea is extremely different from what is being propagated and portrayed in some quarters.

Before discussing some of these allegations, could you tell us about the current country-wide situation, especially in these times of global economic crisis?

Eritrea is blessed with having come late into this world – we are only 18 years old. We have

tried to avoid every single mistake that has been made by developing countries, notably by African countries. Eritrea is very clear about where it wants to go. First and foremost, the foreign aid dependency syndrome has to be cut. That does not mean we do not want foreign aid, but ownership must be ours. Our natural resources also must benefit the country – it must be a win-win situation for both investors and for us.

The other dimension we want in Eritrea is in terms of capacity building. Eritrea is extremely rich. We have gold; we have 1,200 kilometres of coastline with a sustainable capacity of fishing 80,000 metric tonnes per year, out of which only 10,000 metric tonnes are currently caught. We have marble and granite. We are only four million people, and the equitable distribution of wealth is properly handled. But no matter how much gold we have, the investor is not going to come unless our infrastructure such roads, ports, electricity, telecommunications, etc., is developed. We are expanding additional ports. We used to have two airports, now we have four.

We have two major ports; we are connecting them via major highways. Instead of three days, it now takes only seven hours to link them. So we are laying down infrastructure before inviting investors to come.

How do you reply to the criticism from some international associations who make the following allegations: young people who don't want to go into the army (national service) are harshly punished; illegal Eritrean migrants sent back from Egypt are sometimes imprisoned; the government interferes in religious affairs. They give as examples the removal of Patriarch Antonios and the situation of the Pentecostal-like group of the Mulu-Wengel.

These are three very good questions. There are distortions here. First in terms of the national service, we copied it from the Swiss, the Belgians, the Israelis and other countries. As a small nation, we consciously decided there is no need for a professional army which is very expensive. Moreover, national service increases the opportunity for better cohesion among the different ethnic groups. Unfortunately, a war erupted. Ethiopia tried



Eritrean Ambassador, H.E. Mr Girma Asmeron, presents his credentials to José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, 2007. © EC

Ethiopian bomb beside the road near Barentu, 162 kms west of Asmara, the Eritrean capital, 2000. © Reporters/AP

to invade Eritrea. The youth was mobilised. Ethiopia has a population of 80 million, we're only 4 million. It is a nation-building process to protect your own country. Look, the Americans invaded Afghanistan and Iraq. They said that was for national security reasons. Conscription in Eritrea is for a period of one year and six months. In the military structure, there are military disciplinary actions. But punishments do not go beyond normality. Therefore the national service is the right of obligation for Eritreans.

As for the second point you raised about the exodus of Eritrean youth; that is again a distortion of reality. There is now a big business in human trafficking. The NGOs are the ones who write affidavits saying there are human rights violations, and so a particular guy has to be given refugee status. This is a job creation exercise for them. The fact of the matter is that Eritreans returning to their country are not detained or sent to jail.

About religious groups, Eritrea is 50% Christian and 50% Muslim. They lived in

harmony for centuries. Given this cohesion and unity, we have zero tolerance for extremism. Extremism is not only from Islam fundamentalists; it also comes from Christians. There is not only al-Qaeda. I have the right to protect my cohesion, my harmony. We restrict the number of Madrasas opened in Eritrea; we also have to restrict the activities of Christian fundamentalists.

As for Patriarch Antonios, the Eritrean Orthodox church has a Synod which is the most democratic institution. It replaced its own Patriarch by another Patriarch. He has never been detained; he can never be detained. None of the Patriarchs have been deposed as a result of government intervention.

Could you summarise the geopolitics of Eritrea?

Eritrea is the most stable country in the whole of Africa. Look at Ethiopia, where religious cleansing and ethnic cleansing happen everyday. The regime in power in Ethiopia is from a specific ethnic group which makes up only five per cent of the population. So the

entire region is volatile. In Somalia there is tension between the Afars and the Issas. You know about Kenya, what has transpired in the election. It was a volatile situation that included ethnic cleansing. Almost 600,000 people were displaced. Almost 1,500 people were killed. In Sudan there is a South and North and Darfur issue. Eritrea is for peace and stability in the region. Eritrea believes in a strong region. It is a trading block. Unless you have peace and stability, the trading block is not going to function.

The international geopolitics is this – this is diplomacy 101 (a basic principle of diplomacy): there are no permanent friends, but permanent interests. That is the basic theory of every nation. Be it small or big, it has a role to play for peace and stability in this global village. We feel we can play a constructive role, and we have been playing a constructive role; and that is the way forward. **H.G.**

Keywords

Girma Asmerom; Hegel Goutier; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Somalia; Kenya; Patriarch Antonios; Mulu-Wengel; al-Qaeda; Christian Fundamentalist; Muslim Fundamentalist.

Breaking aid myth. Dambisa Moyo's remedies

The best way for Africa to overcome its underdevelopment is by benefitting from international flows of investment – rather than aid programmes. Especially not aid, emphasises Dambisa Moyo, a Zambian economist, whose book, Dead Aid, already figures in the top ten best-seller list in the United States. The book is subject to much controversy... or debate at least. The Courier encourages comments from readers to this heated debated that has been a talking point in international institutions (the European Commission in particular) for many months.



© Flickr.com

“S o there we have it: sixty years, over one trillion dollars of Africa aid, and not much good to show for it. Were aid simply innocuous – just not doing what it claimed it would do – this book would not have been written. The problem is that aid is not benign: it’s malignant. No longer part of the potential solution, it’s part of the problem - in fact, aid is the problem.”

The pitch is given. Dambisa Moyo has launched a battle against today’s widely practiced and praised current policy that sets aid as the preliminary condition to any development policy. She is at war against her former professor, American economist Jeffrey Sachs – father of the Millennium Development Goals – a man who has undertaken the task of taking Africa out of its current state of poverty, unhealthiness and illiteracy, armed with billions of dollars.

Aid, argues Dambisa Moyo, does not eradicate some of Africa’s first rank scourges such as civil wars and corruption. Quite the reverse: development aid encourages corruption and allows some regimes to stay in place artificially. Because of the significant

amounts that aid invests, it triggers envy and can stir up ethnic tensions, which sometimes lead to civil wars.

> Circular logic

Better still, aid is intrinsically linked to upholding the entire corpus in charge of cooperation: World Bank (10,000 staff) and the International Monetary Fund (2,500), to which she feels it would be right to add the 5,000 other persons from United Nations agencies, more than 25,000 attachés to NGOs, charity organisations and the plethora of other experts of governmental aid agencies. “In total” she writes, “around 500,000 persons, the population of Swaziland”. And she continues: “their bread and butter depends on this aid, just like the officials who receive it”. The economist goes further still and fustigates the logic of fear that animates the donors who worry that in the event that poor countries cannot finance their programmes, they will in turn be unable to reimburse their debts to donor countries: “it is specifically this circular logic that allows aid to perpetuate its ploy”.

Thus, it is not by chance, pursues the author, if between 1970 and 1998, a period when

aid to development was at its peak, poverty increased from 11% to 66%. It seems that aid suffers from one essential flaw: it destroys any incentive to evolve, to reform and to develop. The solutions that Dambisa Moyo proposes are essentially based on the “capacity of countries to create richness”, like their Asian counterparts. She stresses that the priority should be given to the respect of property rights and quotes the exemplary case of Botswana, a country that has experienced an average growth of 6.8% between 1968 and 2001 because of its policy favouring economic growth, which includes opening up to international competition, a non-inflationist monetary policy and moderate fiscal pressure.

Furthermore, the economist suggests that American and European governments should be pressurised to end the massive subventions that they grant to farmers. African peasants could thus access global markets and live off their production, which would be far more efficient than to grant them development aid. **M.M.B.**

Keywords

Dambisa Moyo; Dead Aid; Africa; Marie-Martine Buckens.

Joyce van Genderen-Naar

Crossing Borders and Frontiers

View on Nyanzale Refugees Camp (North Kivu, DRC). © Cédric Gerbehaye/Agence VU, www.etat-critique.org



The landscape of international development cooperation is coloured by many actors and organisations. Among them are doctors, engineers, architects, lawyers, economists, sociologist, and journalists, crossing borders and frontiers all over the world. They established international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), based on profession, to work in countries which are at war or in conflict situations. Their work brings along risks, dangers and although characterised by impartiality, neutrality and independence, it is sometimes controversial and criticised as partial and interfering in state affairs. One of the reasons could be the lack of information and understanding about their objectives and their working-method as well as the cooperation and communication with national governments and local experts.

Well known are the **Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)**, an international medical humanitarian organisation created in 1971 by doctors and journalists in France. MSF provides aid/medical care in nearly 60 countries to people in crisis regardless of race, religion, or political affiliation, on the basis of need and independent access to victims of conflict as required under international humanitarian law. Medical teams conduct evaluations on the ground to determine the medical needs and care for people who suffer from vio-

lence, neglect, or catastrophe, due to armed conflict, epidemics, malnutrition, exclusion from health care or natural disasters. MSF says that the key to acting independently in response to a crisis is its independent funding. Eighty-nine percent of MSF's overall funding comes from private sources, not governments. *Website:* www.msf.org

Engineers Without Borders (EWB) are formed by several non-governmental organisations in several countries, focused on engineering and construction in international development work and strongly linked to

academia and students. Engineers without Borders/Ingénieurs sans frontières (ISF)-France was founded in the 1980s, followed by ISF-Spain and ISF-Italy in the 1990s and EWB-Canada, one of the largest of the EWB organisations, in the late 1990s and many other EWB/ISF groups around the world. *Website:* <http://www.ewb-international.org/>

Architects Without Borders is a non-governmental not-for-profit volunteer humanitarian relief organisation, providing technical assistance and support for recovery and reconstruction programs in countries that

suffer from economic crisis, human conflict and natural disaster, such as the Tsunami in Asia. *Website:* <http://www.awb.iohome.net/>

Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) was founded in 1992 in Belgium, sending lawyers without borders, lawyers for lawyers, abroad to take part in sensitive trials and to assist or represent human rights lawyers and human rights activists persecuted for exercising their profession. Lawyers without borders defended the accused and represented the victims in Rwandan courts and between 1995 and 1998 lawyers were trained in Arusha, Tanzania, for appearance before the International Court (ICC) in Rwanda. *Website:* <http://www.asf.be/index.php?module=home&lang=en>

International Lawyers and Economists against Poverty (ILEAP)/Juristes et Economistes Internationaux contre la Pauvrete (JEICP), is an independent non-profit organisation, launched in Nairobi in May 2002 and established as a non-profit organisation in Canada. The work of ILEAP is focused on increasing the capacity and participation of development countries in international negotiations. African and Caribbean experts are trained by ILEAP for the negotiations of the economic partnership agreements (EPA) with the European Community. Capacity building is provided

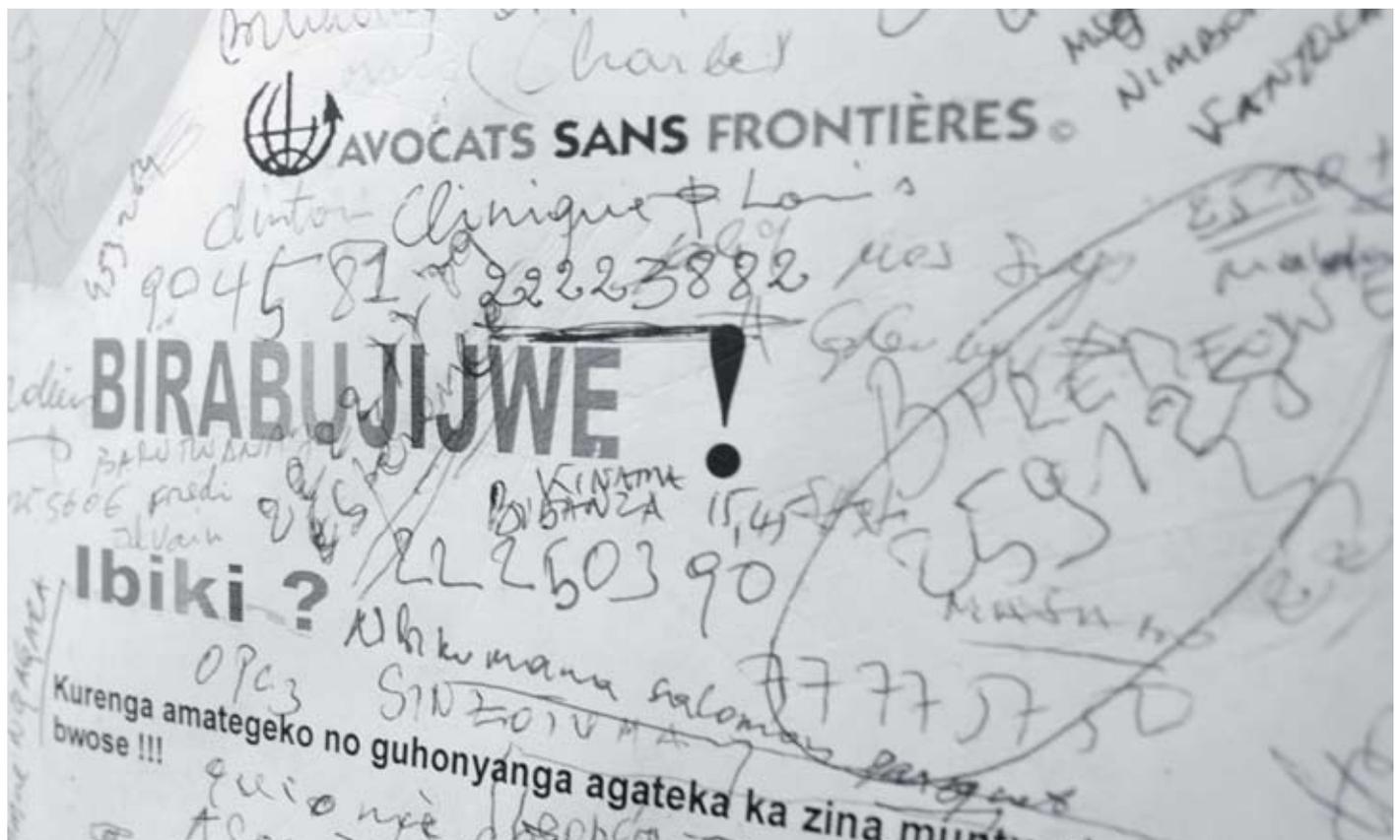
by trade professionals from several countries. *Website:* <http://www.ileap-jeicp.org/>

Association Studies Without Borders/ Études sans frontières is a more recent non-profit association, founded in Paris in March 2003 by young French citizens with the support of international personalities, such as Vaclav Havel, former president of Czechoslovakia, who considers education as a guarantee for peace promotion, solidarity and sustainable development. Through Studies Without Borders young people, who are not able to study in their own country due to crisis, can continue and resume their studies in Europe and North America, and go back to their country when the situation permits. A total of 190 students from Chechnya, Congo, Rwanda and Western Sahara benefited from the programs of Studies Without Borders. *Website:* <http://www.etudessansfrontieres.org>

Reporters without Borders/Reporters sans frontières (RSF), is a Paris-based international non-governmental organisation, founded in 1985, to advocate freedom of the press, the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas regardless of frontiers, in accordance with Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1950 European Convention

on Human Rights. RWB compiles and publishes an annual ranking of countries based upon the organisation's assessment of their press freedom records. The impartiality of Reporters Without Borders is not universally accepted. Criticisms concern RWB's funding (a significant amount of funding, 19% of total, comes from certain western governments and organisations), its anti-Castro and anti-Chavez reporting, its methodology in ranking press freedom and the lack of direct understanding of existing laws in ranked countries. *Website:* www.rsf.org

Sociologists Without Borders was founded in Spain in 2001, as a non-governmental organisation, and has established chapters in Madrid, Catalonia, Valencia, USA, Brazil, and Italy, and others are in formation. Sociologists Without Borders became visible as first professional group that made a critical statement against the United States government unilateral intervention in Iraq. In 2004 and 2005, young sociologists joined the Kibera project, an international effort in support of the welfare and development of a poor slum quarter of Nairobi. Sociologists Without Borders work together with journalists to collect and analyse relevant information for the public. *Website:* <http://www.sociologistswithoutborders.org/>



'Avocats Sans Frontières' campaign. © ASF

Is a deal on services of interest to the Pacific?

Talks are set to resume this autumn between the Pacific region and the EU on an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). Trade in services, taken off the negotiating table early on by Pacific negotiators, is still of big interest to the region.



Samoaan 'Haka', rugby World Cup 2007, France. © Reporters/AP

“When we first started, it was the services that were our main area of interest given only a few Pacific countries have the base to be able to export trade in goods”, says Joseph Ma’ahanua, the Solomons’ Ambassador to the EU and former chairperson of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors.

He continues: “One of the things we tried to push forward was the Temporary Movement of Natural Persons (TMNP). We met a brick wall with the EC on this so decided to approach the whole negotiations in a two-pronged approach where we continued with negotiations of what could constitute a comprehensive EPA, whilst at the same time, we approached EU member countries who we felt would be able to understand and support us [on TMNP].”

Greater opportunities to play in Australia and New Zealand,

Lutz Guellner, spokesperson for EC Trade Commissioner, Baroness Ashton, points out that work permits for non-EU nationals in

any of the 27 EU states “... are not in the Commission’s competence and have to be negotiated directly with individual Member States”.

“The question is why did we shift from a services agreement covering the whole of the Pacific region to a goods one, which we felt early on would not be utilised by the whole Pacific membership?” raises the Ambassador. This was because the opening of trade in fisheries was important to many in the region. It led to the individual ‘goods’ EPAs being signed with Papua New Guinea and initialled with Fiji* whose signature is pending in the wake of country’s coup of 2006.

At the heart of the debate on services is the Pacific’s interest in an EU benchmark on TMNP in order to prise similar concessions out of both New Zealand and Australia with whom the Pacific region is also currently negotiating market openings in PACER (Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations) Plus talks. Lutz Guellner recently indicated to The Courier “...the EU is ready to resume talks including on mode 4”.

> Rugby

Su’a Peter Schuster, Chief Executive Officer of the Samoa Rugby Football Union, says

rugby players are just one group lobbying for greater opportunities to play in New Zealand and Australia. “New Zealand and Australia do not provide the opportunity for our players to participate in their Super 14 Series. PACER PLUS should have provisions that should remove current restrictions on the Pacific’s top international players.”

Guellner says the Pacific stands to gain from an opening of markets in other areas of services: “Services are now over half the economy in most Pacific states and underpin production and trade. EU suppliers can bring the know-how and management skills needed to compete internationally, train local employees and help companies provide a wider choice of services locally at lower prices. Pacific suppliers can gain greater access to EU markets and common regulatory principles will increase legal certainty for all and encourage inward investment.”

D.P.

* An additional seven non-LDC Pacific states; Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Marshall Islands and Tonga, and LDCs; East Timor, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, are involved in EPA talks.

Francis Kokutse

Brighter prospects for sub-Saharan Africa

Rising commodity prices, the upping of lending pledges and the appearance of green shoots in the economies of the United States and Europe are combining to bring brighter economic prospects for the African continent.

“We have seen substantial firming of commodity prices compared to the decline that was experienced for the last quarter of last year”, says Alex Sienaert, an analyst with London-based *Standard Chartered Bank*. For some countries, this may amount to short-term correction because countries like China took advantage of the fall in prices to restock, he says. He is hopeful, however, that the improvement in prices will carry over into next year. Oil-producers like Nigeria, Angola and Gabon have seen energy prices go up and have been well-placed to weather the storm. Namibia has also seen a hike in its uranium exports. Yoofi Grant, an executive director of financial service provider, *Databank*, says the global economy is surfacing from the feared recession. Japan is coming out of the economic problems it experienced last year. “By the third-quarter of this year, the US should come out of the crisis which shows that the packaging remedial strategy is working and the markets should get buoyant again”, he says.

Initially, there were fears that a prolonged global crisis would lead to reduced inflows to Africa. However, *Standard Chartered Bank* research shows that there has been a phenomenal rise in lending by International Financial Institutions (IFIs). “Global lending commitments by the World Bank Group reached a record \$US58.8bn at its financial year-end in June 2009 and lending commitments to Africa by the World Bank stood at \$US8.1 bn. This is a 44 per cent rise compared with the World Bank International Development Association and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development funding to Africa at the end of the 2008 fiscal year”, says a spokesperson for the *Standard Chartered Bank*.

➤ Lending optimism

The Bank is optimistic for the continent pointing out that there are indications that IFI inflows will continue to grow: “The April G-20 summit in London resolved to use International Monetary Fund gold

sales to boost lending to poor countries by \$US6bn over the next two to three years.” These measures were all intended to boost the African economies in order to avoid a possible melt-down. Professor Giorgia Giovannetti of Italy’s University of Firenze says that it is important that the G-20* commitments that have attracted much attention are fulfilled, although reaction has been mixed as to whether or not they will mean anything to Africa. “If these commitments are met, they would go a long way to ease whatever pains that economic slow-down in African economies that were intended to be resolved”, says Professor Giovannetti.

She notes, however, a lot of confusion about the nature of assistance: “One way to avoid this is to enhance human capital through education.” She adds that some of the inflows should be directed at countering the effects of volatility of commodity prices. “African countries themselves must make plans for areas where they want to receive assistance”, she says. But for some, assist-



Cocoa Sao Tomé. © Reporters/Eureka Slide

down. “What Africa should be doing now is to ask for its share in the current system for those facing losses.” *Standard Chartered* admits that “increased IFI engagements are neither a free lunch nor a panacea”, but adds that “by boosting foreign exchange inflows and available resources they are helping to stabilise balance of payment positions, minimise macro-policy dislocation and should help to preserve development spending in the face of a cyclical downturn. Others also believe that investment would be affected greatly. In this regard, Giovannetta notes that investment in some sectors have suffered a bit because of uncertainties: “Investors in oil, for example, have shown some delays because of fears of conditions in countries wherein they operate. These uncertainties have to be removed.” Citing Ghana as an example, she says, “the country’s political uncertainties are less than that of Nigeria and this means that attempts to attract investors into the country’s newly found oil fields may not be a problem”.

‘Ritual for making pledges that are not going to happen should end,’

It does look that much would however depend on the governments. *Standard Chartered* makes it clear that the unfolding events should come to show “how increased IFI engagement would affect the policy stance of African governments in the future, and how private capital flows will pick up as the global economy recovers”. For now, what one expects is everyone keeping their fingers crossed and having faith that policy initiatives in the G-20 countries will yield some results.

* The G-20 brings together twenty industrial and emerging-market countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America. The EU, represented by its rotating Council Presidency and the European Central Bank, is the 20th member.

Keywords

Commodity prices; G20; Pittsburgh; Africa; Standard Chartered Bank; International Financial Institutions (IFI); Georgia Giovannetta; IMF; World Bank; International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).

COCOA RISE

The International Commodities Exchange Futures in the US has reported a 13-month high increase in the price of cocoa. In September futures rose by \$US87 to \$US2,998. This means that the Ghanaian economy is likely to have some reprieve following reduced inflows from donors in the wake of the global financial crisis. In May 2009, outgoing Governor of the Central Bank, Paul Acquah, reported that “the average realised price of cocoa exports increased by 17.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2009 to \$2,794 per tonne”. Consequently, said Acquah, “exports of cocoa beans and products amounted to \$US553.3M in the first quarter of 2009, compared with \$US403.2M for the same period in 2008”. It is no wonder therefore that by early August, Ghanaian President John Atta Mills was hinting at increasing the producer price of cocoa in order to motivate farmers to produce more.

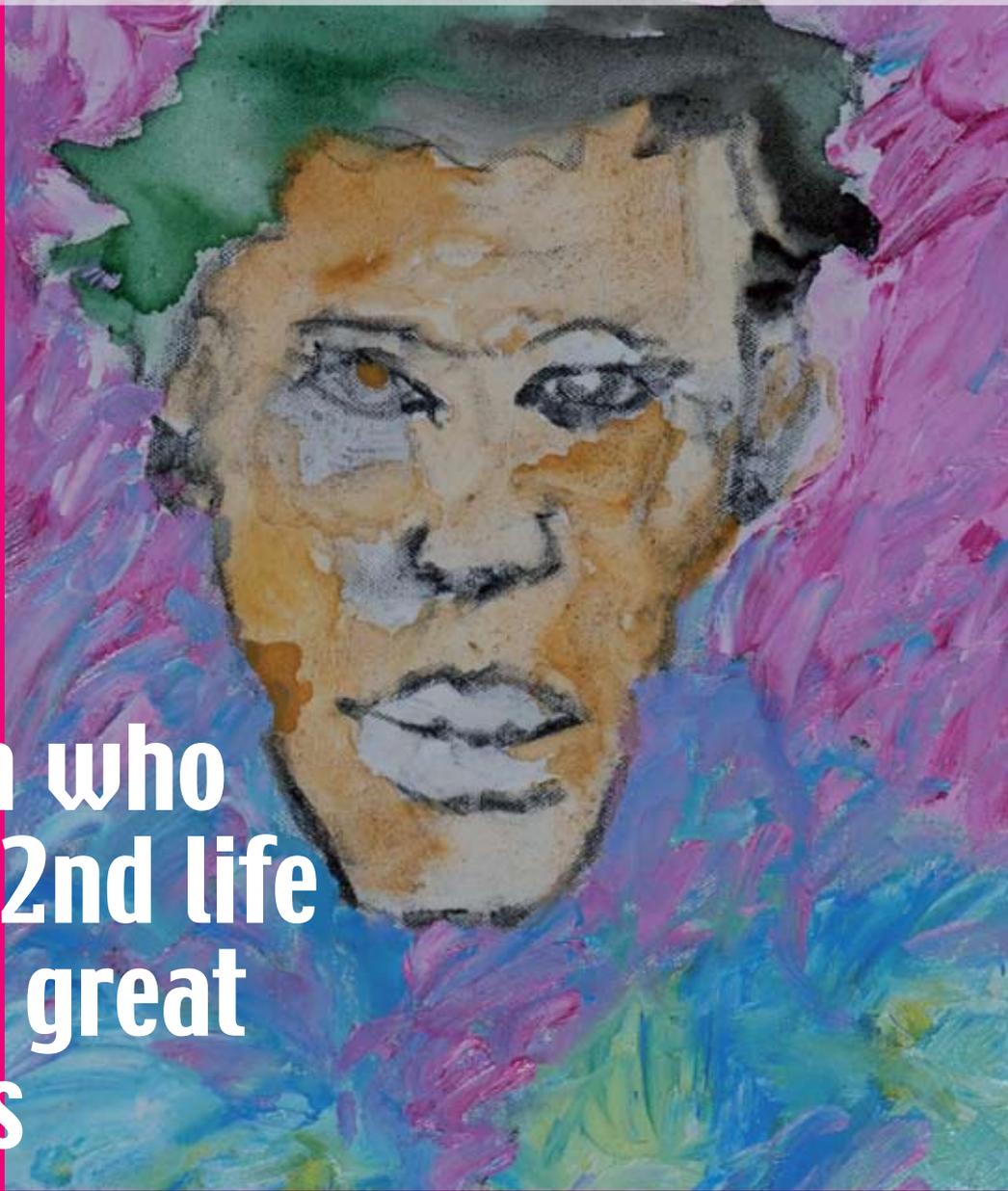
ance from the G-20 countries is flawed. Says Soren Ambrose, Development Finance Coordinator of ActionAid International: “Ritual for making pledges that are not going to happen should end. Money is not being made available to lower income countries where assistance is mostly needed but, for those in the middle-income group.”

This, however, seems different from what *Standard Chartered* sees for Africa. “The concessional nature of new lending complicates the funding challenge for the IMF, in particular (which usually lends on market terms). However, Africa also stands to benefit from the new IMF Special Drawing Right (SDR) allocation,” the Bank adds. When this move takes place, the Bank notes that it would boost global foreign exchange reserves by \$US250bn, and sub-Saharan allocation is worth about \$US10.8bn and would provide a great boost to many countries.

Ambrose says much of what is taking place is lending rather than grants, which is a let-



Cocoa butter balm. © Reporters/Photonostop



Makingson Delivrance Nespoulos, stonecutter

The Haitian who is giving a 2nd life to France's great monuments

Makingson Nespoulos, painting, "Autoportrait". © Photo Hegel Goutier

The day that French TV star Patrick Poivre d'Arvor announced – amongst the main titles of the TF1 8 o'clock news (France's number one television channel) - a report by Marie-Laure Bonnemain on Makingson Delivrance Nespoulos, a Haitian stone cutter, marked a turning point in the life of this talented artisan. For Nespoulos is the man who brought new life to one of the most prestigious monuments of France – Notre Dame. That was in April 2008 and, since then, media from around the world have reported on this and his other artistic talents as a painter, musician and creator of comic strips.

In the television report, one anecdote largely contributed to shaping the image of the character – talent, finesse, and humour. With the support of his parents (the Nespoulos are a French-Greek couple who adopted him when he was three), he looked for his birth mother and explains with underlying tenderness how she told him: "I sent you abroad so that you could do something other than work as a labourer and here you are, slaving away on stones."

The stone in question was that of the masterpieces upon which the artisan puts his mark – little horses "galloping behind the walls of Paris."

> Fine surgery on two thousand years of history

Currently, Makingson is restoring the Arles arena. He is passionate about this city where he finds his inspiration for sculpture, paint-

ing and music, and where he enjoys the spiritual proximity of Van Gogh and all the other geniuses that have fallen for the charms of this Provençal city before he did. Meanwhile, he has already "carved" his mark on 20 or more gems of French architecture. But they, in return, have marked him too. As he explains: "I often think of these old stonecutters who touched, caressed, and cared for these stones." Amongst these treasures: the Quais de Seine, the Louvre

Museum, the Louvre Museum's 'Porche Mamlouk', Versailles and its Petit Trianon, the Amiens and Limoges Cathedrals – and the Pont Neuf, his soft spot. “When I was a little boy and we walked by it, my father used to tell me that this was Paris' most beautiful monument.”

For the past year, Makingson has travelled to Arles every week and returned to Paris for the weekend. This will go on for another year. Along with some of his colleagues, he works under the leadership of Alain-Charles Perrot, Master Architect for the 'Monuments Historiques de France'.

A full day with him in Arles takes you on an wonderful journey across time, under the spans, in the 'entradas' and on to the roof of the arena, that dominates 2,000 years of history. A history of Roman culture, which is still inhabited by the ghosts of Caesar's gladiators. Here, Nespoulos does not carve the stone like he does in Notre-Dame. This is the equivalent of plastic surgery. With tiny gestures not unlike those of a surgeon, he dresses the “wounds” and blemishes of the stone, healing its fragile cavities, stitching the ruptures in, or between, in the old and new stones that he sometimes has to use. The repair must not be seen with a naked eye. Indeed, every small piece of sanding must be subtly tinted with even subtler nuances to give the correct shimmer of the Southern sun on the limestone. “I'm conscious that I work with history” he says, “that I knead it, like the dough for bread. I want this arena to be the most beautiful in the world, and I particularly want to avoid any rupture between the old stonemasonry and these repairs”.

All the while, he tells you the history of this city that has taken over his persona. He talks of the people who erected, in this very arena, a city of 2,000 souls at the end of the Roman Empire, that survived right through the end of the 19th Century. He speaks of poetry, of Van Gogh, Barceló, bullfights, blood, light, Lautréamont, and of Fratellini, whose circus school he attended. And he also reminisces about Haiti where he has set-up a workshop for street children.

➤ Haiti, France, Italy, Germany. From childhood to the Minotaure

He was barely six years old when he made his first sculpture, and his passion has never waned. But he became a professional stonemason quite unexpectedly.

“From my adoption aged three by my father and mother, I spent my early years in Lagny-sur-Automne, a small village of 200 people in the Aisne, in Picardie. My childhood delights consisted of observing bugs and other things under a microscope.

From 16 to 17, I completed my primary schooling in Pletenberg, in Germany's



Makingson Nespoulos aux Arènes d'Arles, 2009. © Hegel Goutier

North Rhine-Westphalia, which means that I was in the country when the Berlin wall fell. Hence, I speak German. When I was 19, my parents sent me to spend a year in Carrara in Italy where I learned about marble quarries. Whilst in Italy, I fell in love with Michelangelo's works and those of other masters of the Italian Renaissance. I was studying at the National centre of apprentices for graphic arts with the idea of becoming a comic strip artist. This is how I participated in the creation of the packaging of Paloma Picasso's perfume *Minotaure*. At the same time, I created an album cover for the legendary alternative band Magma.”

➤ Game of chance and necessity

Aged 19, Nespoulos applied to the very select school of stonecutters. Not receiving a reply, he started studying graphic design. But as the doors of one profession opened before him, he received a message informing him – three years later – that his enrolment request had been accepted. He immediately

packed his bags and started on the adventurous path that he still walks on today. “Did my parents want me to take over my father's trade? I think they would have liked me to do something that was not so hard. But they are happy as long as I am.”

➤ His own little private museum embedded for centuries

From a very early age, Nespoulos has been a painting fanatic. He paints almost every day after work, often well into the night. Once, he was robbed of all the works he had stockpiled in a basement – roughly five hundred paintings and drawings. It was as if part of his life had been rubbed out, “had I really created all these works?” he asks... Yet, another shock put another two-year break in his painting. He saved a young girl from drowning in the river Seine. When he took up his paintbrushes once again, he started including bits of his paintings into the stonework he was working on. Behind the stones of Notre Dame, he has housed one of his sculptures. And Lautréamont's “Les chants de Maldoror” sits next to a good bottle of wine and a corkscrew. **H.G.**

Keywords

Makingson Delivrance Nespoulos; Marie-Laure Bonnemain; Patrick Poivre d'Arvor; Hegel Goutier; Alain-Charles Perrot; Moebius; Notre-Dame Cathedral; Arles; Arles arena; Trianon; Versailles; Pont-Neuf; Haiti; Stonecutter; Porche Mamlouk; Hegel Goutier.

The sun of the Sahara to help Europe?



© Desertec

Thousands of square kilometres of the Sahara desert covered with solar power stations to provide one quarter of Europe's electricity needs before 2025? This is the mission of the Desertec project, announced last July and warmly welcomed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso. That said, the project is somewhat controversial.

The consortium has gathered a dozen or so industrial firms, including German energy giants E.ON and RWE, Deutsche Bank, German conglomerate Siemens and Swiss conglomerate ABB, as well as manufacturers of solar power stations such as Spanish Abengoa Solar and Algerian agro-food group Cevital. The promoters claim that the project will give Europe access to an important source of non-polluting energy, thereby reducing the greenhouse gas effect and the subsequent cost to the climate. However,

many questions remain unanswered, such as where this will be done, the cost of the power produced, the benefit for African countries, the lack of political stability in some producer regions and even its overall benefit to the climate.

Moreover, there is also the issue of finance. The estimated cost would be €400bn (equivalent to the vast programme that France will propose during the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference next December) and that should “organise Africa’s autonomy in

terms of renewable energy”, according to Jean-Louis Borloo, the French Minister of the Environment. One of the main challenges consists of securing these colossal investments through potential public financing, either German or European.

► An “inexhaustible” supply of energy

In theory, the project is attractive. For example, if just one per cent of the surface of the Sahara was covered with solar power

stations it would provide the energy needs of the entire planet. This sort of technology has been tried and tested in the south of Spain, using huge mirrors that concentrate solar energy to a collecting tube containing a fluid. When it is heated to a high temperature, it allows for the evaporation of water, activates a turbine and thus generates electricity. Similar versions of this 'classic' system can be found in coal, gas and nuclear power stations, with all the losses that this entails. According to one energy expert, Olivier Danielo, who strongly supports the Desertec project – albeit in its initial phase: “only 15 percent of the solar energy absorbed by the mirrors is ultimately converted into electricity... the rest, or 85 per cent, is lost in the form of infrared rays and heat, that also warms the atmosphere”.

➤ A rough ride for climate

Apart from the heat produced by the power stations, experts – such as atmospheric physicist Yves Fouquart, who co-authored the 1995 international report on climate evolution – stress the risk of a decrease in the reflectivity of desert surfaces: the ‘albedo’ as it is termed in scientific jargon. In deserts, this so-called albedo is very high (contrary to ‘darker’ areas, such as forests). This allows most of the sun’s rays to be reflected back into the atmosphere (which explains the cold nights of the desert). Yves Fouquart notes: “the problem is that this energy (in the case of solar power stations) will be absorbed and will not be reflected. Since the output is not equal to one – far from it – there will be an additional energy contribution to the region.” He continues: “Nowadays, the average temperature on our planet is 15°C. However, if the earth was covered in forests, the temperature would rise to 24°C. On a completely deserted Earth, the temperature would be 13°C, and if it were completely covered in oceans, it would be 32°C, because oceans are dark and their albedo is weak, like a black object. If our planet was covered in ice, it would be extremely cold at -52°C!”

Furthermore, continues Mr Danielo, any variation to the ‘albedo’ has a greater impact in the Sahara, where direct solar irradiation is particularly high. Any change of ‘albedo’ leads to a ‘radiative forcing’ (roughly, an increase or decrease in warming) that can



Solar mirror. © Reporters/Science Photo Library

be calculated in the level of CO₂. Following the latter, a 100 km² solar power station in the Sahara would deliver a radiative forcing equivalent to the emission of around 10 million tons of CO₂ in the atmosphere. That is the equivalent of 10 per cent of the yearly emissions of a country such as France.

➤ Water in danger

Solar power stations raise the important issue of water consumption. Still, according to Olivier Danielo: “supplying 15 per cent of the European demand in electricity with these Saharan solar power stations would require, every year, a quantity of soft water equivalent to 5 to 10 times the needs of the Paris region”. A Cameroonian engineer specialised in solar energy, Guy Tchuillieu Tchouanga, who founded the *EcoSun Solutions* consultancy firm, explains in an interview with *Afrik.com* magazine: “this initiative will be disastrous for African countries. All the ground water will be pumped to activate the turbines, leading to the drying up of ground water with irreversible consequences”.

➤ The limits of climate reasoning

Youba Sokona does not see things from this point of view. The Executive Secretary of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) (see his interview in the ‘To The Point’ rubric) thinks that Desertec is a very good initiative provided that African countries, notably Algeria, Morocco and Libya, can fully take advantage of the production of electricity to meet the countries’ needs, as well as handling the technology. “We must not just remain providers of raw materials. In view of this, I wonder whether it might be worth considering a sort of global environmental fund to help poor and low to middle countries to put them on the path of sustainable development by launching a less carbon consuming economy for energy purposes”.

M.M.B.

Keywords

Desertec; Club de Rome; solar power stations; Sahara; albedo; climate; Olivier Danielo; Guy Tchuillieu Tchouanga; Yves Fouquart; Marie-Martine Buckens.



North and South meet in Niger

A report by Marie-Martine Buckens

Niger. The Courier's 'country report' is on a nation that has been doubly shaken by political and climatic crises. Political crisis: President Mamadou Tandja, the man who established the democratisation of his country when he was re-elected at the head of the country in 2004, today finds himself disowned for having broken those same democratic rules. On 4 August, he gained an extension of his soon-to-be expiring mandate through a referendum, notwithstanding the veto of the Constitutional Courts.

As the 'Courier' went to press, the country was hit by severe flooding that caused many deaths and the destruction of cereal reserves, putting Niger in danger of another food crisis. In this country, the slightest alteration to the rhythm of seasonal droughts and rains only worsens a poverty that is still generalised. Yet, poverty is not synonymous with misery. The people of Niger, or rather, the different

peoples of Niger – Zarma or Hausa from Black Africa, Fula or Tuareg from Northern Africa – have adapted to their mostly-Sahelian environment for centuries. Whether they are nomads who travel across the country in all seasons, farmers, or sometimes both, they rely on their livestock for income. The reputation of their cattle often goes beyond the borders of the country, and the same is true for crops, such as onions or millet. *The Courier* has decided to focus most of its special report on these peoples who benefit from the strong support of the European Union, Niger's key donor. We will of course also look at an expanding sector, mining, uranium bringing in most of the country's export revenue.



The long road to democracy

Coming from the mists of Northern Europe, the plane leaves Algerian airspace and crosses the Tropic of Capricorn that marks the beginning of the territory of Niger. It flies over the Djabo plateau, a sea of sand punctuated here and there by an oasis. The desertification of the Sahara began in 800 B.C., driving away the crop farmers and making room for herdsmen, probably Peuls. We then pass over the mining town of Arlit that emerged from the sands just 40 years ago, providing the French company *Areva* with the uranium to supply nuclear plants in France and elsewhere. This is followed by the vast Air and Ténéré natural reserves. Going past Agadez, the Tuareg 'capital' on its left, the plane flies over the Sahelian plateaus surrounding Tahoua before finally turning west, towards Niamey. Nestling in a bend on the meandering Niger River, the capital had once been the heart of the Songhai Empire.

On its journey, the plane has passed on its left the regions of Zinder and Diffa neighbouring the long border with Nigeria. The Haoussas form the majority here, but there are also other peoples, such as the Kanouri on the banks of Lake Chad and from whom President Tandja originates. The Sultanate of Zinder is the former capital of the military territory administered after 1900 by France. Two years later the country became a French colony. The capital was later transferred to Niamey to redress the balance between the local economic and political power wielded by the emirs of the east and reduce the influence of Zinder's Haoussa community as well as the influence of northern Nigeria, a wealthy and densely populated region.

1960 marked Niger's accession to independence. The first president was Hamani Diori, leader of the single party. He was overthrown by a military coup in 1974 after which an authoritarian military government was installed, headed by Seyni Kountché. His programme was aimed at economic recovery following the great droughts of 1973, and

continued cooperation with France, especially for uranium mining. His rule was marked by successive coup attempts. When he died in 1987, Colonel Ali Seybou came to power and became president in 1989 after the adoption of a new constitution that returned civilians to power, although Niger remained a one-party state. It was not until 1990 that opposition parties were legalised after a long series of strikes. A year later Niger became a multi-party state. In 1996, another putsch installed Colonel Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara in power. A new presidential-style constitution was adopted. These years were marked

by the revolt of the Touaregs in the north, demanding a fairer share in the nation's wealth. Following an economic crisis triggered by falling uranium prices, the country was gripped by a wave of strikes by students and civil servants, culminating in mutiny by the army. In 1999 the president was assassinated. The Fifth Republic was born, Mamadou Tandja being elected the same year for a five-year term. In December 2004 it came as no surprise when he was returned to office with 65.5 per cent of the vote. An "old-style" military man, President Tandja embodied the politician who had succeeded in imposing democracy – until he decided, in August 2009, to hold a referendum for a third term that was contrary to the constitution. His presidency has had its shortcomings, in particular the regular jailing of journalists, including the recent jailing of the editor of the satirical paper *Le Canard Déchaîné*.

M.M.B.

Keywords

Niger; history; France; Hamani Diori; Ali Seybou; Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara; Mamadou Tandja; *Le Canard Déchaîné*; Touaregs; Marie-Martine Buckens.



Shepherds in the Badaguichiri Market (Tahoua), 2009. © Marie-Martine Buckens

“Demographic growth represents one of the greatest challenges facing the country”

Interview with the Head of the European Commission’s delegation, Hans-Peter Schadek

What were your first impressions when you took up your post in January 2008?

Before coming to Niger, I was posted in Dakar. So already having an understanding of the situation in West Africa, I was not faced with any major surprises. But there are of course differences. Niger is incredibly vast. It has an area of more than 1,265,000 square kilometres, which is almost 29 per cent of Europe with 27 Member States. This means that getting to the regional centres can easily take a day to a day and a half by car. There are no commercial flights serving the country, though a new company is currently in the process of being set up. This means that everyone is completely reliant on road transport for the time being.

Since arriving, I have carried out a number of missions in the various regions of Niger. These visits have enabled me to get to know the country better and to meet the people, who have left a great impression on me with their welcome and the dignity and courage they show in sometimes difficult conditions.

What are the main lines of cooperation between the European Union and Niger?

Our cooperation with Niger is time-based. The succession of five-year programmes takes account of the country’s priorities, where the agricultural sector and infrastructure are of key importance. Under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), rural development and infrastructure, transport in particular, are therefore high up on the agenda. Another key area is good governance in the broader sense, as it also includes decentralisation.



© EC

The aim is to deploy an increased proportion of our support through budgetary support. Although they are not targeted directly, we pay special attention to the social sectors; education and healthcare in particular, because the release of so-called ‘variable tranches’ is linked to the achievement of very specific objectives in these sectors. Amongst other things, the development of indicators, such as the rate of schooling for girls, the rate of vaccination and the percentage of assisted childbirths is tracked. Within the framework of the 10th EDF, budgetary support can reach up to 62 per cent of the total fund, divided into global

and sectoral budgetary support. Under the 10th EDF, some €180M is earmarked for global budgetary support. There is a gradual transition from classic projects to sectoral budgetary support depending on the relevance of sectoral policies carried out and the capacity to implement the funds by the ministries concerned. With regard to the rural development sector, we are working on options to move towards either a joint fund or sectoral budgetary support, but we are not there yet. In the field of decentralisation, we aim to use an agency recently created by the authorities which is responsible for channelling funds for local authorities.



Village in Niger, 2009. © Marie-Martine Buckens

Decentralisation is a priority for the government. How do things stand?

The government has made decentralisation a key focus. From now on, there will be 265 municipalities which have varying levels of equipment, human resources and financial capacity. There is still much work to do before all the local authorities become fully operational, for example, before they are able to efficiently carry out their role as an administration, collect all of their taxes and defend their interest vis-à-vis the central administration. There is also still a major difference between the cities and the rural municipalities. The latter are often without lighting and electricity to connect computers, for example. On the one hand, our efforts aim to support the strengthening of the municipalities' capacities, and on the other, to contribute to the mobilisation of the funds required to successfully carry out priority local investment projects. One such project based on funds from the 9th EDF was launched two years ago in the Agadez region. Based on experience gained, we plan to expand the area benefiting from our support with funds from the 10th EDF.

Another priority area where the EU is also intervening is food security, isn't it?

Food security and the mines, in the framework of the Sysmin funds (see separate article), are part of sectors where we are intervening. Food security is an area where the European Commission's instruments link together well: ECHO – the European Commission's humanitarian aid office – allocates funds for humanitarian actions; Niger is an important part in the ECHO programme for the Sahel region – and our

commitments under the National Indicative Programme (NIP). The Commission's 'food security' budget line has also contributed to the funding of our support in this area. In total, the Commission has mobilised more than €79M in the field of nutrition and food security over the past ten years.

How has Niger coped with the food price crisis?

Niger was well prepared for this eventuality and has managed the situation in a far-sighted and appropriate way. The country has a national system for preventing food crises, which we support along with other aid providers. The country therefore had sufficient stocks of food available to deal with the increase in prices and the scarcity of certain food products. In addition, some vulnerable areas have benefited from 'cash for work' initiatives, which enabled the most vulnerable households to obtain precious income at a critical time. The government has also undertaken additional measures, reducing tax, for example, on the price of imported rice which has had a significant effect on price, in particular in urban areas. All of these measures combined have enabled Niger to manage the situation well, even though prices still remain relatively high today.

What are the main challenges that the country must overcome?

I would say there is one above all, that of demographic growth, because it is a key factor in the future development of the country. It stands at 3.3 per cent per annum. This means that Niger's population, currently already more than 14 million, is increasing by almost 500,000 each year. There is therefore

a risk that the country will reach the limits of its capacity to provide food from its own agricultural resources within the foreseeable future. This is why it is important to develop other sectors, such as the mining sector and subterranean resources, which have significant development potential. Significant investment is also planned, and Niger is committed to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which is clearly a very welcome development.

Demographic growth also has a significant impact on the healthcare and education sectors. Demography plays a key role in ensuring high-quality healthcare and education for all, and adequate policies are required in this respect.

In addition to this challenge, climate change is also a key issue. Niger is very exposed to rainfall risks with very fragile eco-systems. Unfortunately, the various climate change forecasts are not yet very accurate for the country's various geographical areas, and are sometimes even contradictory. But a change will definitely take place. It is therefore vital to provide for adaptation to anticipated changes now in sectoral agricultural, farming and water management policies. We are of course ready to support such studies and analyses with the means at our disposal.

M.M.B.

Keywords

Niger; Hans-Peter Schadek; rural development; decentralisation; infrastructure; 10th EDF; demography; climate; Marie-Martine Buckens.

An important, underexploited agricultural potential

Niger has some undeniable assets, both in the livestock industry and in some cash crops. However, the country must reinforce its capacities, explains Youssouf Mohamed Elmoctar, Secretary General of RECA, the Network of Chambers of Agriculture in Niger.

Niger boasts a significant livestock that is highly valued by its neighbours. Until now, this livestock is sold on the hoof. “However”, explains Youssouf Elmoctar, “we could be the leader for the West African market on a potential livestock-meat market. The milk network also has a great potential, but the collection system has not yet been organised”. RECA represents these stockbreeders – but also farmers and wood producers – to the government. It is also in charge of supplying technical information to the sectoral organisations, particularly on the development of networks.

> Adapting to the EPAs

Another export product, in fact the country’s second source of export after receipt suranum, is the onion. There is also a plethora of other cash crops, such as Arabic gum, sesame, groundnut or earth almond – a rhizome particularly appreciated in Spain.

“The potential to export more in Africa – and why not to Europe – is there. But the great problem”, continues the Secretary General of RECA, “is the lack of means to achieve quality standards. We must at all costs reinforce the capacities of the producers to allow them to be competitive, and to adapt to Economic Partnership Agreements”.

> An ocean under the ground

One of the great challenges is to create added value to basic products, continues Youssouf Elmoctar. “When you sell livestock on the hoof, you sell everything: the horn, the skin, the hair, the hooves, the guts, and even the genes. In actual fact, you are selling the species.” Thus, the network has decided to generalise abattoirs throughout the country, using for instance European funds (read separate article), and following practices that are in accordance with inter-



Cattle market in Badaguichiri (Tahoua), 2009. © Marie-Martine Buckens

national standards. But this is not enough: “it is also imperative to ensure the refrigerated circuit of transportation. We must improve the genetic capacity of the livestock to increase the milk production. Here, a cow produces two to three litres of milk per day, whereas European productivity can reach 20 or even 30 litres.”

“With the country’s current significant demographic growth, agricultural areas are declining, and the biggest problem is food safety.” Of course, continues Youssouf Elmoctar, “we are a land-locked country. But under the soil lies an ocean. For exam-

ple, in the regions of the Air Mountains and Maradi, underground water lies at 6 metres below the ground. According to estimates, the quantity of water is such that it would allow 700,000 hectares of land to be irrigated.” To face these challenges, RECA must still consolidate. “We are a young institution dating back to 2006, and we need support, particularly from Europe. We must broaden our structures. For example, there is no agricultural trade union. We are bound to create one”, concludes Youssouf Elmoctar.

M.M.B.

The price of fame

The exceptional gustatory qualities of the Galmi onion make it a highly prized product throughout the whole of West Africa. The extent of the onion's success is such that a Senegalese company has applied for a certification request with the AIPO, triggering a general outcry a Niger producers.

FROM EGYPT

In fact, explains Patrick Delmas, who is technical assistant at the National Network of Agricultural Chambers of Niger, the Galmi Violet should never have been called... 'Galmi', but should have been named Ader (name of the region where it is produced) or Maggia (name of the valley from where the main ecotypes used to create the first selection of onion – to which the name of 'Galmi Violet' was given – originated). Indeed, the onion came to Africa on Egyptian trans-Saharan caravans, and is implanted in the Niger area of Tahoua since the 17th century. The valleys of this area are surrounded by plateaux, especially the zone of Maggia, and are rich in underground waters, enabling irrigation during the dry season, when the onion is cultivated.

© Marie-Martine Buckens

Galmi is a small village situated at around 500 km from the east of Niamey, between Birni Nkonni and Madaoua. The activity is intense. Along the road, huge semi-trailers registered in Mali, Benin and elsewhere wait to be loaded with great big woven whipcord bags filled with onions before taking off again on a road that will lead them – amongst other destinations – to the ports of Cotonou or Abidjan. The traffic on the trunk road of the southeast of the country is intense. Accidents are commonplace, especially on the sections that have not yet been restored – under the aegis of the EC. The impressive number of lorries lying on their flank alongside the road testifies to the danger of this road.

“We are the first onion exporters – more than 500,000 tonnes are exported each year to Ghana, the Côte d’Ivoire, Benin, Mali, Togo and even Central Africa – and second producers after Nigeria”, notes Youssouf Elmoctar, Secretary General of RECA, the Network of Chambers of Agriculture in Niger, who adds: “we could increase profits, for instance by using preservation processes that would allow us to spread out the sales over out-of-season production or to sell the onions in powder form, in tins, etc.”

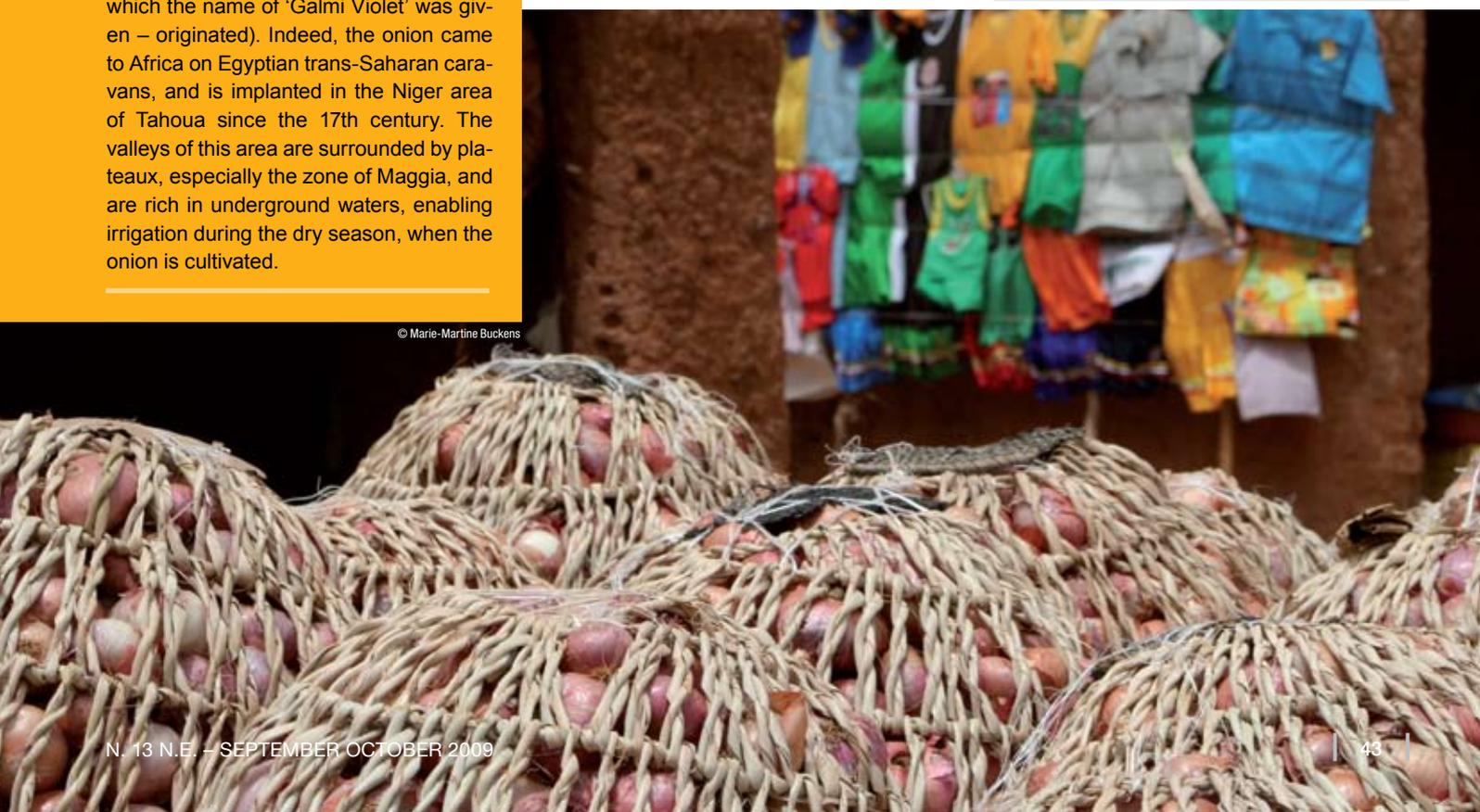
The Galmi onion, or ‘Galmi Violet’ has

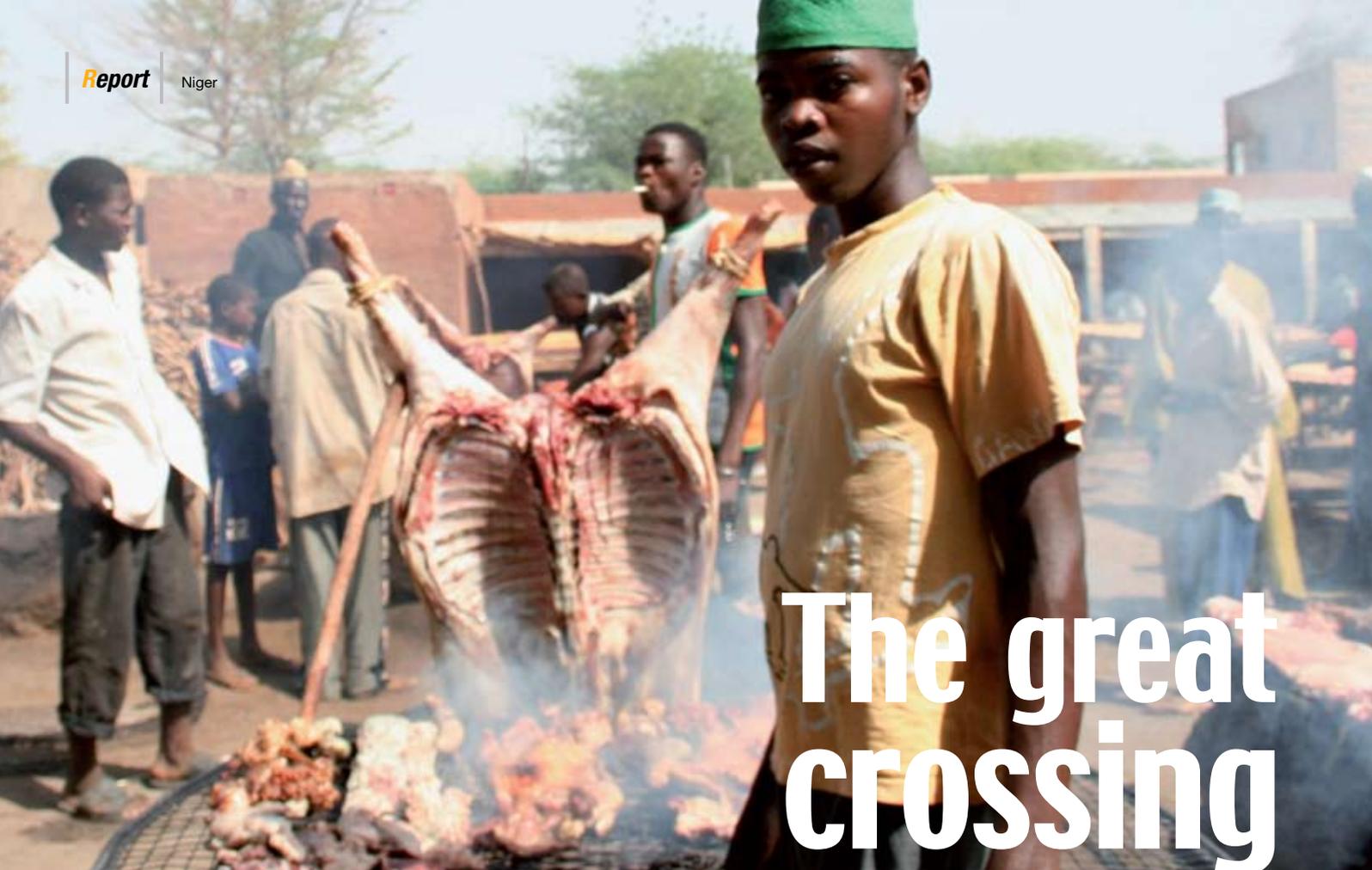
built a solid reputation in West Africa, to such a point that several countries now grow it using its name. Last March, the announcement that Senegalese company *Tropicasem* was applying to the African Intellectual Property Association (AIPO) for a Plant Variety Right (PVR) on this legendary onion triggered a huge controversy. Producer organisations – particularly from Niger – leapt to the defence of their onion and asked their government to thwart the request of the Senegalese company with the AIPO. Recently, the ANFO (Association nationale des coopératives et des professionnels de la filière oignon du Niger – the national association of cooperatives and professionals of the Niger onion network) decided to apply for a geographical indication (GI) for the Galmi Violet, in an aim of linking the quality and reputation of the Galmi Violet to the Ader soil, thus finding a way of protecting the Galmi onion, but to a very limited surface area.

Since then, the government has decided to study the possibility of a geographic identification for other agricultural products, such as the red goat of Maradi, the Diffa pepper and the Asawak zebu. **M.M.B.**

Keywords

Galmi Violet, Galmi onion, AIPO, Tropicasem, PVR, Youssouf Elmoctar Marie-Martine Buckens





Butchers in the Madaoua Market, 2009. © Marie-Martine Buckens

The great crossing

Safeguarding the economy of Niger's legendary pasture farming is the ambition of the European Union's PASEP (Support to the pastoral economy) Programme.

“They are Peuls!” exclaims the driver of our expedition, as he points to a group of men accompanying a drove of cows and goats that cross the road towards the North. “But also Touaregs and Wodaabe”, he continues. “They have been as far as Nigeria, Chad, sometimes even to the Central African Republic.” He adds: “They use Niger’s ‘international passages’ that are paved thanks to the EC programmes. Around June, at the start of the rain season, they go back up to grazing areas, up to Algeria or Mali.”

According to the Niger rural code, these famous grazing areas guarantee pastures to breeders in transhumance so that their flock may graze completely freely. “The pasture act” explains Frédéric Léonard – a Tahoua-based expert at PASEP, which is financed by the EC “forbids cultivation beyond the 50th parallel, or at around 40 kilometres north of Tahoua, and prohibits land ownership, unless it is collective”. Tahoua, Niger’s first ‘northern city’ is situated at some 450 kilometres from Adagez, the city of Touaregs and Peuls at the confines of the Sahara and the Sahel. Agadez – ‘passing through’ in tamasheq, Touaregs’

language - is the last city before the immensity of the Sahara desert, with the exception of the mining city of Arlit at 260 kilometres length to the west.

However, the famous pasture act failed to be adopted by the National Assembly, in contrast to the rural code. This could very well be because of the influence of the great merchants who enjoy strong representation amongst town councillors, some of whom own ranches in the north of the country where they cultivate millet or cotton. Whatever the reason may be, in the event that the increasingly numerous farmers or the breeders wanted to cultivate the soil, they would have to ask for an authorisation. “The traditional chief could very well refuse” says Mr Léonard, “but often he doesn’t, because most of the time they are poor nomads who have lost their herds”.

➤ A new profile, the agro-pastors

Such is the reality: because of the droughts, “the social and economic environment is less and less favourable to shepherds. Thus, we see the emergence of a new profile, the agro-shepherds.” In fact, it would seem that transhumant breeders represent 50 to 60 per

cent of breeders in Niger. Around 25 per cent are sedentary breeders who, with the help of shepherds, put their flocks to graze in a 15 kilometres radius during eight months and feed them with fodder in the village the rest of the time. “Only 20 per cent are truly nomad breeders. For the most part, they are Wodaabe or Borodo from Niger, a fringe of Peuls who, without law or roof, travel around huge circles of 700 kilometres and do not go too deep in the South, in contrast to those who go on long transhumance. Often, these people are marginalised.”

➤ Safeguarding breeding

The European Commission’s PASEP programme has been put in place to secure breeding activities, one of the pillars of Niger’s economy. An ambitious programme centred on five points. The first foresees a reinforcement of the breeders’ capacities through training. “Breeders have a face, they are represented by an organisation, a management committee that will one day allow them to be project supervisors”, explains Frédéric Léonard. The second point is crucially important as it aims at finalising the pastoral code by facilitating the implementation of the Rural Code Secretariat - “it did

not exist before the EU programme” - and to provide support to land ownership committees “The European Union has financed the entire land ownership mechanism in Niger.” This implies, amongst other things, the marking of 600 kilometres of transhumance tracks, thus avoiding the usual conflicts between breeders and farmers, the construction of approximately forty deep pastoral wells and forages and borehole-feed wells.

Another vital point is the commercialisation of breeding products. Cattle markets

are being built, amongst which the great Badaguichiri market near Tahoua and the Tamaské market at the northeast of the country. The programme also foresees, as in Madaoua for instance, the training and regrouping of organisations of butchers, tanners, and artisans. Training is also being offered to develop the milk sector. The fourth priority consists in guaranteeing the good health of the livestock through the implementation of private proximity veterinary services, the construction of 38 vaccination parks and the development of an

epidemiological surveillance map. Finally, the programme ensures the follow-up of the livestock by conducting a census of the productivity by species. The beneficiary is the Ministry of Breeding, which will then have a tool for monitoring the number of animals on the markets and to be exported. **M.M.B.**

Keywords

PASEP; transhumance; livestock; pasture act; land tenure system; markets; wells; Marie-Martine Buckens.

Reinforcing food safety

With a predominantly farming population that lives on millet and sorghum that are extensively cultivated on poorly irrigated and weak soils, Niger is periodically confronted with food crises that are further fuelled by market tensions. The ASAPI (Support to food safety through small-scale irrigation) programme deals with these seemingly impossible challenges.



Anti-erosion plantation on the banks of the Maggia Valley, 2009. © Marie-Martine Buckens

Niger has reacted relatively well to the 2007-2008 food crisis that was given extensive media coverage. But it is true that this was not the first crisis facing the country. 2005 is still fresh in peoples' memories, even though this emergency is nothing in comparison to the famines that the country experienced in 1984 or 1973, which were lived as “national disasters”, explains Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, in charge of the LASDEL, Niger's observatory for social dynamics.

In 2005, notes Olivier de Sardan, the gravity of the situation was greatly attributed to the explosion of market prices, which – he explains – was essentially due to the “backward functioning of the cereals market, particularly with Nigeria buying from Niger, in

contrast to previous years, Ghana not supplying corn as it did in 2001, a year during which the food-producing deficit was similar to 2004, etc. Speculation also played its role, at least partly, and it was then amplified by the media coverage of the crisis and the arrival of the many NGOs in a quest for food to buy.”

> Glimmer

The reality: an agriculture-pastoral economy – the economy of breeders remains preponderant – that owes its food livelihood essentially to millet, a cereal whose production often lacks in “bridging” periods, forcing populations to buy from the outside, for men to immigrate temporarily, thus leaving women behind in the villages; inegalitarian village societies; a considerable birth rate

leading to the parcelling out of lands and the rarefaction of resources. However, for the past fifteen years, a spectacular regeneration of the vegetation in certain areas has been noted, which is due to new agro-forestry practices (on this subject, read the ‘Our Planet’ section of issue 12 of the Courier).

Globally, the situation remains worrying and food safety remains the number one priority on the list of the government's Strategy of Rural Development (SRD) and the European Commission. Thus, Madaoua, an area located some 600 kilometres to the east of the capital, is amongst the regions that benefited from the support of the European Commission's ASAPI programme.

> Fertile lands once again

The objective of ASAPI is to contribute to the reduction of poverty by helping the most vulnerable populations secure their agricultural production by developing land that is potentially rich in water. Two fossil river valleys were chosen to organise the experiment, the Tarka and the Maggia, same as in the Zinder region. Maïgochi Sani, in charge of the programme in Madaoua, explains: “the main operation consists in controlling the water.” During the rain season, fossil rivers become veritable torrents and represent a danger, since they drag away important quantities of arable lands in their course. Anti-erosion practices are multiple, ranging from the massive planting of trees on the sides of valleys by following the curves of levels of the terrain, thus allowing for the creation of natural terraces little by little, to the creation of reservoirs in valleys. “These operations allow to curb erosion and desertification, but also to heighten the level of the expanse of water”; flowing expanses of water is what is needed, “not the underground water, which is something that we will not touch” On top of these operations, there is also the digging of village wells “that allow women to avoid the chore of having to fetch water, which implies walking for miles on end every day”, of garden wells in flood storage areas of track and access roads. “In the past, these lands were abandoned, whereas today, we note a massive return of farmers to the area”, adds Maïgochi Sani.

The whole mechanism must still be perpetuated. “ASAPI has taken measures to structure these lands, and also to secure the agricultural products downstream”. Structuring the land implies securing land ownership. Around sixty communal and seventeen land ownership commissions have been created. The programme also financed the opening of 50 centres for literacy and technical training for the production and transformation of the products. More than 80 cereal banks have been put in place as well as numerous microfinance projects. Financing? “Apart from the great works such as roads and dams, everything was done with micro-credit. We were pioneers”.

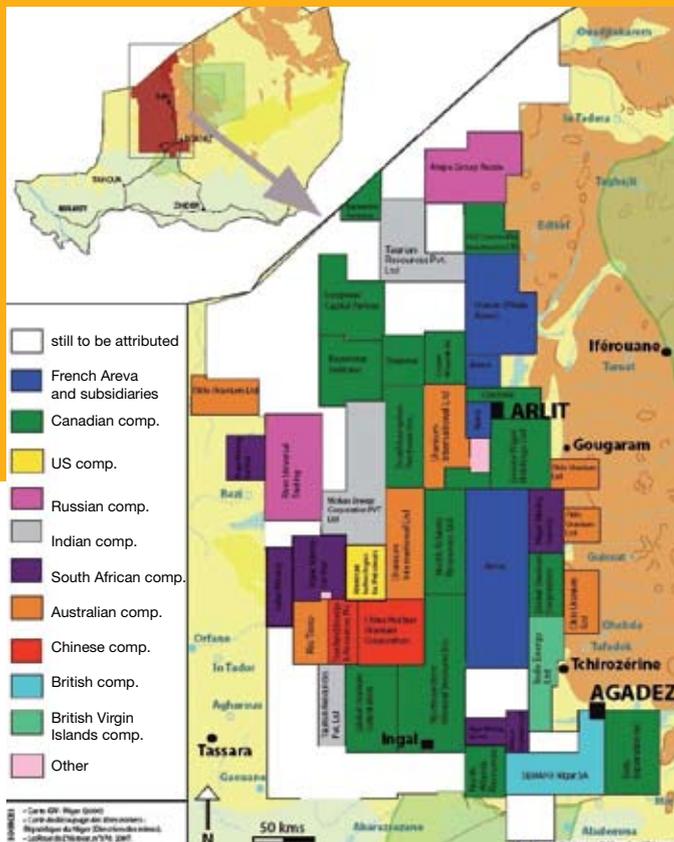
Amongst forthcoming challenges, Maïgochi Sani feels that “the priority for the management of water is that we must have a computerised management system like they do in Burkina Faso, which will allow monitoring the water levels in valleys. We need a water code, a water tax.” **M.M.B**

Keywords

ASAPI; Maïgochi Sani; Madaoua; Tarka; Maggia; irrigation; EC; Marie-Martine Buckens.



Millet, the basic cereal in the Niger diet, 2009. © Marie-Martine Buckens



Escaping the “uranium monoculture”

Uranium is likely to remain the mainstay of Niger’s economy, even if the government - aided by the EC’s Sysmin funds – has decided to diversify the exploitation of its mineral resources by turning in particular to oil and gold, the latter somewhat neglected over the past 20 years. This increased diversification will also be reflected in foreign company activity in Niger. The French multinational, Areva, is in future set to share the mining landscape with Chinese and Indian companies, among others.

NIGER

Niger is one of the least advanced countries and suffers from geographical handicaps: the vast landlocked territory (1,267,000 square kilometres, or 2.3 times the size of France), mostly deserted, has a high demographic increase (3.4 percent for a population of nearly 15 million inhabitants) and scarce infrastructures. Its agricultural production capacity is insufficient, even though the rural sector contributes to 40 percent of the GDP (\$5.2 billion in 2008) and to 31 percent of export revenue, right behind uranium. Despite this, the country boasts a GDP growth rate of 5.9 percent (2008), which is partly due to the revival of the mining sector (mainly uranium, gold, coal, etc).

The Programme to Strengthen and Diversify the Mining Sector (PRDSM) was launched by the European Commission in 2004 for a seven-year period and with a budget of €35M. The idea is to support a sector that, after 2000, was plunged into major crisis due to many industrialised countries winding down their electro-nuclear activities. This was disastrous for a country such as Niger whose uranium represented about 50 per

cent of its exports. The re-launch of nuclear programmes in countries such as China has now boosted uranium prices and lent a new dynamism to mining and prospecting. One example of this is *Areva’s* acquisition of the vast Imouararen deposits that has made Niger the world number two uranium producer.

The PRDSM has set two priorities. First of all, to reduce the sector’s external charges by reforming the health system of the twin mining towns of Akokan and Arlit, located northwest of Agadez. Until recently, it was the mining company that bore the health costs of all the inhabitants, including the non-mining population. A new public hospital has now been built and the programme also foresees the collection of wastewater and treatment to ensure compliance with World Health Organisation (WHO) standards. Technical assistance has also been made available to artisan miners. The second priority is to strengthen the role of the Ministry for Mines and Energy. As Philippe Le Bars, French expert assigned to the ministry, explains, the issue here is to bring the mining code of Niger in line with the supranational code of ECOWAS (Economic and Monetary Union of West African States). “But above all,” he continues, “we are developing a geological information system in which all the data are geo-referenced. In actual fact, this integrating system is quite exceptional, not to say unique”. The first to benefit is the government (through the construction of

infrastructures in particular) and the mining companies. “The system is somewhat complex, however, and hampered by a shortage of qualified staff. They need training in everything, and doing that takes us well beyond our mission.” **M.M.B.**

10th EDF – National Indicative Programme (2008–2013)

Support to rural growth and social integration (including infrastructures and food safety):	€160M
Governance and support to institutional and economic reforms:	€95M
General budgetary support for the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy:	€180M
Support for the development of various commercial exchanges:	€13M
Technical facility:	€4M
Support for the National Authorising Officer:	€6M
Total:	€458M

A second budget amounting to €15.2M and known as budget ‘B’ allows to cover such unforeseeable needs as emergency aid.

Keywords

Uranium; mining code; PRDSM; Sysmin; Areva; Niger; Marie-Martine Buckens.

“Niger’s population has always been able to step back when faced with political crises”

Inhabitants of Niger have gone through many political crises and have always managed to avoid resorting to violence. Sociologist Abdoulaye Mohamadou explains that this distance from politics should allow the country to adjust to the new order... as long as the finances follow.

The Abdoulaye Mohamadou is a researcher at the LASDEL, the Niamey-based laboratory for the study and research on social dynamics and local development. We had already met with him a few weeks ago, just before the referendum organised by President Tandja was held. The ‘ayes’ massively won, allowing the President to prolong his mandate, which was about to expire. During these hectic weeks, the opposition calmly demonstrated through the streets of the capital city and although some towns such as Dosso experienced more viciousness, things never got out of hand.

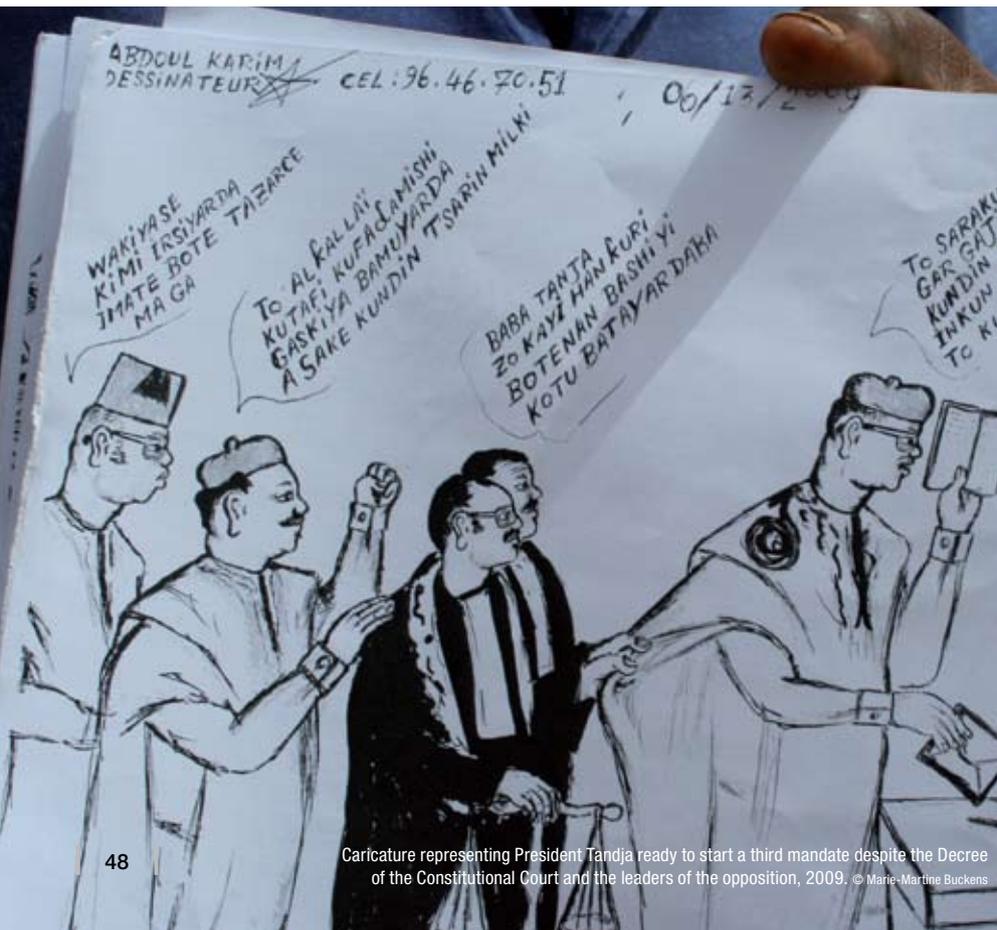
“In our countries” he explains, “the population’s practices of mobilisation are ancient”. He continues: “The referendum does not represent a strong challenge for the population. The referendum is a practice that we inherited from colonization. Before any referendum, there is already an agreement at the heart of the political community. Historically, politicians agree between themselves first and then ask the people to say ‘aye.’”

“The great novelty” continues the LASDEL expert, “is that today, the elite does not get along. For the very first time, there is no political consensus. Mathematically, the ‘no’ should take over, but we are perfectly aware that the people close to the State will participate to the vote and will manipulate it”. This was not to mention that the opposition had massively called upon its adherent or sympathisers to boycott the vote, which explains the massive ‘yes’ (92.5 per cent with a participation of 68.26 per cent).

“In the event that the referendum is positive, and even if no violence ensues, the climate will not be appeased”, added Abdoulaye Mohamadou. And at the time the Courier is sent to press, the climate is by no means appeased. “The problem” added the LASDEL expert “is if the trade unions go on strike, blocking the economy. Since the country depends on its customs revenue, there is a risk that the State could be destabilised”.

> Boundaries that should not be crossed

“In Niger, there is a whole mechanism to neutralise violence that is distanced from the politicians and politics in general” adding: “since the 1990s, we have handled many crises. This is partly due to the fact that, in many cases, the members of the same family are affiliated to four or five different political parties, which neutralises conflicts. This phenomenon applies to every ethnic group and social class”. “In Niger” pursues Abdoulaye Mohamadou, “the population avoids conflicts. Ethically, there are boundaries that should not be crossed for fear of breaking the balance. To some extent, the same is true in Benin, where political violence is not very developed, and in Mali too, although less so in Burkina Faso”. “This detachment” he adds, “can be applied to all facets of life”. **M.M.B.**





Women in Niger

After having been considered as solely being in charge of their households for a very long time, women in Niger are trying to get rid of this stereotype. Today, women's associations are flourishing and there is a ministry in charge of the advancement of women at state level.

In Niger, schooling for girls was deemed unnecessary for a very long time. Indeed, girls were only destined to leave behind their original families when they married. Both in cities and in rural areas, parents invest more in the schooling of boys than of girls. Today, a mere 38.52 per cent of girls are schooled, and the rate of illiterate women is 88 per cent. This illiteracy is the direct reason why women are relegated to the background. The political sphere is widely dominated by men. Women's rights have not yet effectively been recognised in spite of the combat that women continue to fight alongside men for the construction and consolidation of multipartite regimes. Despite the fact that they represent 50.3 per cent of the population of Niger, women are underrepresented in the decision-making bodies. From 1960 – the date of independence of Niger – to 1974 – end of the first Republic – there was not a single woman in the government, and the right to deputation was not taken into consideration.

Faced with this blatant inequality, the government adopted in 1996 a National Policy for the Advancement of Women, which led to the adoption of a law of the quota setting a minimum participation of each gender for the management of public affairs in June 2000. Thus, in the proclamation of definitive results of a legislative or local election, the proportion of elected candidates of one or the other gender must not be lower than 10 per cent, and must not be less than 25 per cent for the nomination of the members of government.

➤ Significant progress, but there is still a long way to go...

The law on the quota greatly encouraged the emergence of women in politics. During the 2004 general election, 14 women were elected at the National Assembly, which is made up of 113 deputies, or a proportion of 12 per cent. Out of the 3,747 available work positions throughout the 255 municipalities of Niger, 671 women have become advisers.

At the government, the number of women increased from four ministers in 2004 to 8 out of 32, or a rate of 25 per cent. However, this progress is all just for show.

According to Mrs. Ben Wahab, deputy and former special adviser to the President of the National Assembly, “in the structure of political parties, women only hold positions related to social issues or in sub-positions of 2nd or 3rd secretary, which are exclusively reserved for them”.

The work of housewives, also referred to as homemakers, is not accounted for. They are considered as inactive and unproductive, despite the fact that, every day, they spend 12 hours looking after their families. From a legal perspective, women are subject to three sources of law: modern, Islamic and customary. This situation endures despite the fact that the State of Niger has adopted a series of national and international texts favouring women. **S.S.M.**

Keywords

Women; Niger; quota; Mrs. Ben Wahab.

Centrifugal forces and 'joke kinship'

Niger is a true crossroads for exchange between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, as reflect the many ethnic groups of the country.

Two ethnic groups make up three quarters of the population of Niger, and are mainly concentrated in the south of the country: the Hausa and the Djerma-Songhai people. The former are renowned merchants and make up the lion's share of the population with 43 per cent. They have settled in the centre and the east with a cultural area that widely overflows into Nigeria, which explains the large porosity of the frontier that separates the two countries. The latter make up almost 18 per cent of the population, and are the descendants of the Songhai Empire, which was established in the 7th century in the basin of the Niger River and destroyed by the Moroccans ten centuries later. The Tuaregs and the Toubou (around 8.5 per cent) occupy the north and northeastern territories of Niger, while the Kanuri and Bouduma (5 per cent) are at the Far East,

near Lake Chad. Finally, the Fula, who are mostly renowned as cattle breeders, spread out over the entire country's territory after having controlled the nation between the 17th and 19th centuries.

There are many causes behind the tensions between all these people: the French political elite privileges the Zarma who are stockbreeders – particularly the Bororo Fula – rejected by the sedentary whilst northern Tuaregs feel neglected by a central power

that monopolises the dividends of the uranium in their region. The insurgencies of the latter were smothered by fire and metal in 1990, but stay well and truly alive in the memory and the tension between the central power and the Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice (MNJ), the foremost rebel Tuareg movement, remains rife to this day.

Yet, these populations have learned to cohabit by adopting conflict-avoiding mechanisms. One of these practices is the 'Parenté à Plaisanterie' (joke kinship), a custom that authorises or sometimes even forces the members of the same family or of different ethnic groups to tease and even insult each other, without any consequence whatsoever. French ethnologist Marcel Griaule has qualified this custom as 'cathartic alliance'.

M.M.B.

Keywords

Ethnic groups; Fula; Zarma; Tuaregs; Kanuri; Bouduma; joke kinship; Marie-Martine Buckens.

Water: a factor of regional integration

Even though the river that gave the country its name only runs through 550 kilometres of it (although it is 4100 kilometres long, making it the 3rd largest river in Africa after the Nile and the Congo), it represents a significant economic asset for the country. One year ago, the first stone of the Kandadji dam was laid. This dam should allow Niger to depend less on Nigeria, a country that currently supplies it with 90 per cent of its elec-

tricity needs. It should also help to increase (with the support of the EU) irrigation surfaces. The dam had first to be granted an authorisation from the Autorité du Bassin du Niger, a body regrouping Guinea, Mali, Niger, Benin and Nigeria (main course) and Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Chad (affluent) with the aim of managing the increasingly-polluted and silted up river basin in a sustainable manner. The same challenges and cooperation unite the

countries along the banks of Lake Chad. In 2000, the Commission du Lac Tchad (Lake Chad Commission), which regroups Niger, Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad and Central Africa, pledged to restore to the dried-up basin its wetland configuration. **M.M.B.**

Keywords

Authority of the basin of the Niger River; Lake Chad Commission; Marie-Martine Buckens.



Tuareg in Niger, 2009. © Marie-Martine Buckens

A report by Debra Percival

At the EU's most easterly edge at the centre of Europe



Monument to Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas, created by Vytautas Kašuba, Cathedral Square, Vilnius, 2009. © Debra Percival

Vilnius, one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, is the capital of Lithuania, one of three Baltic States. In geographical terms, is with Bucharest (Romania) and Nicosia (Cyprus), one of the EU's most easterly capitals, yet according to studies done by French cartographers, it sits at the centre of Europe. A look at Lithuania's complex history of wars, division and unification is key to understanding how the city has emerged as a crossroads for East and West European cultures with a strong pride in the nation, which only regained independence two decades ago, displayed by a city of some 544,000 citizens.

Lithuania was first mentioned in written texts one thousand years ago in 1009. In 1253, Duke Mindaugas was crowned King of Lithuania, the country's only King. It was during his reign that Vilnius was mentioned for the first time as the capital and the Catholic Cathedral of the city was built although the majority of the population remained pagan at this time. In 1325, Gediminas formed a union with Poland by marrying his daughter to the Polish King's son and under the Kreva Union the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth came into being in 1387. Joint Polish and Lithuanian armies, led respectively by Jogaila and Lithuania's Grand Duke Vytautas, defeated the invasion of Teutonic knights at the battle of Grunwald.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, Lithuania grew into one of the largest states in Europe and developed as a centre for East-Central European trade. Cultural advances made included the founding of Vilnius University in 1579. But the end of the 16th century saw the political and cultural marginalisation of Lithuania and the Union of Lublin marked the single state of Poland and Lithuania, with Vilnius losing out as Warsaw became the centre of the huge state.

It was at the start of the 18th century that both Swedish and Russian forces tried to seize the country and in 1795, Lithuania was annexed to Russia. Many residents of Vilnius were either killed or deported into

the eastern regions of the Russian empire. From 1830-1831 an uprising against the Russian administration led to repression and a period of Russification of Lithuania. The Russian administration closed the University of Vilnius and turned Catholic churches into Orthodox ones. In 1864, a second uprising led to the banning of the Lithuanian language and the Lithuanian press although the publishing of books in Lithuanian and opening of Lithuanian schools continued in secret and a revival of Lithuanian culture and tradition occurred with the publishing of the Lithuanian language newspaper, 'Auszra', or 'Dawn'. The St. Petersburg-Vilnius-Warsaw railway was built during this period and Vilnius became the centre of a national revival.



Cathedral of St. Stanislav and St. Vladislav and Bell Tower, Cathedral Square, Vilnius, 2009. © Debra Percival



Barricades outside the seimas (parliament); a reminder of the failed attempt by the Red Army to storm the building in 1991. © Debra Percival

> Call for independence

A call for independence came following World War I (1914-1918) in the 16 February 1918 Declaration of Vilnius, but as the Germans began their retreat, the Lithuanian state came under attack from Polish General, Józef Pilsudski, who seized control of Vilnius and the south of the country which was held from 1920 to 1939. Poland maintained part of its former Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth and the capital of Lithuania moved to Kaunas. The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, 1939-40, between Hitler and Stalin who carved Europe up to be controlled by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in Vilnius, ended the country's independence.

Between 1941-1944, Nazis and some Lithuanian partisans ordered the mass murder of 200,000 Jews, known as 'Litvaks'. The return of the Red Army and incorporation of Lithuania into the USSR in 1944 by the Red Army led to the deportation of 250,000 Lithuanians to Siberia which had already begun in 1941.

The underground resistance was active up to 1953 including the 'forest brothers'; (miško broliai). In an act of protest against Soviet occupation in May 1971, 19 year-old student Romas Kalanta, set fire to himself in public in Kaunas.

> 'Sąjūdis'

In a move for reform, the 'sąjūdis' was founded by 500 representatives of the intelligentsia

in 1988 and the Lithuanian flag was raised in Gediminas castle. Calls for independence from the Soviet Union gathered pace and in 1991, two million people from all Baltic States - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia - formed a 650 km long human chain from the capital of Vilnius to the Estonian capital Tallinn to protest the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.

The 'sąjūdis' won a majority in the first free election in Lithuania in 1990. The Seimas subsequently declared the restoration of Lithuanian independence and requested the withdrawal of Soviet forces during the 'singing revolution'.

In 1991, Soviet forces tried, but failed, to storm the Parliamentary building and in a thwarted attempt to take over the television tower, 14 civilians were killed. By August 1991, the putsch was over. In August 1992, Sweden became the first country to open an embassy in Vilnius and in September 1992, Lithuania and the two other Baltic States were admitted to the United Nations.

The country's accession talks to the EU began in 1999, although one sticking point was the decommissioning of the Ignalina nuclear power plant by 2010, which is still an issue since it will make the country almost entirely dependent on gas from Russia for its energy supply. The country became a fully-fledged member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 2004 and also joined the EU on May 1, 2004.

In 2007, Lithuania became a member of the Schengen group of countries allowing

borderless travel to and from other Schengen members. And former EU Commissioner, Dacia Grybauskaitė, won the presidential election in 2009, becoming the country's first female head of state on her inauguration on July 12, 2009. But she took over the country in the height of an economic crisis, highlighted by the demise of national airline, flyLAL, which suspended all services at the beginning of the year.

'VILNIUS: CITY OF STRANGERS'

Published in collaboration with 'Vilnius: European Capital of Culture' this book by academic Laimonas Briedis captures the city's soul and traces "a map of the European continent walked through the streets of Vilnius". This native of Vilnius, who has gone on to do research work in Canadian universities, uses letters, diaries and reflections of the diverse cultures which have all left their mark on the city. "To this day, Vilnius stands as a continental outsider, an unfamiliar character – a trespasser – within a well crafted storyboard of Europe," says the author.

Baltos Lankos Publishers, 2009.

www.baltoslankos.lt

Keywords

Lithuania; Vilnius; Dacia Grybauskaitė; Laimonas Briedis; 'Sąjūdis'; Baltics; Seimas.

An ever-changing city

Mayor of Vilnius, Vilius Navickas, gives us his long-term vision for the capital whose growth has been affected of late by the global economic crisis. The EU is providing €7bn of structural funds (2007-2013) to assist Lithuania's development.

How has the year as Europe's Cultural Capital changed Vilnius?

'Vilnius – European Capital of Culture 2009', together with the celebration of the Millennium of Lithuania, already became beacons of city expansion from 2005 and have had a fundamental impact on its development. In recent years, considerable attention has been given to arts and cultural spaces where the European Capital of Culture and Millennium of Lithuania programme could be held: The Royal Palace of Lithuania, The National Gallery of Art, Arts Printing House, Tymas Quarter, Technical Museum of Lithuania, and A.Gudaitis Art Gallery.

Attention has been given to renewal of public space, especially adapting it for the disabled. The reconstruction of Gediminas Avenue – the city's main street, was recently finished. The renovation of the riversides of the Neris, Sereikiškės, Kalnų, Vingis Parks, and the riversides of the Vilnia are underway.

Have tourist numbers risen?

'Vilnius – European Capital of Culture 2009' has attracted many tourists, but the fact is the world economic crisis has had a negative effect and reduced the number of direct flights from Europe to Vilnius.

Are other EU countries investing in your city?

The flow of investment at the end of 2009 and beginning of 2010 will reduce but this isn't a surprise. On the whole, we are glad that the outlook remains positive. A good example is the shopping and entertainment center 'Ozas' which opened some months ago. German investment in the centre is to the tune of €200M.

What are your long-term infrastructure projects?

Although many projects are currently suspended, we have ambitious future plans for sustainable city development. In the short-term, we plan to introduce a self-

service bicycle transit system – the same that is found in Stockholm, Brussels and many other European cities. In the longer-term, we are considering a plan for the Guggenheim-Hermitage museum in Vilnius and will resume the construction of the National Football Stadium as well as further development of roundabouts. But in the near future we are not planning any big investments to asphalt surfaces - the recently introduced automated traffic control system having reduced traffic flows.

Do you have any plans to twin Vilnius with other cities in developing nations?

Vilnius maintains friendly relations with cities of developing and transitional countries. As capital of the European Union, it has a

lot of experience to share with the cities of EU newcomer countries or those on the way to European integration. Good examples are recent cooperation agreements with Kisinov (Moldova) in 2006 and Tbilisi (Georgia) in 2009. The cities have shown an interest in our lessons concerning administration and city governing, like construction of dwellings, improving urban transport infrastructure, conserving heritage, and attracting foreign investments. Vilnius also regularly carries out exchanges of experience with Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Poland and Belarussian cities. **D.P.**

Keywords

Vilius Navickas; European Capital of Culture; Guggenheim-Hermitage Museum.



Vilnius is a very green city, 2009. © Debra Percival

Pasts and present intermingle

Green spaces – including Trakai Park 28 km west of Vilnius – flowing rivers, fashionable and lively, Vilnius is a very livable city. Its eclectic architecture, from Baroque to heavy Soviet monuments draws more and more visitors. Throughout history, Lithuania’s changing populations have each left their respective marks on the city which now consists of 84.3 per cent Lithuanians, 6.2 per cent Poles, 5 per cent Russians, 1.1 per cent Belarusians and 0.6 per cent Ukrainians.

The French National Geographical Institutue has located the continental centre of Europe at 54 degrees and 50 minutes latitude, 25 degrees and 18 minutes longitude, or just six kilometres north of the Old Town of Vilnius. As Laimonas Briedis says in his book, *Vilnius City of Strangers**, “Vilnius in the twentieth century is just like the geographical centre of Europe: always shifting, recalculating, remapping, and yet able to reach a fixed meaning or a stable location”.

The narrow streets of the Old Town contain businesses of former trades which still thrive today: wood carving (the country is covered

roughly by a 30 per cent forestarea), linen garment making; glass blowing and objects and jewellery crafted from Baltic amber which comes from the fossilised tree resin secreted some 40 million years ago and deposited off the shores of the Baltic Sea.

Cathedral Square is at the city’s centre. The Cathedral was first built in 1251, on the site of a former pagan temple and became a Basilica in 1922. The three white striking crosses which sit on the hillside above the square were erected in the 17th century to mark the spot where seven Franciscian monks were crucified. The originals were removed and buried by Soviet occupation

but in 1989 rebuilt and have become a symbol of both Lithuanian mourning and hope. Another landmark is the Gedinimas Castle which dates from the 13th century and was rebuilt by Grand Duke Vytautas.

The 326-metre tall Television Tower which was surrounded by Soviet tanks in 1991 is never far from sight. Another landmark is the Holocaust museum. Outside, there is a monument to Japan’s Vice Consul who in issuing 2,139 visas spared the lives of many Lithuanian Jews.

The Green Bridge or ‘Žalioji Tiltas’ over the River Neris which cuts through Vilnius is named after a Red Army General and is one of the remaining Soviet monuments. Constructed in 1952, the sculptures at each of its four corners represent the cornerstones of the former Soviet state: agriculture, industry and construction, peace and youth. Cross over to the other side where the glass-fronted business district and shopping area are symbols of recent economic growth, perturbed by the current global crisis. **D.P.**

* Vilnius City of Strangers, by Laimona Briedas, Baltos Lankos Publishers, 2009.



Soviet ‘industry’, Neris bridge, Vilnius, 2009 © Debra Percival



Signpost for Republic of Užupis, 2009 © Debra Percival



Riverside architecture, 2009. © Debra Percival

REPUBLIC OF UŽUPIS

Take one of seven bridges – laden with padlocks engraved with the names of couples seeking to ‘lock-in’ their love – over the River Vilnia and stumble upon the Republic of Užupis. This area which literally means ‘place beyond the river’, was neglected during Soviet occupation. Artists moved in and in 1997, it declared its independence with a president, flag and constitution written on plaques attached to a street wall. It includes: “People have the right to be insignificant and unknown.” Independence Day on April Fools’ Day.

Keywords

Vilnius; French National Geographical Institutue; Laimonas Briedis; River Neris; Debra Percival.



Evaldas Ignatavičius, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2009.
© Debra Perovai

Lithuania's development policy looks east

Evaldas Ignatavičius, Lithuania's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of development cooperation policy, says his small country has a limited bilateral development budget and a global reach is difficult. Rather, it is targeting such aid to areas where it can be most effective in line with political objectives, such as its immediate neighbours and Afghanistan.

In an interview with 'The Courier' in Vilnius, the Deputy Minister spoke of "adjusting our development policies to our foreign policy goals and our priorities on enlargement of the European Union." "We have integration experience and try to use these instruments and mechanisms for other countries which have future membership of the European Union as a goal," he said.

The country's Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion programme, where bilateral aid is concentrated, is hence focussed on countries which are part of the EC's 'European Neighbourhood Policy': Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and also Afghanistan – where 50 per cent of funds go.

The Deputy Minister explained that it's also a question of not spreading funds too thinly and being effective. The country's 2009 bilateral aid budget is some €2.5M. "Last year it was a bit more but we have had cuts – next year I do not know yet," he said (see: www.orange-projects.lt).

Overall, he said that Lithuania's official Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) would be around 0.1 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) this year: "It is not a huge amount, but it is still not bad". This sum includes international commitments. For example, from next year, Lithuania will be required to contribute for the first time to the

European Development Fund (2008-2013) for ACP nations, with a €27.2M commitment.

We asked the Minister why part of the budget is not being used to alleviate poverty in Africa: "In the past, we had some projects and we hope to come back to these. Now, we want to achieve the best possible results with the relatively few resources we have and this is not possible in African or Caribbean countries: there are big transport costs and we do not have well-prepared experts to work in Africa. For Central Europe and Eastern Asia, we have people who can speak Russian and can communicate and we have the skills that these countries need for transformation," he said. Projects being funded in these regions include classic social and small clean water projects and building small power stations.

> Afghanistan

"We are funding more of these classic development projects in Afghanistan: this is the centre of our development cooperation - combatting poverty and illiteracy, helping transform agriculture, or building small schools and hydro-power plants. We also have a small project in Palestine," added the Deputy Minister. Why the political focus on Afghanistan? "We are responsible for a provincial reconstruction team there and see the added value of civil and military cooperation. We can control our projects

- this is difficult to do in very distant countries on the African continent,” he said.

Whereas fellow Baltic state, Estonia, channels all its funding for development through international organisations and agencies, the Deputy Minister said: “Our policy is one of visibility and using continuation of our devel-

opment policy as foreign policy.” Lithuania currently has only one embassy in Africa in Cairo. Technical experts in the Foreign Affairs department are currently in training for Lithuania’s EU Presidency in 2013. The country currently holds the presidency of the 140-nation Community of Democracies, set up in 2000 by then Polish Minister of Foreign

Affairs, Bronislaw Geremek and former US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, to promote global democratic rules and norms. “Many African countries are active in this,” he said. **D.P.**

Keywords

Evaldas Ignatavičius; Lithuania; Julius Norvila; Afghanistan; CONCORD, Trialog; Debra Percival.

LITHUANIAN NGOS DRAW ATTENTION TO AFRICA

Julius Norvila is the representative in Lithuania of the development NGO *Humana*, and is critical of half of the development funds going to Afghanistan and also to Lithuania’s neighbouring countries, where the standard of living is higher than in many developing nations. Headquartered in Zimbabwe and particularly known in Scandinavia, he says *Humana* sells second-hand clothes to raise money for development projects with education in rural areas a priority. Norvila, who also works for the Institute of Social Ethics, a private organisation set up by several Lithuanians, is also active in educating Lithuanians on international development, having invited African individuals to give talks in Lithuanian schools. He disputes those who say that Lithu-

anians have neither any knowledge of, nor interest in developing countries. It is an “open secret” he says that Lithuanians, interested in foreign currency and furthering careers were “pre-selected” by the former Soviet authorities during the Cold War period to work in various African nations, thus knowing what “global worker solidarity” is about. And Lithuanians show a big interest in volunteer work in Africa, many joining schemes run by Norway and Sweden. *Humana* is both a member of Trialog, an umbrella of Development NGOs in the enlarged EU, and participates in the European NGO Confederation For Relief and Development’s (CONCORD) ‘Aid Watch’ group. A survey carried out mid-2008 by the NGO Information and Support Centre and the

Lithuanian market research centre, ‘Vilmorus’, showed that 65.5 per cent of Lithuanian citizens approve support and knowledge sharing with developing countries, although this was down from 2005 when 72 per cent gave a positive response. Out of this figure, says Norvila, 60 per cent said support should go to Africa and 30 per cent to Afghanistan, although the same survey found that young people in particular saw Lithuania as a small country that could not give external support and knew very little about where Lithuania’s aid went. The NGO Information and Support Centre is currently implementing a project, ‘We are ready’, funded by the EC to enhance development policy education in the country.

AFRICA IN LITHUANIAN PARLIAMENT

Christian Democrat MP, Egidijus Vareikis, nicknamed ‘Seal’, is one of a handful of members in the Lithuanian Parliament interested in African issues. He belongs to the group of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA). “For Lithuanians, Africa is still ‘terra incognita’, he says. A lively interest in diplomat relations is the background to his thinking on globalisation with the

publication of a book, ‘Globalusis Futbolas’ or ‘Global Football’. He is currently looking at whether democracy has “universality”. “Is the same liberal democracy we have in the EU good for Africa?” he asks. “Or are there alternatives.”? He would like Lithuania to fund more development projects in sub-Saharan Africa, perhaps of a triangular nature with other EU states.



Primary school children in Kaunas ‘attack’ *Humana* development project manager, Kenneth Musonda, from Zambia. © Julius Norvila

PASSIONATE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGNER

Seeking a Member of the European Parliament to take up a human rights issue? Look no further than Leonidas Donskis. This former Professor and Dean of political science at the University of Vytautas Magnus, Kaunas was elected to serve a first five-year time in the EP in June 2009. He is set to become a vigorous member of both the Development Committee and

sub-Committee on Human Rights. He is also coordinator of his political group – the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe – on human rights issues. He wants to invite “fearless media people” from Russia to the sub-Committee’s hearings. He is particularly disturbed by violence against women and children in both Lithuania and globally.



Culture Live logo, Vilnius, 2009. © Debra Percival

Culture Live hits Vilnius

Rolandas Kvietauskas, director of 'Vilnius-European Capital of Culture 2009'*, spoke to us about how the programme, supported by the European Commission and branded as Culture Live by organisers, journeys through the many diverse and rich influences of Lithuania, a crossroads for East and West European cultures. In the post since February 2009, he says Culture Live stretches from crafts to classical music concerts. Traditional venues and new public spaces are showcasing established and new artistic talent from Lithuania and other EU countries.

The inspirations for the brand *Culture Live* are the method of 'live transmission' of the audiovisual sector and 'Fluxus', an avant-garde movement of the early 1970's which was created in the United States by a Lithuanian artist, George Maciunas, and based on art as being what is happening right now, says Kvietauskas in his office in one of the municipal buildings in Vilnius.

In planning the year-long events, Lithuanians sent in spontaneous ideas for projects which best reflected the city's ideology. Some of those short-listed were developed. The onus has been on a diverse programme, says its director, whereas the city's regular cultural happenings came up with "something spe-

cial" for 2009. Other initiatives were developed by the *Culture Live* team to bring in particular artists.

Some of the highlights of the jam-packed programme include a special music and laser show by German artist, Gert Hof and an interpretation of Tchaikovsky's ballet, the 'Nutcracker' in Vilnius Palace of Concerts and Sports, which was previously closed down. And an open air ice rink was opened in City Hall Square at the start of 2009 with performances by Lithuanian ice dancing stars, Margarita Drobiazko and Povilas Vanagas.

Kvietauskas says there is a strong theatre programme and the Vilnius opera festival which took place in June 2009 is now to

become a fixed event on the Lithuanian cultural calendar.

New spaces for contemporary art have been opened such as a changing exhibition in the railway and bus stations and from September 2009, grounds next to the airport will be the venue for an open-air exhibition of sculptures featuring artists from Poland, Russia, Belarus and France.

As one of the most Eastern capital cities (Romanian and Cyprus capitals more eastern) in the European Union, the inclusion of cultural influences from neighbours has been a theme, including an exhibition of the work of notable Georgian artist, Niko Pirosmani.

> Soviet past

Culture Live has not left out of the programme the period of Lithuania's Soviet occupation. From 2 October until 7 December 2009, an exhibition will take place in the new National Art Gallery in collaboration with the Victoria and Albert Exhibition in London entitled 'Modern Art and design from the Cold War period (1945-1970).' It includes the earth's first artificial satellite 'Sputnik'.

And a project to recreate the "atmosphere in deep Soviet times" is to receive a further grant in 2010 from the European Commission to commemorate the Second World War, including the deportation of Lithuanians to Siberia.

Despite a lack of direct flights to Vilnius from other EU cities, tourism information centres in Vilnius have reported a 27 per cent increase in visitors to their premises for the first half of 2009, says Kvietauskas, but *Culture Live's* contribution goes beyond tourist statistics, says its director.

"We have created new relations between artists, companies and institutions and provided a number of famous artists the possibilities to present themselves in a new space," he says, referring to 'ART-O-THLON', a reality show where 4 groups of mainly Lithuanian young artists, created different art pieces over 7 weeks with their work shown live on national TV and judged by a panel of experts as well as a public phone-in. The prize, which went to 'Die kitch en', is the opportunity to create a permanent sculpture for 'Europos Parkas' Europe Park : an open air park outside the city).

In another *Culture Live* project, young directors from Estonia, Belgium and Poland have been making film documentaries on their individual interpretations of Vilnius.

> Embankment arch

'Krantines arka' or 'Embankment arch', a huge rusted arch on the river Neris constructed of old gas pipes, by Vlada Urbanavičius, has proved to be one of the most controversial pieces of sculpture funded by *Culture Live*. His aim is to get passers-by to take note of the surrounding hilly environment of

Keywords

European capital for Culture; Culture Live; Rolandas Kvietauskas; Anja Westerfrölke; George Maciunas; Debra Percival.

Vilnius but love it or hate it, it has sparked general debate in Lithuania on what is art, at the same time as the "possibility to look at public spaces and how they are used and provide a platform to artists," says Kvietauskas.

Does the director have recommendations for future European Capitals of Culture? "Investment creates a real possibility of changing cities in the long-term. If the city manages to create something interesting for their communities, a different face motivates people to live in it and come from outside." He says, "it shows the potential of culture to unite different sectors to make a city more interesting with new and better quality of services." Pécs (Hungary), Essen (Germany) and Istanbul (Turkey) are European Capitals of Culture for 2010.

D.P.

For *Culture Live's* jam-packed September-December 2009 schedule including the 'Crossing Europe' film programme and European jazz event see: www.culturelive.lt/en/

*The Capital of Culture programme was launched in 1985, originating from a proposal by former Greek Minister of Culture, Melina Mercouri.



Culture Live's Director, Rolandas Kvietauskas, 2009. © Debra Percival



Love it, or hate it, 'Krantines arka' or 'Embankment arch' by Vlada Urbanavičius, 2009. © Debra Percival

LAYERS OF VILNIUS

Austrian artist, Anja Westerfrölke, was drawn to the neglected church behind high walls and heavy locked gates which in the 18th century was part of a monastery and then from 1948-2007, a men's prison. She persuaded Vilnius municipality to open up The Sacred Heart of Jesus (Vistanines Church).to create her installation for *Culture Live*. Mikas Žukauskas, who showed us around, explains that the light sheets of fabric draped from walls and windows

on which are sketched the original plans of the church, like an architect's drawings, bring attention to the building's previous lives. There are pieces of art created by prisoners from its more recent history. The visitor reflects on the many layers of history in Vilnius. The church now begs a new life. Some have suggested a future meeting place for women while others would like to see it restored to its former glory as a church. The installation runs until 6 December 2009.

**Andrea Marchesini
Reggiani**

Africa at the head of design

One of the most appreciated presentations at this year's Salone del Mobile at the Moroso showroom in Milan, set up by the Afro-American New York-based designer Stephen Burks and Patrizia Moroso, the company's energetic art director.

The presentation was entitled *M'Afrique*, and involved African plastic artists and photographers, as well as Senegalese craftsmen and internationally renowned designers. Design objects were produced, which were designed by Tord Boontje, Bibi Seck, Ayse Birsel, Patricia Urquiola and Stephen Burks and made in Senegal by local craftspeople. *M'Afrique* also presented new products inspired by Africa, such as Philippe Bestenheider's 'Binta' armchair and 'Bogolan bouffe'. Several of Moroso's classical, iconic and famous name designs (*Do-lo-rez* sofas, *Antibodi* chaises longues, *Bohemian* armchairs, *Bouquet* chairs) were upholstered in African fabrics. These fabrics are not simply textiles to buy and sell or to use for clothes, but represent a means of communication for women, because their richness gives an indication of the family's social status. The Dakar Biennial, a reference point where artists and art critics from all over the world meet to keep up-to-date with African artistic research, was one of the starting points

for this project. It was here that Patrizia Moroso made contact with some of the artists who she asked to be part of the show, such as Senegalese Soly Cissé, the 'Nubian' artist Fathi Hassan who lives in Italy, and the self-taught photographer Mandémory. She went on to involve David Adjaye, one of the best-known architects on the international scene. In *M'Afrique* he presented his research project 'African Cities', which consisted of a photographic documentary of five African cities (Dakar, Addis Ababa, Harare, Pretoria and Bamako). Stephen Burks put everything together to create a beautiful show.

"Multifaceted, modern Africa deserves to be known and sustained for the originality of the creative languages with which it enriches global culture", says Patrizia Moroso. "The African continent is extraordinarily rich in creativity, materials and ideas that are sources of inspiration and nourishment for us. When applied to design, they engender products which exude tradition and modernity, innovation and history, form and beauty."



Fathi Hassan, Eating star, at M'Afrique Showroom, 'Salone del Mobile' in Milan. © Moroso

One of the most valuable concrete representations of this idea is the symbolism expressed in various forms, through the written word by Fathi Hassand and through the visually stunning fabrics designed and produced by Senegalese textile creator Aissa Dione. Aissa, who runs a gallery in Dakar, is a symbol of the successful creativity and managerial skills of African women. She focuses on the need to increase the value of textiles produced using precious African techniques to protect them against the invasion of foreign industrial textiles, and in her work she applies her pictorial talent to the creation of cotton and raffia textiles.

The project as a whole represents a splendid collaboration between artists and creative people from across the world, with Africa playing a central role, not as a place of nostalgic exoticism, but as a source of ideas for the renewal of contemporary creative production. The pieces have been exhibited in the showrooms of New York and will be put up for sale. Their success is guaranteed.

Keywords

Contemporary art and design, Salone del Mobile, M'Afrique, Patrizia Moroso, Stephen Burks, Senegal, local craftsmen, African fabrics.



Moroso installation M'Afrique Showroom at the 'Salone del Mobile' in Milan. © Moroso

Sandra Federici

Swaziland: Investing in Culture

In Mbabane, the capital of the small Kingdom of Swaziland, the sd.com art gallery has been set up to increase the value of local artistic production, aiming to fight poverty brought about by internal migration.

Many women leave their rural villages and move to the cities, stimulated by the pull of presumably more desirable conditions and opportunities in urban areas combined with the push of deteriorating conditions in rural areas. But usually, all that awaits them is deterioration in their quality of life and their health. Oppressed by pov-

erty, the need to find housing often forces them into prostitution, which becomes their only means of survival. They then inevitably contract HIV.

The art galley sd.com in Mbabane, is trying to prevent this from happening to women from the villages of Mpolonjeni and Ngomane. It supports these women by employing them as embroiderers, working

on artwork, which is consequently marketed. At the same time the gallery improves their quality of life by providing water and sanitation services for their poor houses. This has a positive impact on their families, and therefore on the whole village. The aim is therefore to accompany them on a path towards economic autonomy.

The idea belongs to Archie B. Magwaza, an engineer who is the boss of a company which rents and sells chemical toilets. It was his idea to set up the gallery, which he could manage carefully and determinedly alongside his main job. He described the origins of his passion for art:

“While I was studying in England I lived with three French students who were studying there as part of the ‘Erasmus’ programme, and it was thanks to them that I discovered the beauty and vitality of contemporary art. My education continued in Tokyo, where I started collecting examples of stimuli and special techniques and methods for creating contemporary art, to integrate on my return to my home country.”

It was in this way that Archie began working as an art promoter, establishing sd.com – a gallery and studio as well as a coffee shop serving excellent Italian espresso. He also set up an interesting enterprise researching and promoting local contemporary art. His main aim is that of encouraging the growth of local artists, by organising residencies for qualified visiting artists, in collaboration with organisations from various countries, such as the Nucleo de Arte in Maputo, the South African Bad Factory, la Fondazione Gulbenkian and l’Alliance Française. In January 2008 he organised the exhibition ‘11 artists from Africa Remix – Fringe Touring Exhibition’.

“I aim to promote the practice of collecting in the upper classes of my country. I think it is fair that those who have the economic means invest in art and not just in luxury goods. I myself am a collector, and every three years I exhibit my collection in a museum. I would also like to organise an exhibition made up of the royal collection of art: the King is an important figure here and this would greatly inspire the collective imagination.”

Before leaving, Archie showed us his latest project: he has bought an amphitheatre which was used for the settling of iron ore (in Swaziland iron mining was once very important). It is situated a few kilometres from Mbabane, and is now abandoned, and he plans to transform it into a space for large-scale musical and theatrical events. As the amphitheatre is already in place, in a

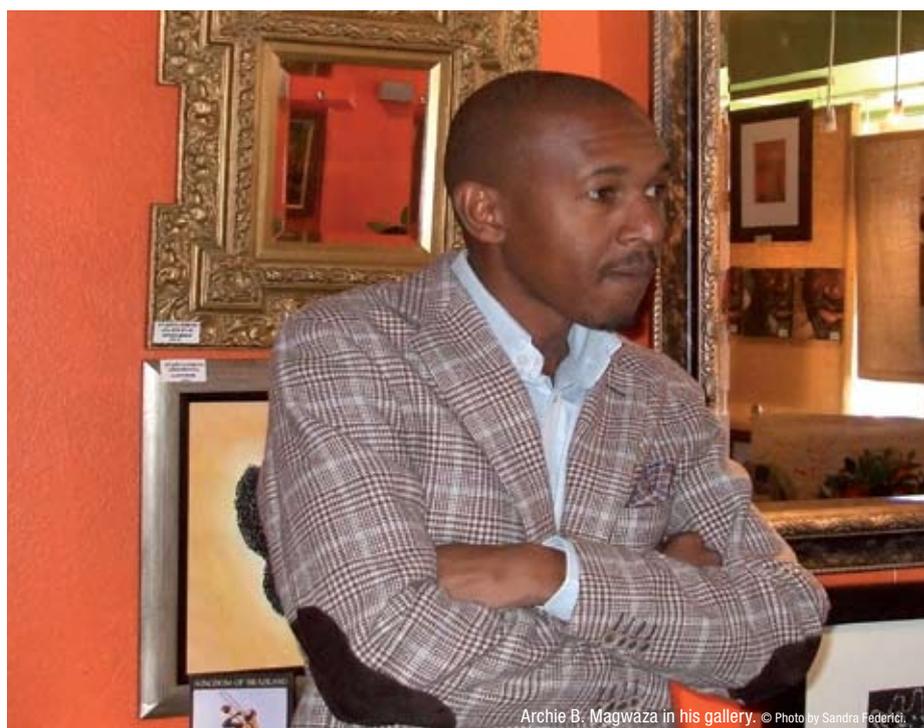
striking natural setting of rocks of iron ore, all that is necessary is the fitting of seating, staging and lights. The old miners’ accommodation has already been transformed into shops and workshops for local craftswomen. This is a private project, locally financed predominantly from private sources, with a business plan starting in January 2010 and covering a period of 18 months.

Swaziland is therefore not just a country of impressive natural scenery and traditional

ethnic culture, packaged ad hoc to attract tourists. The sd.com gallery is an example of investment in contemporary artistic production which has been created autonomously, with an outlook that is open to international cooperation and exchange.

Keywords

sd.com Gallery, Swaziland, Archie B. Magwaza, contemporary art, local artistic production, poverty, women.



Archie B. Magwaza in his gallery. © Photo by Sandra Federici.



One of the artworks exposed in the sd.com gallery

© Photo by Sandra Federici.

Elisabetta Degli Esposti Merli

Kenya: the Winds of Change

Wholly locally produced, The XYZ Show is a TV series that uses rubber puppets to tackle serious political issues.



“A world-class TV series proudly produced in Kenya”. This is how The XYZ Show producers define their work. This series presents political satire in the form of a puppet show, in the style of the British Spitting Image and the French Les Guignols – programmes famous for revealing the scandals, eccentricities and skeletons in the closet of politicians.

Satire, as everyone knows, is very disturbing to authority figures and brings a cold sweat to the foreheads of politicians. As the French Latinist poet Jean de Santeul said, “castigat ridendo mores” – “(satire) corrects customs by mocking them”.

Satire is an unconstrained form of theatre and a literary genre characterised by a critical view of politics and society, which highlights contradictions within them. Because of this, and also because of the fact that satire has a powerful impact on public opinion, it has been violently attacked by authority figures as far back as Ancient Greece.

The current government of Mwai Kibaki, however, with the exception of a few bitter comments on the part of some of his ministers, hasn’t impeded the broadcast of the show. This fact is proof of the level of democracy and freedom of opinion that exists in Kenya today. This freedom is very important not only in African countries, but also in Western countries. In Italy, for example, politicians would probably dismiss the same show as a political conspiracy against the established order.

The creator of the series, the cartoonist Godfrey Mwampembwa, also known as Gado, came up with the idea in 2002, during the transition from the dark days of the Kenyatta-Moi-Kanu dictatorships to the “winds of change” brought about by the new president Kibaki. The

series was first broadcast in May 2009, on the private TV channel Citizen TV, owned by the multimedia company Royal Media.

In his work, Gado has criticised politics and politicians involved in suspicious deals, corruption, scandals and scams over the years. A Prince Claus Laureate in 2007, Editorial Cartoonist for the Daily and Sunday Nation and a regular contributor to the New African, Courier International, Business Day and Sunday Tribune, Gado has had the courage to challenge the reticence and fears of producers and broadcasters, producing a series which has struck a chord with the public.

And fortune favours those who are bold: after 13 episodes the series has been hugely successful. This success reveals that the Kenyan public is open and receptive to this hard form of expression, which is so new to Africa.

What is the structure of the show? It is a weekly mock-news broadcast, featuring rubber caricatures of politicians, in order to emphasise and highlight their defects and imperfections.

The first series was made possible due to funding by foundations (such as the Ford Foundation) and foreign embassies, and in this way a new series is already being planned.

And as Gado says, fortunately (or not?!), the politicians continue to give him ‘gifts’ of scandalous material on which to base the show. To follow the latest, see the website <http://www.xyzshow.com/>, from which it is possible to download episodes of the series.

Keywords

Gado, Puppet show, satire, Kenya, Kibaki, TV series.

Tribes and Democracy



By Glez, cartoonist from Burkina Faso
www.glez.org

Words from Readers

About the article "Blogs: a meeting room for African cartoonists"

This sounds great. We can meet and chat the world over without passports and still be known the world over. The cartoons are starting to get their global recognition share on the net. Thanks to techno!

Mtheto Lip Smile Lungu (South Africa)

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

Corrigendum

A letter, dated 31 July 2009, from Ms Cristina Calabró, desk officer at the European Commission for Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and The Grenadines, asks us to communicate the comments below related to the Report on Dominica and Grenada (issue No 11) :

Article "EC aid. A recompense for good governance" (Issue 11, page 40):

"Under the 10th EDF for Dominica the main focal area is General Budget Support, whereas the projects mentioned in the article as falling under the 10th EDF pertain either to the SFA Banana programme or to the 9th EDF, under which Infrastructure was the main sector of intervention. If we want to be more precise, the sentence '[...] the setting up, or rehabilitation of several agricultural facilities to increase {emphasis added} exports of bananas [...]' is also questionable,

since, given the constant decline in exported bananas in the last decades, the Dominican industry is struggling to maintain production/access to the European market rather than trying to increase numbers."

"...it is hinted that the objective of the Special Framework of Assistance is 'to offset the impact of dwindling banana exports', which is not correct, as the objective of the SFA scheme was either improving traditional suppliers' competitiveness or supporting their diversification efforts"

"In the footnote at the end of the same article, Haiti is listed as a signatory of the EPA, which is not true as Haiti has not signed the agreement yet" "... on both countries (Dominica and Grenada) some confusion arises between the SFA scheme – which was funded through an EC budget line and expired in December 2008 – and the EDF cycles. They are two different instruments and it should be clearly said."

Address: *The Courier* - 45, Rue de Trèves 1040 Brussels (Belgium)
email: info@acp-eucourier.info - website: www.acp-eucourier.info

Agenda

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2009

October 2009

- From 15/10 **Exhibition: L'Art d'être un homme - Afrique, Océanie**
Musée Dapper, Paris, France
- 22 - **European Development Days 2009** Stockholm, Sweden.
Website: <http://www.eudevdays.eu/>
- 27 - **9th Eurafriic-Partners Forum.** Theme: Water and Energy in Africa. Lyon Convention Centre, France
For more information, visit: <http://www.eurafriic.org/> (in French)

November 2009

- 02 - **Food Security 2009: The Hunger Agenda in a Global Recession** Chatham House, London, UK
<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/foodsecurity09/>

MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT

TV Campaign by SNV (Dutch Development NGO's) www.snvworld.org on Euronews. From 19 October. "Making a difference", a series of five journalistic video-reports produced in cooperation with TV broadcaster EuroNews. The

reports highlight global development issues, such as the food crisis, energy crisis, the gap between the rich and the poor and the effects of the global crisis on the developing world.

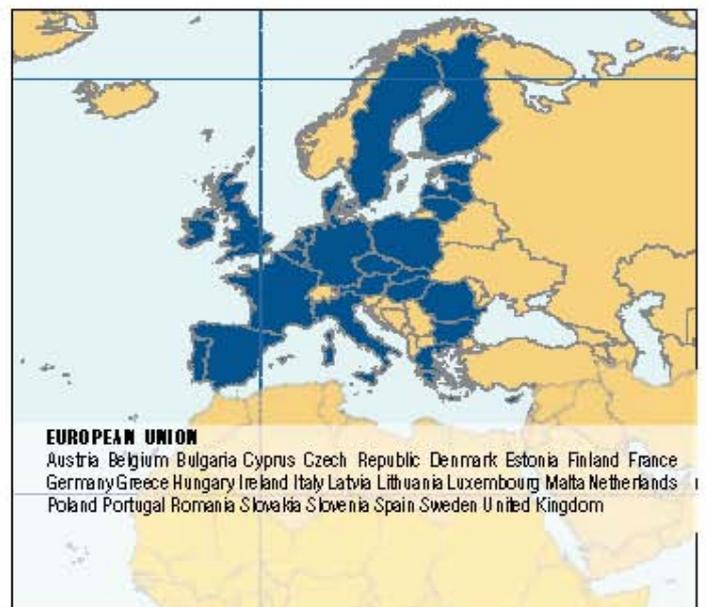
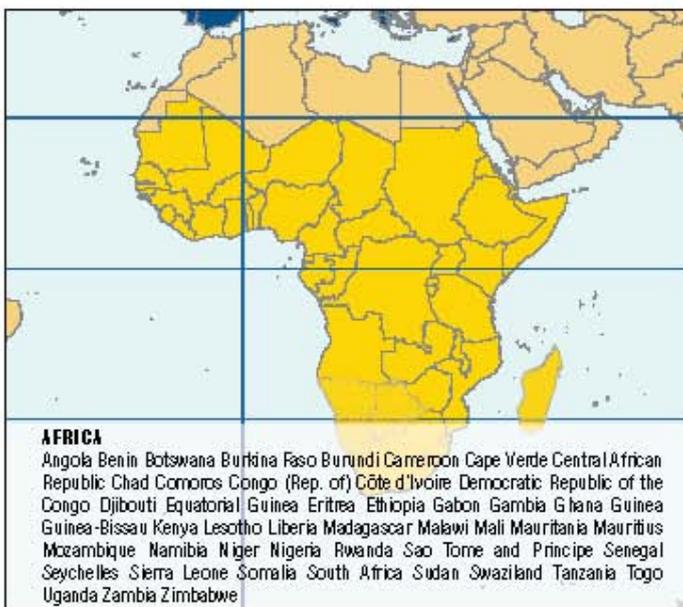
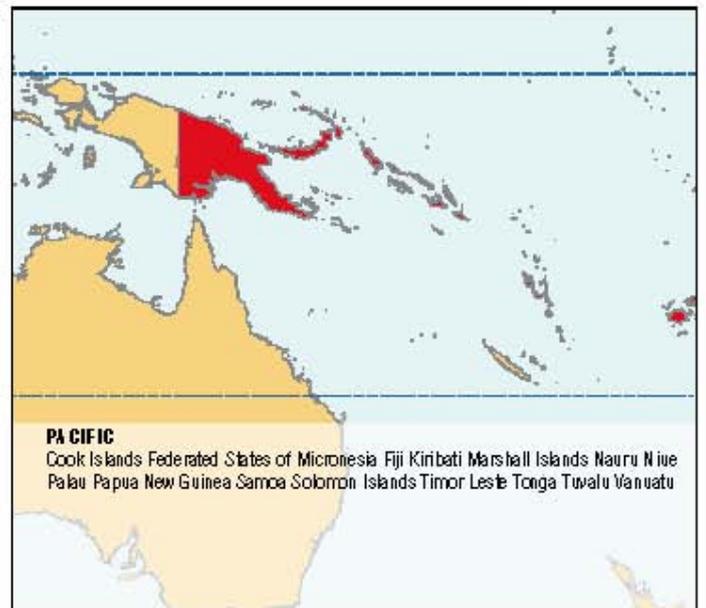
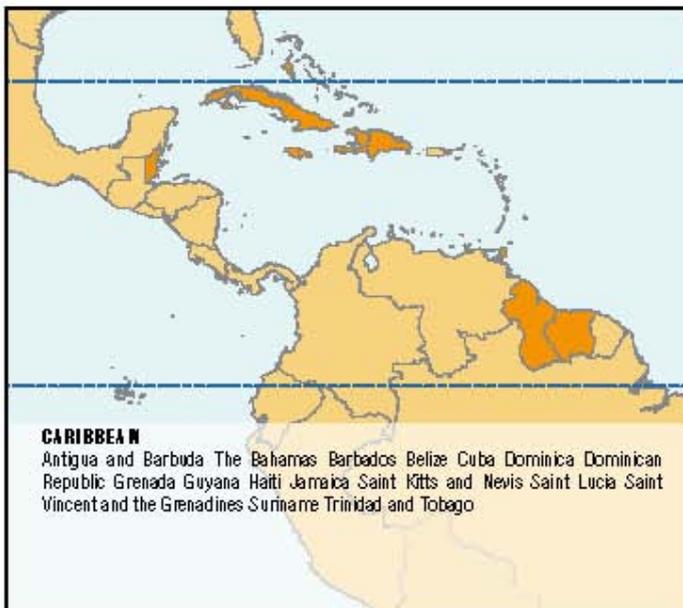
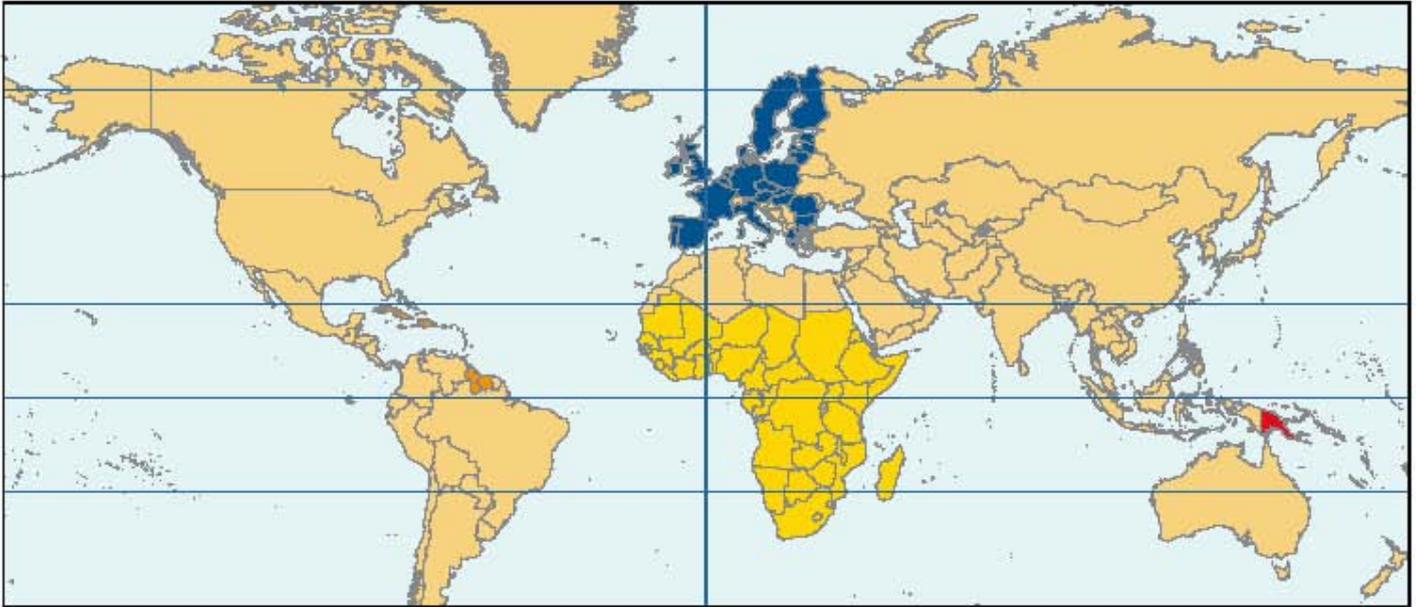
- 11 - **2009 African Economic Conference seminar)**
13/11 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- 12 - **UNRISD International conference on 'Social and Political Dimensions of the Global Crisis: Implications for Developing Countries'**
13/11 Geneva, Switzerland
- 16 - **90th Session of the ACP Council of Ministers,**
18/11 Brussels, Belgium
- 25/11 **18th Session of the ACP Parliamentary and 18th Session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Association**
03/12 Luanda, Angola

- 27 - **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting**
29/11 Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago

December 2009

- 07 - **UN Climate Change Conference**
18/12 <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>
Copenhagen, Denmark
- 10 - **World Congress of NGOs - 'Enhancing Human Dignity: The Role of NGOs'**
13/12 <http://www.wango.org/congress/>
Manila, Philippines

Africa – Caribbean – Pacific and European Union countries



The lists of countries published by The Courier do not prejudice the status of these countries and territories now or in the future. *The Courier* uses maps from a variety of sources. Their use does not imply recognition of any particular boundaries nor prejudice the status of any state or territory.

