Timor-Leste
Birth of a nation

DOSSIER
Africa
Energies

AGENDA

Lisbon, Portugal
8–9 December 2007
A large shift
Table of contents

THE COURIER, N. 3 NEW EDITION (N.E.)

EDITORIAL
Refusing fatal strategies 3

TO THE POINT
Meeting with Gertrude Mongella, President of the Pan-African Parliament 4

ROUND UP
Energy: Potential for major development in Africa 8
Fossil fuels: Africa’s increasingly important strategic value 9
The EIB: Banking on infrastructures 11
The uranium rush 12
Hydroelectricity: An enormous yet underused resource 14
Renewable energies: Unexploited Treasures 16
Energy partnership on the agenda at EU-Africa Summit 18

INTERACTION
A Watershed in Relations between Two Continents 20
Dominican entrepreneurs: Small businesses showing imagination 22
EU-Africa-China, a new triangular relationship? 23
International cooperation and foundations: A profitable encounter 25
Celtel: Creating a buzz in Africa 27
Beginnings of a decisive turning point in the approach to EPAs 28

TRADE
Sugar without a Protocol 30
Testing times for small ACP banana growers 32

ZOOM
A day in the life of Dieudonné Kabongo 34

OUR PLANET
Eritrea: Fossil is missing link in elephant lineage 38
Electronic waste: Private sector involvement in Africa 39

REPORT
Timor-Leste 39
Birth of a nation: An epic effort 40
Post-crisis optimism 43
Timor’s key concern: Preparing for ASEAN membership 45
No Violence Please! Toppling the government by hook or by crook 47
Understanding the Timorese 48
Surviving splendours and curiosities: Discover them before the tourists come 50
Strengthening institutional capabilities and rural development: Responding Quickly to crisis 52

DISCOVERING EUROPE
Slovenia 53
Ljubljana – a gateway to Slovenia’s many assets 53
Wines gaining a global reputation 55
Waking up Ljubljana 57
Slovenian NGOs on world map 58

CREATIVITY
Yambi festival: It’s ‘Congo Nouveau’ Time! 59
WHY AFRICA? The Pigozzi collection 61
Rwanda: Invitation to the Voyage 63

TRADE
Sugar without a Protocol 30
The end of this year is of great significance to relations between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Union. After the wide-ranging and open debates of the European Development Days in November comes the EU – Africa Summit, during which, among other topics, questions related to the energy partnership between the two continents will be discussed.

The special report in this issue of the new Courier series examines from various perspectives the growing attraction of the African continent’s energy resources at a time when the whole world fears for the future of energy supplies, and even for the survival of planet Earth in the centuries, if not the decades, to come. The African continent’s energy resources, both in fossil fuels such as oil or nuclear fuel, and renewable energies, are vast and will contribute to the continent becoming the focus of many and varied interests.

The ACP countries of the Caribbean and the Pacific regions are not to be ignored, although the issue affects them on a smaller scale: Timor-Leste, a small country in Southeast Asia, is the subject of an in-depth Courier report for the first time. Its oil reserves have attracted considerable interest, and in the years to come will probably play a part in Timor-Leste’s cooperation with the European Union, given the EU’s decision to make the fight against climate change and the management of energy resources a priority in its development policy.

Timor-Leste is a country whose recent history has been a rather sad tale. It remains largely unknown. Since gaining independence in 2002, Timor-Leste has rarely been the focus of attention of the world’s press, that is, during the upheavals that left many people displaced but resulted in relatively few deaths. Its assets are remarkable, beginning with its geo-strategic position between Asia’s current and future dominant powers, a relatively healthy, well-managed state sector, no foreign debt, oil, and particularly the management of its reserves, the transparency of which is more often compared to that of Norway than to that of countries where hardship and poverty are frequently in direct and stark contrast with their natural wealth.

Another small country comes under the spotlight in this issue of The Courier. Slovenia, a country on the other side of the cooperation equation, is in a class of its own. It is the first country of the former Yugoslav federation to emerge from the post-Soviet turmoil and upheaval and become a member of the European Union, and the first of the 10 new Member States of 2004 to gain access to the euro-zone. At the beginning of 2008, Slovenia will become the first of these ten to accede to the presidency of the European Union. It will be called upon to guide and set the tone for relations between the European Union and the ACP countries during the crucial period of the implementation of the next five-year tranche of European development financing. But above all, Slovenia will be required to manage the launching of the economic partnership agreements between the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions and the EU, or to oversee the remaining difficulties of the negotiations.

One of our readers has asked whether The Courier is a publication that only covers the success stories of the ACP countries and their co-operation with Europe, in other words, if it is just a good-news magazine. The answer, quite simply, is that The Courier covers both good and bad-news. Timor-Leste, for example, is not yet completely free of its woes; United Nations forces are still stationed there to prevent further trouble. Slovenia, on the other hand, has not yet caught up with the old countries of the European Union.

Nothing is perfect. However, is this a reason to be drawn into exaggerations in the media, as in so many other aspects of life? The Courier refuses “fatal strategies” of exaggeration identified and denounced by Jean Baudrillard, which neglect to present the positive side-by-side with the negative, and lead to destruction through excess where what is sought is truer than true, more real than real, uglier than ugly, what is more sensational than sensational, and mimic, but without the underlying humour, the pithy maxim of the celebrated 19th century actress, Marie Duval: “Je ne suis pas belle, je suis pire” (I am not just beautiful, I am worse than beautiful).*

* Jean Baudrillard “Les stratégies fatales” ED Grasset & Fasquelle 1983

Hegel Goutier
Editor-in-chief
Gertrude Mongella was appointed President of the Pan African Parliament (PAP) at its inauguration in Midrand, South Africa in 2004. She spoke to us about her vision for the fledgling organisation, an organ of the African Union. Twenty-five of its members will meet with an equal number of their European Parliament counterparts prior to the December Africa-EU Summit in Lisbon to the people’s viewpoint.

**On the set-up of the Pan-African Parliament**

Its main goal is to look into conditions in Africa, make recommendations to heads of state on the development of African continent. We have a role to harmonise the laws of Africa. We have achieved a legislative role in this respect and have a responsibility of political and economic integration of the people of Africa.

**Aims and achievements**

We’ve set up the structure of the Parliament comprised of the presidency, bureau members representing the five regions of Africa and 10 committees working on different issues. We’ve developed our strategic plans from 2006-2010 and there will be another strategy in 2010 to give us a sense of direction. A relationship with a number of parliaments of a similar nature on the continent and outside Africa has been established. For example, there is close collaboration with the European Parliament, Latin American Parliament and Indian, German and Japanese Parliaments. We also have very close relationships with our national Parliaments because they are the ones who designate the five members from each country (53 countries are represented) to sit on the PAP. They support our activities and even pay the expenses of some of the members so they can carry out their responsibilities as members of the PAP.

A trust fund has been set up to compliment the regional resources that we get from the African Union because it is also under-funded. We’re therefore looking for friends and partners to contribute to the Fund to enable the Parliament to build its capacity and human, financial and technical resources. We have also carried out a number of activities of great interest to the African continent. Conflict and security is permanently on the agenda, as is discussion about development of Africa in general, and also the NIPAD – the African initiative for development.

**Do Member States pay enough attention to the PAP’s views? This is often the problem with European Parliament resolutions.**

This is definitely a problem. A vote cannot be taken on every resolution you adopt. This is why we have to work out a sort of mobilisation or sensitisation mechanism to make sure that the issues we raise of great concern to everybody cannot be ignored.

**How can the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) and European Parliament support the PAP?**

Part of our strategic plan is to promote the democratic processes in Africa: elections and the rule of law. This can only be done if we do not support parliamentarism in general. They have a role to play in promoting democracy. EU support for Africa should be for good governance, economic development, etc. The PAP is part of that process.

**When last in Brussels, you brought up the complex issue of Zimbabwe. As you know there’s a bone of contention between EU and Africa over Zimbabwe. Is consensus possible?**

Africa cannot deal with the Zimbabwe question just by finding consensus with Europe. The question is whether Africa can work with Zimbabwe to resolve its problem. This is why we have taken initiatives to work with Zimbabweans to find a solution. We think that the involvement of issues where the conflict parties are now engaging in dialogue is to be commended. We should not be hard line. We are all family members. You cannot throw family members overboard simply because they may have gotten drunk or have made a mistake. Zimbabwe is Africa. We are concerned and we must work with them to find a solution. This is what Africa is doing. If the relationship between Africa and Europe is judged by the way Africa loves Zimbabwe, or doesn’t love Zimbabwe, the Brussels meeting will miss the point. We should not destroy the Brussels meeting by bringing in issues that can be better dealt with on the continent.

**What is PAP’s request for financial support from the EU?**

We have asked for EU financial assistance. The EU’s support for Africa should have a broad base. You cannot support democracy if you do not support parliamentary institutions. They have a role in this respect and have a responsibility of political and economic integration of the people of Africa.

**From the outset, we have taken this issue very seriously. At the beginning of this Parliament, the first thing that we tackled was Darfur. We sent a mission there and have drawn up a report on the Darfur conflict. We gave some recommendations on how to solve some of the internal problems of Darfur. We are fully engaged in looking at the situation and the real causes of the problems in Darfur. What next after the fighting has stopped? There is spillover into Chad and the Central African Republic. We eventually intend to send another mission to the conflict areas.**

**What is the PAP’s role in resolving the conflict in Darfur?**

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**PACIFIC FIRSTS**

Thirteen Pacific Island Forum (PIF) nations will together receive €276 million in assistance under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), a 20% increase over the previous ninth EDF. Funds will be spent on specific policy areas contained in strategy papers, jointly drawn up with individual Forum countries and signed with the EU during the PIF Ministerial meeting in Nuku’alofa, Tonga on 19 October. The region is the first to put its signature to the 10th EDF spending programmes due to come on stream 1 January 2008. Beneficiary countries are: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Pen is also being put to paper on strategies for the other two PIF members; East Timor and Fiji which is normalising relations with the EU following a military coup in December 2006.

Sustainable management of natural resources by such as renewable energy development is priorities for 11 PIF countries, said EU Development Commissioner, Louis Michel, while in Tonga. Another focus is strengthening good governance. PIF nations, including good governance-related projects in their country strategy paper, receive a 25% top in their respective spending allocations. “My main aim with you is not to focus exclusively on what may be wrong. You will not catch me moralising you. What I am interested in is supporting what is or what has the potential to become good,” added Louis Michel. Ownership and efficiency of spending are high priorities with direct support to national budgets, the preferred means of disbursing funds. Vanuatu is already following this path, with Samoa expected to follow too.

The Pacific Island Forum countries are also expected to benefit from a €95 million Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) to promote regional integration and facilitate implementation of a European Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the region. It adds up to a tripling of the regional package over the ninth EDF.

> ‘Stepping Stone’ trade accord

Sides are yet to reach agreement on a fully-fledged EPA with a so-called ‘stepping stone’ agreement in the offing until there is further progress in the free trade talks. The “EPA is intended to support your own integration agenda and provides you with a bridge to integrating gradually into the world economy,” EU Director General for Development, Stefano Mансерви, told Ministers in Tonga.

The advantage of having an Interim Agreement is that it would enable us to bridge the gap to this ideal situation whilst securing for you those fruits which can be reaped now such as the EU’s market offer and Pacific-specific fisheries rules of origin,” he added.

In October in Brussels, Pacific and EU Ministers agreed on a comprehensive EPA which by 31 December 2008 will also include trade-related rules and services. The EU’s goods offer is for duty-free, tariff free access for all imports from the Pacific except for sugar and bananas. Another first at the Pacific Forum was the move towards an enhanced political dialogue between the two regions, which will include regular EU-Pacific high level meetings to discuss issues such as regional security, good governance, economic stability and growth, international trade, development cooperation and all other topics in common.

**STRENGTHENING CONTROLS ON TIMBER IMPORTS**

The European Commission should consider strengthening current measures to ensure that timber imported into the EU is not the result of illegal logging. This is the conclusion drawn from public consultations by the Commission between December 2006 and March 2007. These consultations examined the need to support the policy currently pursued by the EU on voluntary partnership agreements with certain exporting countries agreements known by the English acronym FLEGT*. Most of those involved in these discussions, including the private sector, believe that the bilateral negotiations carried out by the EU in the framework of the FLEGT will not be enough to guarantee the legality of timber entering EU territory. And indeed, a majority – although a narrow majority in the case of industry – believe that it is not too premature to be considering additional measures. Opinions vary as to what measures, with a third of the private sector (unlike the NGOs) believing that the voluntary agreements they have concluded will be enough to resolve much of the problem. As to a ban on the imports of illegal timber, responses are more mixed, although most participants are in favour of legislation that would guarantee only legally logged timber to be sold in Europe.

Now, these various options must be evaluated on their overall impact by the Finnish company Indufor and the Commission, which must submit its formal evaluation of the situation by March 2008. *(The EU’s Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) in the EU’s action plan to clamp down on illegal logging and illegally traded timber. Implemented from May 2003, it links good governance with legal trade instruments.)*

**THE LJUBLJANA 12**

The Slovenian Presidency is to host a meeting of first-time contributors to the European Development Fund (EDF) in February 2008. All of the EU’s 12 newest Member States will be party to the €22.682 billion (2008–2013) 10th edition of the European Development Fund (EDF from 1 January 2008, along with the 15 other long-time EU members). Individual contributions of all 27 EU Member States to the EDF are largely decided by a key based on a percentage of their national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, respectively, are the biggest contributors in monetary terms. The Fund is for EU projects in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) nations and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs). Since the EDF comes straight from the pockets of EU Member States, they each have a say on the approval of how the money is spent in ACP/OCT states. The Ljubljana meeting will be an opportunity to explain to the public in the newcomer states what EDF monies are for, and also look at how some of their own companies may benefit from future tenders under the Fund.

Few of the 12 have a legacy of projects in ACP States; many over the past years have focused assistance on their neighbours in South-East Europe. Trade flows between the EU newcomers and ACP States are also low.

A councillor at Slovenia’s delegation to the EU in Brussels confirmed that implementation of the European Partnership Agreements (EPAs) also due to come on stream from 1 January 2008, and the eradication of poverty in Africa were both high on the agenda for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, January–June 2008.

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE EU’S NEWEST MEMBER STATES TO THE 10TH EDF**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>% CONTRIBUTION KEY OF TOTAL FUND</th>
<th>MILLIONS OF EUROS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
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<td>Czech Republic</td>
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<td>Estonia</td>
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<td>Cyprus</td>
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<td>Slovakia</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Estimated contribution</em></td>
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</table>

**EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT DAYS**

*Climate change and development*

European Development Days in Lisbon, 6–9 November, gathered European and ACP officials, representatives from many development agencies from Europe, the UN, civil society, the business sector, media, individual experts and scientists to focus on climate change and development. A full report on this event will appear the fourth issue of The Courier.

[Image credits: © European Commission]

© South Pacific Tourism organisation
ENERGY:
Potential for major development in Africa

The explosion in petrol prices and the increasing tension in the Near East in recent years have redefined Africa’s status as an energy partner for Europe. According to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2007, at the end of 2006 Africa accounted for 12.1% of the world’s reserves. But from Europe’s perspective, the importance of Africa is even greater. In 2005, around 20% of EU-25 imports came from Africa – with the figure reaching 16% for natural gas mainly coming from Libya, Nigeria, and Algeria. Africa, and in particular the Gulf of Guinea, holds two main attractions for Europe – geographical proximity and a means of diversifying energy supplies to be less reliant on its two main sources, Russia and the Persian Gulf. These factors have been taken into account by Europe’s military and help explain why NATO manoeuvres took place for the first time in sub-Saharan in Cape Verde Africa in June 2006. This operation involved a simulation of military intervention in an imaginary sovereign state rich in natural resources.

The hunt for ‘marginal’ deposits
Exploration budgets are soaring. ExxonMobil (15% of whose global production comes from Africa) unveiled plans in 2005 to invest $5.5 billion up to 2015. According to company vice-president, Kevin Riddle, estimated total growth in demand for petrol is 2% a year until 2020, while at the same time reserves will diminish by 4% every year. For rival Shell, 20% of production comes from Africa. It also believes this percentage is set to increase. However, Africa has always been under-explored and recent increas...
The prospect of global petrol reserves running dry has led to a re-evaluation of the total value of Africa’s reserves, and there are various conflicting schools of thought on this. Among the pessimists are supporters of Shell geophysicist Manion King Hubbert, who developed a mathematical model in 1956 that plotted a curve based on estimated reserves and petrol output. Hubbert’s analysis is based on the idea that production for which the world’s resources would decline forever. His prediction was 1970. Today, Hubbert’s supporters are more concerned than ever, as he predicted for the decline of America’s domestic production after 1970 have been proven. However, BP’s chief economist, Peter Davies, believes that poor data collection is the primary reason for this.

The Table shows production and reserves at the end of 2006 (in million of barrels):

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<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congo-Brazzaville</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
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<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
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<td>Nigeria</td>
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<td>1.36</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
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<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other African countries</td>
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Total for Africa 9.99 12.1% 117.2 9.7%


> Increasingly precious reserves: the peak theory

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> Multiplier effect

The request has been granted, at least in part. Last June the world’s eight most industrialised countries met in Germany where they approved a series of initiatives proposed by the World Bank to reduce the impact of greenhouse gases on climate.

They include the creation of ‘a forest carbon’ partnership designed to avoid deforestation, which experts believe is responsible for 20% of greenhouse gas emissions.

This partnership consists of a series of pilot projects implemented initially in a number of key countries such as the DRC, Brazil and Indonesia. Minister Pembe believes that the DRC could receive around US$6 billion a year, a considerable sum when one considers that the country’s total budget is unlikely to exceed US$2 billion in 2007. However, these projects will not be included in the market mechanisms (including the CO2 exchange) provided for in the Kyoto Protocol until 2012 and the start of the protocol’s second phase where the greatest uncertainty remains. Forests saved by carbon markets? Some experts doubt it. Jutta Kell of the FERN ecological research organisation With an initial allocation of €87 million, this fund will have a multiplier effect. According to EIB President Philippe Maystadt, it should enable the Bank to grant over €400 million in loans for projects in the fields of energy, water, telecommunications, transport and information technologies. The objective is to facilitate the economic integration of the continent. The first two projects to be launched will be the Felois Dam, which, when completed, will supply Mali, Mauritania and Senegal with power and the construction of a submarine fibre optic cable running around the entire East African coast from south to north. Branches will also serve Madagascar and landlocked countries. In the energy sector, the EIB is also planning to fund two interconnections in Southern Africa: Zambia-Namibia via the Caprivi Strip and Malawi-Mozambique. Additionally, a loan of €100 million for the construction of a 250-megawatt Dam on the White Nile in Uganda is being studied. The EIB is also planning to provide €70 million to fund the construction of the Ghanaian section of the East African gas pipeline between Nigeria and Togo. Also, in the longer term, the Bank is considering the option of participating in the rehabilitation of the Inga Dam in the Democratic Republic of Congo jointly with the World Bank and the African Development Bank – a NEPAD flagship project. Renewable energy sources should also receive support from the Bank, which decided in December to finance a wind power generation plant with a capacity of 9.4 megawatts in Barbados. Moreover, a ceiling on loans by the EIB to South Africa has been raised from €825 to €900 million. The emphasis will be on improving access to water and electricity for people living in rural areas and townships. But why borrow from the EIB if China is prepared to lend with no environmental or social strings attached and without a detailed technical analysis of the projects? Maystadt acknowledges the problem, and, like European Commissioner for Development Louis Michel, he intends to expand the dialogue with Chinese financial institutions like Eximbank and African governments about investment conditions in Africa.

http://www.eib.org
Uranium prices have soared in the past two years, creating a proscribing boom in Africa where a growing number of countries are at the threshold of entering the nuclear industry. In less than two years (between December 2005 and October 2007) the price of uranium nearly quadrupled, from US$20 to $75 a pound, reaching a peak of US$135 dollars in July 2007. According to market analyst David Miller’s forecast, prices could double yet again. There is considerable tension in the market due to the unexpected increases in demand and also the fear of exhausting uranium supplies between 2015 and 2040, as predicted by the most pessimistic of the economic forecasters. However, this view is contested by Robert Vance, an analyst with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), who believes that, “Today there is sufficient uranium to produce electricity for 270 years, especially as the new fourth generation rapid reactors will consume 50 times less uranium than at present.” However, Vance’s comments do take into account that demand is set to rise dramatically. Over the next five years 31 nuclear plants will be built or modernised worldwide and by 2020 China alone plans to invest US$8 billion in building 27 plants, with India constructing a further 17 by 2012.

There is also demand from Africa. In South Africa, where there are fears of an electricity generation shortfall of some 10,000 megawatts by 2020, the national electricity company Eskom is planning to build a fourth generation reactor (likely in Koehberg), plus additional projects with a total capacity of over 4,000 megawatts. This is in addition to its two existing reactors (out of 442 worldwide), which are the only reactors currently operational in Africa, with the exception of several small research reactors.

> Nuclear programmes in Africa

Other African countries are also emerging as future clients for uranium. In July 2007 French President Nicholas Sarkozy and Libyan leader Muammar Khadaﬁ signed a protocol agreement to supply Libya with a reactor for civilian use. This agreement was facilitated by Libya’s pledge to drop any plans to acquire weapons of mass destruction and to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The previous year France had also signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with Tunisia, which is considering the construction of a 600 megawatt reactor.

Last April, Ghana (which like Nigeria has had a small research reactor supplied by China since 1994) signed a cooperation agreement with Egypt in 2006 and announced it also planned to embark on nuclear energy production. Elsewhere, Russia has already supplied Libya with a 10-megawatt reactor and is now carrying out prospective studies in Algeria with a view to starting up nuclear production there. It is also conducting feasibility studies to build a reactor in Morocco at Sidi Bouiba, which could be operational by 2016. Namibia, Africa’s number one uranium producer, is now considering using this resource to generate electricity. However, apart from South Africa, it is perhaps Nigeria that has the most ambitious plans with negotiations already in progress with the IAEA to develop a nuclear production capacity of 4,000 megawatts by 2025.

This favourable climate is fueling a ‘uranium gold rush’ across the African continent where in 2006, according to the Paris Energy Observatory, four countries possessed almost 20% of proven world uranium resources: Niger (6.8%), South Africa (6.7%), Namibia (5.7%) and Algeria (0.7%). In Namibia, where production reached 3,200 tonnes in 2005, the Australian ﬁrm Paladin Resources plans to produce an additional 1,200 tonnes from the Heinrich mine in the Namib Desert. This despite protests by environmental groups who fear that mining this radioactive mineral will threaten the ecology of the Naukluft National Park.

Niger, Africa’s second producer (3,093 tonnes), which on its own accounts for 13.5% of EU imports, skillfully played off rival mining groups this summer to impose a 46% increase in the price of the uranium. It sold this to the world’s number one, the French company Areva, until then its sole customer. But the days are numbered for this monopoly. In 2006, the China Nation Nuclear Corporation acquired two concessions and three Australian ﬁrms recently obtained research permits.

The prospecting rush concerns at least 10 countries. Landmark Minerals (Canada) is interested in Hoggar, Algeria while another Canadian company, Pan African Mining, is prospecting in Madagascar. Australian ﬁrms are particularly enterprising with Paladin Resources negotiating a permit in Malawi, while in Tanzania at least ﬁve Australian companies have obtained concessions. There is also uranium prospecting in Zambia and Mauritania, while the South Korean Institute for Geoscience and Mineral Resources has plans to begin prospecting in Nigeria. In Uganda, the African Development Bank, the Nordic Fund and the World Bank are ﬁnancing an airborne geophysical exploration initiative. Finally, the British ﬁrm Brinkley Africa has just signed an agreement with the DRC’s General Commissariat for Atomic Energy to assist in monitoring exports of Congolese radioactive materials and substances. The aim is to combat trafficking and any danger of proliferation for military and terrorist ends which, as The Economist reported, have increased with the spread of civilian nuclear technology. The involvement of African countries in the nuclear industry also brings new challenges, not least in ﬁnancing the high cost of reactors that run into billions of dollars, as well as that of managing waste and providing proper security. There is also the question of their long-term proﬁtability and already opponents of the civilian nuclear industry are arguing that by 2040 it will be cheaper to produce electricity from renewable resources. That said, and whether or not African countries fully embrace the nuclear industry, the continent is already strategically positioned on the world hydrocarbon market and it appears it is even more strategically placed when it comes to uranium exploitation and its ultimate use.

F.M.
HYDROELECTRICITY: An enormous yet underused resource

The future of the African continent is dependant to a large extent on its ability to harness its source of renewable energy – hydropower. And the focus falls principally on the future potential of the main river systems.

It must be wonderful to work in the hydro-electric business in Africa. Consider this: on its own, the Inga power station – situated on the river Congo between Kinshasa and the Atlantic – has an estimated potential output of between 39,000 and 44,000 megawatts. That is more than twice the power produced by the Three Gorges Dam in China, which is the biggest in the world. However, only a minuscule proportion of the Inga Power station’s output is being used (just 1,774 megawatts) and less than half of the site is operational. Now, repair work is under way thanks to funding from the World Bank. Inga is the stuff of engineer’s dreams. Electricité de France and Lahmeyer International carried out a pre-feasibility study in 1990 – thanks to funding from the African Development Bank – on the construction of a third (Inga III) and a fourth (Grand Inga) power station, as well as a 5,300 kilometre energy superhighway linked to the Awajun Dam in Egypt. Even then – almost two decades ago – the cost of the projects was estimated at US$29 billion.

But with the return of peace to the region hopes have been raised that a smaller-scale, but nevertheless significant – project could be feasible. This would involve the construction of Inga III (5,500 megawatts) and the Western Corridor, a second energy highway that would link Inga with South Africa, via Angola and Namibia and provide a connection with Botswana. A third axis in the pipeline would provide a supply connection between Inga and Calabar in Nigeria (2,100 megawatts). This is one of the flagship projects of the New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).

There is certainly massive need and consequent demand. For unless new electricity generation infrastructure is operational by 2012 the whole of southern Africa will face significant shortages. Additionally, there is significant demand from the mining industry, with two major projects: Billiton’s aluminium factory in Botswana, costing US$2.5 billion; and CVRD’s steel plant in Soyo, Angola that require a total capacity of 1,800 megawatts. That, of course, is more than the Inga I and Inga II power stations produce today.

After the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – whose total hydro-electric potential is estimated at some 100,000 megawatts – Africa’s next most significant hydroelectric source is found in the mountainous plateaus of Ethiopia where the Blue Nile rises. Here too, hydroelectric potential has hardly been tapped. Actual output is currently less than 1,000 megawatts although the country’s potential capacity is estimated at around 40,000 megawatts. However, rapid development is expected in the future and production capacity is set to double within two years when the Takeze (300 megawatts), Anabeshe (460 megawatts) and Gibe II (420 megawatts) dams become operational. Adding to this capacity another Dam, the Halale Werasa (367 megawatts), will come on stream in 2011.

The European Investment Bank has been approached to provide funding for the electromechanical part of the biggest project in the region, the Gibe III (3,870 megawatts) power station, costing an estimated US$3.2 billion. Already a contract for the engineering of the project has been signed between the Ethiopian Electric Power Company and the Italian company Salini Construttori. The aim of this projects is not just to satisfy internal demand, but to export electricity to the surrounding region (Djibouti, Kenya, Sudan and Yemen).

The current economic climate favours these types of projects, as a previous reluctance by both Sudan and Egypt towards any Dam upstream of the Nile is now fading away. Most encouragingly, a tripartite joint venture, the Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office – whose legal advisor is the former Secretary General of the ACP Group, Ghebray Berhane – recently established a common framework for the management of projects on the river. As one of the last great frontiers, Africa offers great opportunities and challenges for electricity-industry professionals from all over the world and emerging countries are taking advantage of this.

Currently, China is in negotiations with the government of Guinea over the possibility of constructing the Souapiti Dam (600 megawatts) on the river Konkouré in exchange for valuable supplies of bauxite. The Zambéze is yet another strategic river system, with the potential of generating 12,000 megawatts on the Mozambique stretch of its course alone. Indeed, in Mozambique, where Portugal has just handed back ownership of the Cahora Bassa Dam (2,075 megawatts), Energy Minister, Salvador Namburete, anticipates the construction downstream of a second major project by 2015. This is the Mepanda Uncua Dam (1,300 megawatts) to be built at an estimated cost of US$1.3 billion, to be followed by a second 850 megawatt power station to the north of Cahora Bassa. The final financing of these projects has not yet been concluded, but considering the requirements of South Africa and a rapidly growing domestic market, the Compagnie Electridade de Mozambique (Mozambique Electricity Company) is not too concerned about the outcome.

Angola – with the basins of the Kwango (6,000 megawatts) and Quene (3,000 megawatts) river systems – is another unexploited source in a region where demand is set to rise, with growth in gross domestic product reaching around 30% towards the end of 2007. Other significant projects are also set to get underway soon. In April the World Bank gave the go-ahead for the funding of US$360 million for the Bui-Jalgi Dam on the White Nile, while the African Development Bank has provided US$110 million in additional financing for the project. However, the drop in the water level upstream in Lake Victoria, which could reduce the installation’s anticipated power output from 250 megawatts to a final 175 megawatts, needs to be taken into account. In Nigeria, the World Bank also intends to contribute towards the repair of the Kainji (760 megawatts) and Jebba (540 megawatts) dams on the river Niger. The implementation of projects like these does not always have unanimous support. For example, the Mozambique authorities face a difficult task in persuading environmentalists of the validity of constructing the Mepanda Uncua Dam. The project’s opponents say it will displace 2,000 people, most of whom are farmers. They also argue that the Dam will retain sediment and silt with adverse downstream consequences for the mangroves of the Zambéze delta. At the same time, everyone recognises that to develop economically, Mozambique needs to increase its capacity for energy production.

And that need for economic development includes the future of small and medium-sized enterprises. For example, in Bukavu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the joiners, tailors and TV repairmen of the Katutu district would all be out of a job or forced to pay an exorbitant price for electricity if the power supply of the Ruzizi Dam was interrupted. Day-to-day realities like these point to the fact that when it comes to the power of water – the situation across Africa is without question much more complex than at first glance.

F.M.
Renewable energy production could save Africa from poverty. This at least is the belief of a growing number of African states, beginning with the non-oil-producing countries. However, the main obstacle to the development of solar, wind, geothermal or biomass energy (see separate article on major hydroelectricity projects) remains at a relatively high cost although, with oil prices that could reach the US$100 a barrel mark in the future, they are becoming increasingly attractive. Today, investment in alternative energy projects is receiving a great deal of support, starting with financing by the European Investment Bank and the new risk capital fund proposed by the European Commission, which has allocated an initial budget of €100 million. Additionally, there is the ACP-EU Energy Facility with a budget of €220 million (see article on these funds in The Courier n. 1).

> The world’s least electrified continent

According to the International Energy Agency (IAE) just 23% of the sub-Saharan population has access to electricity. Rural areas are the most poorly served, with just 8% of the inhabitants having mains electricity and often having to pay high prices to produce electricity from generators or solar panels. Renewable energies, especially stand-alone facilities like solar and wind power, could make up a large part of this deficit. Despite their vast potential at present they represent less than 1% of the electricity generated commercially. According to the OECD, just 7% of hydro-capacity and less than 1% of geothermal capacity is currently exploited. What is more, in countries such as Nigeria and the Congo as much as 40% of electricity is estimated to be ‘lost’ during transport, compared with the global average of just 10%. Worse still, the share of renewable energy remains low compared with world production levels (excluding major hydroelectric projects) even if it is growing at a faster rate than that of total consumption.

> Unpredictable winds

Although parts of Africa lie within the equatorial belt, where the wind is often not as strong as in Europe or North America, Africa’s wind power potential is far from negligible. This is especially true of the countries furthest from the equator – South Africa and those lying along the southern shores of the Mediterranean. In Central Africa, the preference has been for projects on a small scale. And the sector is growing fast when you consider that in 2002 Africa’s wind power capacity was still very low at around 150 megawatts (or 0.5% of the global installed capacity), but this year the total installed capacity was almost 1,000 megawatts. Currently the most important projects are in Morocco and Namibia, followed by Egypt, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and South Africa. An example of this is the Zafarana Wind Park on the banks of the Red Sea in Egypt, an area known for its strong winds, which produces 160 megawatts and supplies a total of 340,000 homes with electricity.

> Geothermal resources in the Rift Valley

The exploitation of geothermal resources is particularly promising in the ‘natural fault’ of the Rift Valley. However, at present strategically placed countries like Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania are not exploiting this resource, with only Kenya having a development project. For this, Kenya is receiving assistance from both the EU and Germany to construct Africa’s biggest geothermal plant that will supply 10% of the country’s electricity. And this output is set to double in the coming years.

> The attraction of biofuels for the forests

Although biofuels are attracting growing criticism due to their greater impact on climate change than at first thought, for many African countries they remain a major alternative to oil. Many African countries see biofuels as providing more jobs in agriculture, the dominant sector of their economies. Indeed, the World Bank estimates that biofuels require 100 times more labour per unit of energy produced than fossil fuels. For example, in Brazil the bioethanol industry is believed to provide more than half a million direct jobs. In addition to South Africa, Senegal was one of the first African countries to show an interest in biofuels, even nurturing an ambition of being the launch pad for biofuels in Africa. This was reaffirmed in Brasilia in May by Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade at the signing of a series of agreements with Brazil. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva took this opportunity to stress the “major progress” his country had made in biofuel production, adding, “under Senegal’s leadership, we want to extend this initiative to Africa’s other non-oil producing countries.” The members of this group are known collectively as ‘Green OPEC’.

Because of this focus on biofuels, plants previously thought to have limited uses are now seen as offering new opportunities. This is true of tabanani, or juntopha – almost 188 hectares of which were recently planted in Senegal. The eventual aim is to cover more than 5,000 hectares with this flowering shrub originating in Brazil and whose seeds yield an oil previously used only in traditional medicine and livestock feed. Yet it is South Africa that remains the driving force in biofuels. Maize, sugarcane and other plants play a part in helping South Africa to reach a target of 10% of its petrol and diesel needs from biofuels by 2010. The figures speak for themselves. In 2005 the country produced about 110 million gallons of biofuel, making it the world’s seventh biggest producer – although this is still far behind Brazil’s 4 billion gallons and the United States’ 3.5 billion gallons. Production elsewhere in the ACP countries is on the rise, although on a different scale featuring on the list from the world’s principal biofuel producers: Mauritius (26 million gallons), Zimbabwe (6 million) and Kenya and Swaziland with 3 million gallons each. Other countries are also committed to embarking on biofuel production, such as Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Senegal.
It all began at the European Council of 8–9 March 2007 when the heads of state and government of the EU-27 adopted a global action plan in the energy field for the 2007-2009 period, including provisions to set up a specific dialogue on energy with the countries of Africa. Subsequently, in mid-May, Europe’s foreign ministers proposed that this energy partnership should be the subject of a formal agreement at the EU-Africa Summit. In their conclusions, ministers detailed EU plans to create a long-term global framework for dialogue drawn up with the African Union in cooperation with the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and the Forum of Energy Ministers in Africa (FEMA). For this, the European ministers recommended that a high-level EU-Africa meeting on energy should be held every two years. Among the objectives is improving access in Africa to safe, reliable, affordable, diverse, climate-friendly and sustainable energy services in cooperation with the World Bank. The partnership also seeks to ensure that the sector contributes to the Millennium Development Goals and to increasing energy supply security for Europe and a safe market for Africa. The strategic importance of Africa as a supplier of hydrocarbons – with potential production of 50 million tonnes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) a year (or 30% of the world’s total) – is also stressed by Dutch MP Jos Van Gennip, author of a report published in 2006 by the Parliamentary Assembly on this issue. However, the ministers go on to say that to achieve these objectives there must be increased investment in Africa’s infrastructures while at the same time promoting renewable energies and energy efficiency. The Council notes that Africa has a vast potential in terms of fossil fuels and renewable energies, but that many remain largely unexploited – principally biofuels, hydroelectric power, geothermal power and solar or wind power.

ENERGY PARTNERSHIP
on the agenda at the EU–Africa Summit

With growing energy interdependency between Africa and Europe, a partnership in this sector is to be formally established at the December EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon. Consequently, the Council advocates increased support for the African energy sector through bilateral cooperation and the assistance of the European Development Fund. It stresses the need to implement the partnership between Europe and Africa in the field of infrastructure with an allocation of €5.6 billion for the 2008–2013 period as well as by reviving the ACP-EU energy facility (€250 million).

But the EU also plans to focus the dialogue on the energy policies of the African countries themselves and the use of oil and gas revenues for development purposes. The Commission and Member States have been asked to assist African partners in increasing the flow of revenue from extractive industries directly to economic and social projects. The ministers have proposed to create solidarity funds for the oil sector that energy users and private investors would pay into as well as stabilisation funds financed with capital originating in the exploitation of energy resources that would be destined for future generations.

With these initiatives, the EU plans to improve the transparency of finance originating in the exploitation of natural resources as an essential precondition for creating an improved business climate. It plans to assist African governments in strengthening transparency in decision-making and negotiations with partner countries.

The EU will, for example, promote implementation of the Initiative on Transparency in Extractive Industries (ITEI) and encourage European multinationals to conform to its standards. At the same time it will encourage European banks to implement the standards of the World Bank Group’s International Finance Corporation in the transparency of payments and contracts in this sector.

Learning the lesson from the growing presence of emerging players in Africa – as confirmed by the annual meeting of the African Development Bank in Shanghai in May – the EU proposes that “new donors and investors” should be included in the dialogue. This follows statements made at the beginning of the year by Development Commissioner Louis Michel and European Investment Bank (EIB) President Philippe Maystadt of their intention to discuss these issues with the Chinese.

The partnership should also put into place a more favourable regulatory framework for the energy industries in Africa. This is the reason for the offer of support for African efforts to create a legal, regulatory and fiscal framework designed to attract investors and venture capital. These measures must be implemented with the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), set to be signed at the end of 2007 with the six ACP regions. The partnership also includes measures that take into account climate change by supporting the abilities of African countries to adapt to these changes. For example, by limiting greenhouse gas emissions – specifically those arising from deforestation – by making a more efficient use of the biomass. On this, Louis Michel proposed in September that EU Member States should create an alliance to help developing countries adapt and prepare for climate change. The Commission has also put forward an initial sum of €100 million for the 2008–2010 period not including additional contributions that individual EU Member States could provide. In practice, the EU plans go toward supporting efforts to reduce gas flaring during the oil production.

The political signal given by the EU–27 should encourage cooperation between the European Development Fund and the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership. Managed by the EIB, this group makes loans and venture capital available to major industrial infrastructure projects and has a budget of €8.7 billion for the 2007–2013 period. Major projects such as the Trans-Saharan Nigeria–Algeria gas pipeline are planned to meet integration expectations on the African continent and provide supply security for Europe.

In this way the resources of the bilateral banks and agencies combine with the resources of the EIB for the ACP countries (€3.7 billion for the 2008–2013 period) to set and meet goals that bring benefit to both Africa and the EU.

F.M.
A Watershed in Relations between Two Continents

EU-Africa Summit

According to its organisers, the EU-Africa Summit on 8 and 9 December in Lisbon will mark a turning point in relations between the two continents. A roadmap will be drawn up at the Summit to jointly tackle a series of global challenges.

The Lisbon Summit is the second of its kind following the Cairo Summit in 2000 where willingness was shown to extend cooperation between the two continents in the fields of economics, the fight against crime and defence. However, several things have changed in the seven years for both partners. The number of EU Member States has almost doubled while the Organisation of African Unity has been transformed into the African Union and has incorporated the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). A European preparatory paper indicates that progress has been made in the democratisation process on both continents.

These developments have made the 2007 Summit a matter of urgency, particularly as the previous summit, scheduled for 2003, did not take place because of a disagreement between the Africans and Europeans over the participation of Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe. While the Europeans, led by the British, pointed to human rights violations and crimes against the state to justify their position, the Africans argued that each party should have sovereign power to decide who represented it.

> “Nothing can stop this summit from going ahead”, says Louis Michel

Four years on and positions on Zimbabwe remain different. However, both sides want to ensure this delicate issue does not prevent the Summit from going ahead. While British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, and other European leaders have made it clear they may reconsider their participation if the Zimbabwean President attends, confidence is high in diplomatic circles that the Summit will take place whatever the level of representation from certain delegations. This backs up the view expressed at the end of September by Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, that nothing can stop this Summit from going ahead. It has been much anticipated for four years, particularly in view of the recent summit between Africa and China. While the prospect of huge Chinese investment may seem attractive in the short-term to states struggling financially, a long-term approach is needed which looks beyond the exploitation of natural resources.

According to a diplomat involved in the preparation of the Summit, the relationship with the EU may be more demanding in the short-term, but ultimately it promises to deliver much more.

Luís Amado, the Foreign Affairs Minister for Portugal – the Member State currently holding the EU Presidency – said in October that it would be a huge strategic mistake to let the relationship between two such important continental organisations break down because of a disagreement over Zimbabwe.

Political pressure is being exerted from all sides. At the Council of the EU, it was pointed out that Latin America also held a summit with Africa in 2006 and it is therefore time for Africa’s leaders to meet with their counterparts from Europe – Africa’s most important partner in all areas. The need for such a meeting has become even more pressing as positions have changed dramatically since the Cairo Summit. The Europeans are now much more aware that the EU has strategic interests in Africa, particularly in the energy sector.

> Working together

Key challenges, such as the Millennium Development Goals, migration and terrorism, must be tackled together with Africa and in Africa. In other words, the Lisbon Summit will provide clear acknowledgement of the fact that while Africa needs Europe, Europe needs Africa too. A European diplomat said that the aid-beneficiary relationship has become much more solid interaction in a range of areas (for example, peace and security, governance, trade, migration, climate change and energy).

All of these areas are covered by two documents that will be adopted at the Summit – the Common Strategy and the Action Plan – which aim to build on the Strategy for Africa approved by the EU in December 2005 with the participation of the African side. They will set out a roadmap for a new partnership which will take account of the diversification and extension of cooperation between the two continents.

The Summit’s main objectives include the strengthening of the partnership with regard to the Common Strategy. The main aim of this is to promote peace and security by supporting African peacekeeping forces, particularly the African Standby Force. It is also concerned with sustainable development, human rights, continental integration, the improvement of the management of public affairs by supporting reforms (based on the African Peer Review Mechanism) and also the fight against illegal trafficking in natural resources.

The strategy also deals with key development issues such as increasing the level of aid and improving the coherence of policies in this area. It should also provide the means to ensure that migration contributes towards sustainable development on both continents. Environmental issues and food safety are also a key part of this new partnership.

The third priority is to jointly tackle global challenges such as breaches of human rights, health, environmental and energy issues, information technology, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Another key challenge is the integration of Africa into the global economy and to improve its competitiveness by means of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the four African sub-Saharan regions. The Lisbon Summit will also be a test of the political will of both sides with respect to the level of financial commitment to which they are prepared to agree.

Finally, the Common Strategy aims to extend the partnership to players outside of the state, such as private companies, unions, civil society organisations and parliaments. The Lisbon Summit will be accompanied by a series of parallel events connected to the main event, which is the summit of the heads of state and government. These parallel events include a meeting of Pan-African and European parliaments, meetings between members of civil society, a youth summit and an Africa Finance Investment Forum to look at business opportunities in Africa (www.emrc.be). As The Courier was going to press, diplomats’ only fear was that difficulties in negotiations on the EPAs could throw a shadow over the Summit.

F.M.
Rafael Diaz, owner of the company Green Sun, was working with a chemist in his small manufacturing firm operating from the back room of his home, which backs on to a peristyle and an old storehouse. We are in the rather chic suburbs of Santo Domingo. He has just sat down when a customer arrives to fill up. In addition to his residence and his factory, his house is also a service station. His chemist doubles as the pump attendant. The manual pump is started up. The large 4WD fills up. Its owner is clearly delighted to be driving a vehicle whose exhaust emits clean fumes. The demonstration speaks for itself. Rafael Diaz joins in the performance by holding his hand for a full minute behind the exhaust pipe. Clean as a whistle.

The customer leaves after having given a testiment that Green Sun could use as an advertising slogan: “I have been using this fuel for a month. The engine runs smoother, there is less pollution and it uses less fuel. In terms of cost and quality, it really makes sense. Nothing had to be changed in the engine; I just switched from one fuel to the other”. Rafael Diaz sits down and tells the story of Green Sun, and his own story.

### Price of the fuel

We sell by linking the price of the biodiesel to that of diesel. At present, we charge 85 pesos per gallon compared with 95 for conventional diesel. Ninety percent of our customers are businesses, mainly distribution companies.

### Outlook

Businesses are developing fast now in the Dominican Republic. I hope that we will soon be able to benefit from that. It is not difficult to find customers. Also, the state has been running a positive education campaign. If we could produce more, we could sell all our production. But my project is only in its first phase. Economically, we are starting to have continuous production and sales. This will enable us to increase our production capacity.

During the first two years we were devoted to market research, setting up the company and making contacts with government bodies. We are now stepping up production. Green Sun’s target is to produce 5,000 gallons per day, with recently developed technology from Europe and the USA. Our product will be able to be certified ‘Dominican biodiesel’ on the market and have a good competitive position.

### Support

We obtained a credit line of €150,000 from the European Investment Bank, but the principle is €1 invested for €1 borrowed. We could not use it, as we did not have the US$150,000 to invest. And the company’s success so far cannot be used as collateral.

### Ecological benefits

Ecologically it’s important. Our country lives from tourism. Less pollution keeps the rivers, sea and air cleaner. We have signed the Kyoto Agreement, which represents an ecological compromise. Moreover, the country can receive ‘green vouchers’ for every ton of CO2 it cuts.

EU – Africa – China, a new triangular relationship?

China, and its capital, is making an unprecedented impact in Africa. The European Union, as the continent’s leading partner, has decided cooperation is a safer response than confrontation.

That Europe finds it is better to be friends than foes has been underscored by a host of recent initiatives that began with a key event the European Commission held in June, where representatives from Europe, Africa and China came together under the same roof for the first time. This gathering was to set the stage for discussions during the EU-China Summit in Beijing, 27 November and the EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon, 7–9 December.

Brussels was the venue for a 28 June Commission-sponsored get-together where more than 180 experts were asked to consider the key question: were the EU, Africa and China able to cooperate as partners? To answer this, political, industrial, scientific and diplomatic experts from Europe, Africa and Asia were tasked with exploring opportunities for Sino-European cooperation against a backdrop of the African continent. “Triangular” cooperation may have been the watchword, but the aim, in the final analysis, was to avert a clash between Africa’s leading trading partner and investor and a nation that has become the continent’s third largest trading partner in the period of just three years. As Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development, stated in his opening speech to the conference, “we are competitors, but we are also partners and Africa should benefit rather than suffer from our presence”.

### Thriving trade

That said, the main concern of the Europeans is to preserve the privileged relationship it has enjoyed with Africa for decades, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

“China’s inroads to Africa have been so successful that we are compelled to start asking ourselves questions and thinking about the best ways of reacting”, a European expert acknowledged at the conference. And indeed the figures speak for themselves: the average rate of economic growth in Africa in recent years is 6%, with 2% of this directly attributable to the ‘China effect’. That is thanks to the country’s investment programme and its 900 or so companies already located in Africa.

Additionally, the soaring prices for raw materials and farm and fishery produce can be directly traced to Chinese demand, as it has now become the world’s leading buyer of these types of products. In fact, Beijing is now ranked as Africa’s third largest trading partner. These
trade activities were worth US$55 billion in 2006 versus US$40 billion 12 months earlier, and they are expected to double again within five years. At the same time the share enjoyed by Europe, currently the leading partner, is decreasing.

However, currently relations between China and the EU are going from strength to strength. Bilateral trade has increased 40-fold in the wake of the reforms in China since 1978, and were worth over €174 billion in 2004. Indeed, China is now the EU’s second most important trading partner behind the United States and the EU became Beijing’s top partner in 2004. On the institutional front, the EU and China have close relations overseen by an annual meeting of government leaders. The next summit is scheduled for November in Beijing.

And while the EU, considering its long association with Africa, still struggles to put together meetings with its African partners – the first EU-Africa Summit was in 2000, and a second is to take place at the end of this year – Chinese leaders have been pulling out all the stops. By 2006 they had already set up the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which was transformed into a summit conference in 2006 when Hu Jintao, President of the People’s Republic of China, welcomed 48 African heads of state to Beijing. Now plans for a trilateral summit must be developed.

The African experience

Chinese representatives at the Brussels meeting, including ambassador Liu Guijin, the Chinese Special Representative for African Affairs, stressed the “solid friendship between their countries and their African brothers and sisters”, while making a critical passing reference to Europe’s colonial past.

From the African side reaction was more mixed, with officials underscoring the genuine opportunities opened up by China’s commitment while also warning of the equally genuine and proven risks of dumping and the plundering of natural resources. At the same time, the European Commission has taken care to refrain from criticism of its own, particularly in the case of China’s “no-ties” aid policy, showing that Europe has clearly opted for cooperation rather than confrontation.

One specialist stressed the importance of reviewing how the Chinese aid system works in practice. While it is more flexible than the European model and apparently more adaptable, the Chinese are sometimes caught by surprise in spite of their massive commitment and turn to the EU for explanations. It is with this “African experience” that Europe plans to discuss and negotiate with China in its attempt to win Beijing over to a workable triangular partnership.

Practical cooperation

The European Commission has plans to go much further than that. During its closing speech at the conference, Bernard Petit, the Commission’s Deputy Director-General for Development, elaborated a list of areas where China and the EU could cooperate in the future: reforming the security sector in Democratic Republic of Congo; the Kimberley Process and FLEGT – two programmes aimed at clamping down on the illegal trade in diamonds and timber – and finally the reform of the continent’s infrastructure.

European foundations are important agents on both national and international scenes; they have a big responsibility, as they can use their money to aid local development, research, the social sector, art and culture, joining political decision makers and civil society. But what is a foundation?

A foundation is a private institution with legal personality, which owns assets that can be assigned for specific non-profit purposes.

Italian bank foundations

Within the panoply of European foundations, Italian bank foundations are an extremely interesting case. Their grant distributions are extremely important, especially in the social and cultural fields. This is an auxiliary role to their respective European, governmental and local public policies. In certain territories their contributions are essential.

They were instituted in 1991 with the Amato/Carli Law that imposed the division between banks (which had to start a privatisation process) and foundations in two distinct legal entities. As a consequence, foundations with a large dimension have been created. These were initially identified as holding the entire stock of former public banks, but have subsequently been invited to be on the market. These institutions operate in different modalities with a preference for grant-making in the classic fields of big foundations: education and research, art and culture, health and welfare. To these fields we can add, in certain cases, issues related to the environment and promotion of local development. Foundations work on the borderline between the public, private and civil sectors (i.e. the non-profit field). In fact, they generate profit from the first sphere and need to be able to dialogue and connect policies and resources with the second. The third sphere is their main field and in which they find their most important partners.

At least ten of these foundations have assets that exceed the threshold of €1 billion, while nearly 30 go beyond €100 million.

Ceilings per year are continuously increasing and go from €1 million for small foundations to almost €200 million for the MontePulchi, Cariplo, and Compagnia di San Paolo foundations, which are in the European top ten for assets and contributions. Consequently, if we consider the growing amount of money to be distributed in social, cultural and research projects with great autonomy and freedom of
action, we can easily notice the crucial role played by foundations. They are now developing into modern organisations with specific operational strategies, staffed with young, specialised personnel, with due transparency (through well managed, updated websites) of announcements and contributions that have been implemented. Normally, evaluation methodologies and structures for calls for applications are based on those used by the European Commission.

> A European way to philanthropy

Going through programme documents, the increasing will to create a stronger connection between the local and the international, global and European spheres is easily noticeable. The need to develop a European way for foundations originated at the European Foundations Centre (EFC), an international association of foundations and corporate founders, based in Brussels. It is dedicated to documenting the foundation landscape, strengthening the infrastructure of the sector and promoting cooperation at European level and around the world. Since its foundation in 1989, the EFC’s main goals are to represent the interest of members (more than 200 foundations), not only donors and bank foundations but also charitable, scientific and cultural organisations and target governments, the European Union and international bodies. Globalisation is making clear the necessity to value problems and opportunities on a super-national level and to organise programmes and specific processes about global issues on a local level. In fact, since 2003 the EFC has promoted Europe in the World, a programme that aims to advocate and mobilise more leadership, collaboration and efforts for global development among foundations and in partnership with governments, multilateral institutions, business and NGOs. According to EFC, it is important to persuade the ever growing number of European foundations to increase current resources – skills, knowledge, funding – for global issues and development on a sustainable basis.

> A more open territory of action

The Cassa di Risparmio Foundation in Bologna was the first to change its statute in order to allow funds for actions taking place out of its territory, especially in the Global South. This statute modification, in October 2000, was strongly advocated by the vice-president at that time, Giovanni Bersani. As a European Parliamentarian, he participated in many crucial phases of the Lomé Convention and development policies promoted by the European Union. Among other functions, he has been President of the EU-ACP Parliamentary Assembly, for which he is now honorary president. Bersani went beyond the old principle that funds must be distributed in the foundations’ reference territory and that these subjects may stretch have responsibilities also towards far territories and peoples. This would have contributed to a common perspective of a real and sustainable peace.

Consequently foundations now have the possibility to operate in the development field and, especially in the last three to four years, many NGO programmes from the Global North and Global South have been promoted. We have interviewed Gabriele Mancini, president of the Monte dei Paschi di Siena Foundation, who said: “In the last four years we have worked especially with associations, depending on projects that have been proposed, but we have the intention to fund better and better quality actions. There is a need to target the real needs of these countries, possibly working in tune with the local institutions. In order to improve synergies and coordination, since 2004 we have agreed, together with the region of Tuscany, a protocol of intentions to target projects that need funds. Among these, we can remember the realisation of the heart surgery centre Salam in Sudan realised by Emergency, the centre Saving the children that offers medical assistance to more than 1,000 Palestinian children, or the mobile field hospital realised by the association Fatebenefratelli. But, as well as big actions, contributions are also delivered to local associations.”

There are more than 160 projects in ACP countries that have been funded during the last four years, for a financial commitment that exceeds €20 million. The main issues of these projects are education, infant vaccinations, attendance and care of children with HIV/AIDS, creation of hospitals, sanitary structures and surgical specialised centres, and reservoirs for drinkable water and irrigation. Some other foundations have realised projects in this field. Compagnia di San Paolo devoted attention to advanced training for developing countries, with courses organised by the ILO, Hydroaid, the International Water for Development Management Institute and the Higher European Cooperation and the Development School of the University of Pavia. In 2004, the Carpilo Foundation has signed an action plan approving a new operative line that has been proposed in order to reduce the gap between the Global North and South. In 2005, 12 contributions for a total amount of €1 million have been allocated and the number of funded projects increased from 12 to 39 in 2006 with a total contribution of €3 million. This participation can be increased. Positive perspectives can be seen in the answer of Mr. Mancini to our question: “What kind of coordination experiences are there among foundations in order to aid development?” He said: “We are working according to the explicit au-

> Rural expansion

Celtel either tenders for licenses or acquires local companies. In 2007, MTC/Celtel’s investment in the African continent was expected to be around US$2 billion, with an onus on expansion in rural areas. Of the company’s 7,500 employees, 99% are from African nations, explains Rhodes. There are a total of 408,000 points of sale for the pay as you go cards across all 15 countries. From a position of importing technology into the continent, the company is now trailblazing the world’s first borderless mobile phone network in African nations, offering customers across six countries the possibility of calls without incurring so-called ‘roaming’ surcharges, explains Rhodes. You can buy a SIM card in Congo-DRC, Congo-Brazzaville, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Gabon and be charged the same rate in any of the six. Brandied as ‘One Network’, this product is ahead of anything offered by EU-based mobile phone companies which levy hefty charges for calls made and received in any EU country other than where the SIM card was purchased, says Rhodes. Koning explains that Celtel offers continual training to its employees, including a 15-month training graduate programme, ‘Headstart’. Company options and shares are other perks. Celtel is also involved in a number of voluntary projects to distribute books to schools and school building work. It is keen to extend its network to other African nations, notably Ethiopia, Mozambique and Angola, on its way to becoming a leading pan-African phone company. D.P. www.celtel.com

What’s behind the success of company that is adding one million new customers every month? “Balancing the risks and returns and understanding how to do business in African nations,” is part of the explanation, says Terry Rhodes, the company’s co-founder and strategy adviser. Good branding with a vibrant logo, together with being a “principles based organisation”, including investment in every employee’s future, are all part of the grow, explains Rhodes from the company’s office in Hooipdorf, the Netherlands. The Celtel network now stretches across 15 African countries from the Atlantic to Indian Oceans: Burkina Faso, Chad, Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan (where it operates as ‘Mobitel’), Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. “We had to persuade people that the company was a lower risk than perceived,” adds Martin de Koning, Celtel’s Communications Director. Sudanese expatriate, Dr Mo Ibrahim, a former telecommunications consultant, started Celtel almost a decade ago joining fellow consultant, Terry Rhodes, in acquiring a single license to operate in Uganda. Getting the finance together for the huge infrastructure investment needed was the first step, right down to purchasing of back-up genera-

Rural expansion

> Creating a buzz in Africa

There were just 2 million mobile phone users across African nations back in 1998 when Celtel was set up, most of whom in South Africa. Today, out of a total of 200 million mobile users on the continent, 25 million are Celtel customers.
It was on Madeira, that bridge between the coasts of Africa and Europe, that EU development ministers gathered 21–22 September for an informal meeting on key issues regarding the partnership between the EU and ACP countries. The theme of the meeting in Funchal, Madeira’s capital, came from the desire of Portugal’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Joao Gomes Cravinho, for his EU colleagues to consider the three priorities of the Portuguese Presidency. Cravinho, current president of the Development Council, re-emphasised these priorities as:

• How to improve links between European security policy and development in emerging economies?
• How to improve the EU’s role in countries in a ‘fragile’ situation by providing more appropriate responses to the problems they face?
• How to ensure that the laborious negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and six ACP sub-regions will conclude by 31 December in line with the World Trade Organisation’s (WTO) rules of free trade and respect for the development goals of the ACP countries?

The ambition during the Portuguese presidency has been to identify ways forward for EU development policy and to conclude agreements prior to the end of the AfricanKeyUp in Lisbon on 8-9 December. It was an ambition achieved. The Funchal informal council will hopefully be recognised as a decisive turning point in the European approach to the EPAs. It will also be remembered for recommending the application of a code of conduct on the optimal breakdown of work between the Commission and ‘fragile’ developing countries and for having launched high-level discussions to more precisely trace the limits of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and EU humanitarian policy, avoiding any confusion between the two.

While army intervention in the humanitarian field can at times be useful – such as the ARTEMIS operation in Ituri in the DRC, and the promising prospect of deploying EUFOR to Chad/Central African Republic to protect refugees of the Darfur crisis and aid workers – there is general agreement that the leadership in any intervention should rest with humanitarian groups. The experiences of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Denmark, all three champions of close cooperation between their development and defence ministers, should serve as an example to other Member States, believes the Council. Explained Joao Gomes Cravinho, “security and defence as well as security and development are two sides of the same coin. We still have difficulties of a cultural nature in determining when to marry defence with development, but there is unanimous acceptance of the need to work hand in hand.” He added, “this is the beginning of what will be a long process”. Loin Michiel, EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, concurred, saying, “we all agree that there is no security without development, and no development without security, but development has its own aims”. He went on, “the military are not there to do humanitarian work. It is therefore essential to define precise rules of engagement for military forces, without which there is no way of assuming political responsibility”.

Defining these rules is a task that the European Commission has set for itself. It will soon be presenting a document for “defining the natural missions of both humanitarian and military forces” and setting out the rules of engagement.

Towards two-stage EPAs?

Addressing the Council, Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson gave a sombre assessment of the state of the EPA negotiations with the ACP regions. The difficulties, including that most of them regard trade liberalisation with fear, are enormous. West Africa and Eastern Africa lag furthest behind and while the Caribbean and Pacific have made the most progress. Negotiations have stalled with Southern Africa. The end result is that none have yet submitted a plan for opening up their markets to EU products. The commissioner pointed out that in the absence of an EPA, none of the 36 most developed ACP countries will be able to count on any thing more than the basic system of generalised preferences accessible to all developing countries. That is clearly less advantageous than duty-free access without quotas for nearly all products (with the exception of rice and sugar) offered from 1 January 2008 to all ACP states that sign an EPA.

Mandelson’s statement was contested by MEP Glens Kinnoch, co-president of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. She favours the continuation of negotiations and the application of the SGP Plus to all ACP States in trouble until such time as an agreement is reached on the EPA content directly in line with a country’s development needs. The active participation of representatives of the European Parliament in this exchange is a distinctive feature of the Development Council. “The only one of the EU’s sectoral councils to give a voice to the elected representatives”, says Kinnoch.

While the ministers gave the European Commission their support in helping ACP countries meet the January deadline set by the WTO, they also suggested that it could be rather less ambitious. As Cravinho explained, “It is not a question of changing the date because it is absolutely necessary to conclude the most comprehensive agreements possible before the end of the year. However, if that cannot be done, we must have a general agreement in principle with all the regions”.

That would mean an agreement establishing a general framework, with the details to be finalised in the first three months of 2008. This was Cravinho’s way of acknowledging that the EU will have to accept the impossibility of concluding EPAs with every ACP country by the end of 2007, especially tying up final details on products as well as so-called ‘new generation’ issues (using WTO jargon) that include services, public contracts, competition and investments.
In place are EU-funded so-called Multi-Annual Strategies to offset price cuts. These are tailor-made packages for individual ACP sugar producers such as to improve production, diversify into other areas like biofuels and for social schemes to support those leaving the industry. The eight-year (2006–2013) package totals €1.24 billion.

**EPA access**

The EU is in the midst of discussing transitional arrangements for sugar under regional EPAs. As it stands, its April offer will up the level of market access for all sugar producers up to 2009, meaning the Dominican Republic will gain duty-free access to the EU market for the first time. A second phase from October 2009 will apply strict safeguards of up to 3.5 million tonnes from all exporters and 1.3 million tonnes from ACPs over which tariffs must be paid. Up to 2012, the EU has offered an “attractive and remunerative floor price”. The phased transition will ensure that change is not at the expense of the poorest, say EU officials. Lionel Jefferies, Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation of Guyana, stated at a special ACP Sugar Ministerial in September that ACP states were seeking more clarity and improvements to the offer such as a higher level of exports before safeguards are applied, regional quotas and remunerative prices to continue until 2015.

Another factor propelling change is the need for the EPA, due to come into force from 1 January 2008, to comply with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. Under it, a free trade area must cover substantially all trade. For many ACP regions, raw sugar is a hefty share of trade with the EU including with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Caribbean and Pacific.

A spokesman added that the EU also has to honour its commitments to Least Development Countries (LDCs) under its free access for all exports from LDCs from 2009 pledged under the ‘Everything but Arms Initiative’.

**Price cut**

A 36% price cut over four years affecting ACP sugar producers was already announced in 2005, starting with the 2006–2007 campaign, in tandem with cuts to the EU’s own domestic raw sugar price. ACP states say this already means annual loses of €250 million for its 18 Protocol members.

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In the midst of negotiating, ACP states say they received a side swipe by the EU’s end of September decision to “denucle” the Protocol. Peter Power, spokesperson for trade commissioner, Peter Mandelson, explained that the EU needs to give two years notice by the end of September, ahead of the second phase of the market access offer for sugar in EPAs coming into force in October 2009. “The Sugar Protocol cannot co-exist with these new arrangements, so the Protocol has to end by that date,” he explained.

“The EU is emerging on its previous commitments to the ACP countries with a pre-emptive strike at a time when we are still negotiating the EPAs in good faith. Unless the guarantees of the Sugar Protocol are transposed into the new arrangements, it will leave us significantly worse off than we are already; that would be a complete contradiction of the stated goals of the EPAs,” retorted Ambassador Patrick Gomes, Ambassador of Guyana to the EU and Chairman of the Consultative Group on Sugar.

Paul Goodison predicts that further rounds of sugar price cuts in 2013 and 2015 in the wake of CAP reform and mounting freight and insurance costs in ACP states will leave just a handful of southern African nations – Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe – able to make a profit from sugar exports by 2015.

In this sunset for the Sugar Protocol, he says ‘oums should be placed on making the most of market advantages while they’re there. “For every 10,000 tonnes of sugar exported to the EU in 2008/2009 season, rather than the 2009/2010 season, extra revenue would be nearly €1.14 million,” calculates Goodison. “And there must be fast delivery of aid to the industry so far pledged. Quoting the success of Plantation Reserve, he says that a lot more innovative aid and low-cost loans are required in future such as to develop luxury goods and fair trade products in the sector to create new revenue for millers and growers alike.”

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on paper, the EU’s duty-free, quota-free offer under an EPA with Cariforum countries looks generous, says Renwick Rose, St. Vincent-based coordinator of the Windward Islands’ Farmers’ Association (WINFA) representing growers in St Vincent, Dominica, St. Lucia and Grenada. On the table and due to come on stream on 1 January 2008, the EU’s open market access is for all but the most sensitive products, sugar and rice. It will replace the current market arrangements under the Banana Protocol enshrined in successive EU development accords with the ACP group. This currently gives duty-free access up to 775,000 tonnes allocated between ACP countries. Dig a little deeper and there are jitters about how the post-protocol market will shape up. It will all come down to pricing, forecasts Rose, with the most vulnerable small farmers of the group, those of the Windwards, but also small holders in Jamaica, Belize and in some African nations such as Cameroon, will be most affected.

Alistair Smith of the UK-based NGO, Bananalink, which campaigns for a fairly traded, sustainably farmed banana, explains that big multi-nationals in ACP States have already become rooted in several African nations including Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana.

> Price pressure

“The greater volumes in the market will put pressure on prices”, explains Rose. He adds: “If the price is not remunerative then the duty-free, tariff-free access makes no sense”. Windwards’ farmers are no strangers to grappling the nettle of restructuring that began in the 1990s. The European Union (EU) has assisted with funding many projects to improve production methods such as irrigation, construction of roads, reception and distribution stations and for certification schemes. Other EU funds have gone to diversification into other farming and social schemes for those who have left the sector. There’s no steady core of growers Windwards-wide selling their fair trade produce to leading UK supermarkets. The small, creamy, sweet-tasting Windward banana – perfect for school lunch boxes – is little known outside the UK.

“Our worry is that when you open the market, the price differences between the fair trade and regular banana will get wider and wider”, says Rose. “A managed market is essential to us”.

“Whilst Fair Trade is a saving grace, it will not insulate us from the general pressure of the market”, warns Rose. He reminds EU-ACP negotiators: “There is nothing in the EPA text which suggests that we will be compensated for the banana”. D.P.

###Bernard Cornibert###

Executive Chairman of the UK-based Windward Islands Banana Development and Exporting Company Ltd. (WIB-DECO), which markets the fruit, gives his take on the EPA proposals and his industry:

> Is the Windwards’ industry fearful of more open competition from implementation of the EPAs?

Many in the Windwards banana industry understand that ultimately there will be open competition, but the industry is not quite ready for that as yet. It still requires some measure of support in the market, whatever form that takes, in order to continue to survive. We still do not know, even at this late stage, what the level of ACP preference will be under the EPA. If, as the question implies, the EPA will result in more open competition then this is ominous.

To the contrary, will the EPAs mean a more certain future for the Windwards’ banana industry by eliminating future challenges to the region’s exports in the WTO?

The EPA by itself will not bring a more certain or secure future for the Windwards’ banana industry. While the EPA will eliminate the threat of challenges to the preferential access arrangements for ACP imports, it is a quota-free environment. It is the tariff on Most Favoured Nation (MFN) imports that will minimise the competitive pressure on ACP imports and ensure that they have a place in the market. Therefore, even with the EPAs, if the tariff is too low, ACP suppliers like the Windwards will have very little chance of surviving the harsh and competitive market environment.

> By how much has the region’s production been cut back since the early 1990s?

Banana exports from the Windwards Islands dropped from 274,500 tonnes in 1992 to 67,100 tonnes in 2006. Some 20,000 small holders have left the industry, as a result of increasing competition brought about by the steady liberalisation of the market.

> Is the Windwards’ banana industry in a strong position now where it can hold its own in the global marketplace?

There is no doubt that the Windwards’ banana industry is now stronger and better able to compete in what is becoming a very crowded and competitive market. But it will never be able to survive, let alone win, the fight on its own. It needs all the support it can muster. Fairtrade and its growing band of consumers has played and will play a major part in the continued presence of Windwards’ banana on the market. But Fair trade alone will not guarantee the continued survival of the Windwards banana industry. It will need the continued support of its loyal customers, supermarkets and consumers. More importantly, it needs the institutional support of the EU through the EPA and otherwise.

How have this season’s hurricanes affected the industry?

It takes only one major hit to cripple the industry; and Hurricane Dean this year almost did that. The damages to the banana crops have been significant. Dominica was the worst affected but across the Windwards the overall damage was in the order of 55%. The rehabilitation process has already started and we expect production and exports to bounce back in full around March-April next year.

> Economic diversification is being encouraged throughout the region. Why is it important to retain a core Windwards banana industry?

Moving or transferring activities from one sector to another, or even with the same sector, is not easy. This involves extensive dislocation of both people and resources which (a) can only be accommodated smoothly in the very long term, and (b) only to the extent that there are viable alternatives. The banana industry is alive today – it still brings income to many people in the Windwards Islands. No one with any sense would suggest that these people abandon their livelihood before they know what else they will do to earn a living. Having said that, the islands must continue to search for alternatives, but the objective must not be to replace bananas but rather to broaden the production base and economic base generally of those countries. As a company that is at the centre of the Windwards banana industry, we are actively encouraging diversification but we are under no illusion that the banana industry will and must remain, for the foreseeable future, an important part of the agricultural sector and economic live in those islands.
Everyone in Belgium knows this man from the Congo, Dieudonné Kabongo: actor, playwright, storyteller, comedian, television show host, musician and singer.

As well known as this multi-talented performer is in Belgium and other French-speaking countries for his natural charm (including towards those he rebukes in his shows), deep voice and wrestler’s build, he is also famously modest. It is as if he is unaware of his fame and the fondness people feel towards him, even those who have never met him face-to-face.

For me, a national rail strike wasn’t bad news at all. Instead of meeting Kabongo at the Théâtre du Manège in Mons Belgium, I made the journey with him by car, giving us another hour to talk.

Kabongo’s working day is due to begin with a costume fitting for the show he is rehearsing, but when we arrive, the director himself is there. And not just any director but THE master, THE magician — Dragone! Dieudonné Kabongo is working with Franco Dragone, the Belgian director who has conquered Las Vegas, California, Montreal and the rest as the creator of unique, gigantic spectacles.

The Disney Cinemagic Parade; “The Dream” in Las Vegas, marking the opening of the Wynn Hotel; Céline Dion’s mega-spectacle, “A New Day”; the exhibition at the Museum of Civilization to mark the 400th anniversary of the city of Quebec, were all his creative works. And coming up in autumn 2009, the extravagance of “City of Dreams” in Macao, with a cast of hundreds if not thousands of gymnasts, acrobats, synchronized swimmers, tightrope walkers and visual artists.

Of course, it isn’t Kabongo’s way to draw attention to the recognition afforded him in this production, but while we are in the car he describes the role he plays in “Othello, passeur” (Othello the ferryman) — an Othello created for a contemporary story. In this version, Othello is a smuggler bringing illegal immigrants to Europe. However, he has the soul of Shakespeare’s Othello and renews his passengers as Shakespeare’s characters. Like the original, he’s in love with a girl — Desdemona — and faces and confronts adversity, and knows what Othello’s destiny is. But as the modern-day tale unfolds, will he follow it or deviate from it?

And as we drive, he describes his own life. “For a long time, I was caught in a dilemma: was I an African and an artist, or an artist and an African? Trying to reconcile the two was extremely difficult for me, but little by little this became less important. Even the huge amount of effort needed to become recognized when you first arrive as an immigrant has faded from my thoughts because you move on. You just get on with your personal creativity.” His comments clearly sum up someone who is entranced and consumed by art in many different forms.

Although Kabongo is regarded as a national treasure in Belgium (especially in Brussels), where he has lived since 1970, he has never considered taking Belgian citizenship. “It’s not for ideological reasons,” he says, “but simply because I’ve never seen myself as anything but Congolese.” He adds, “Having said that, it doesn’t bother me at all when the local press adopt me and label me a Belgian”.

In the Théâtre Le Manège in Mons, after many try-outs and ‘take fives,’ the costumes have been decided upon and rehearsals are finally beginning. Director Dragone wants to tighten up a few parts of the show, getting the ambience and positions right in the rehearsal room before moving to the full stage. To begin, Kabongo runs through a dialogue with one of the actors. They both have trouble remembering their lines, but the moment they are on stage in front of Dragone, the words begin to flow.

Othello and Iago are there before us.

Come here Iago
Othello, the men are complaining
Only the men?
Don’t laugh, Othello, the women too, of course! What’s the matter with you, Iago, are you their messenger?
I am with them
And so?

As they recite their lines Dragone steps in, cajoling, suggesting and refining his expectations, stretching the performers, bidding them to create his vision. Each break in rehearsal provides further opportunities to talk with Kabongo on art, life, the people he’s met, his career: a career that began in 1984 when he was just over 30, with “Méfiez-vous des tsetse-fly!” (“Don’t trust the tsetse fly”), co-written with Mirko Popovitch, which won first prize at the Rochefort Comedy Festival.

My day with Dieudonné

Kabongo ends around 2am, many hours after our return to Brussels. During that time he has talked about almost everything: successes, childhood, discovering his talent through his story-telling uncle; “Who did everything that others did — like Robert Lamoureux or Bourvil—but without the great resources they had at their disposal?”

He also talked about his self-taught appren- ticeship in writing and the theatre after study- ing electromechanical engineering in Verviers, Belgium. At that time Kabongo and others wanted learned profes- sions that would allow them to help their country. Although that is long behind him, he also talks of his “constant training” — never ceasing to learn from everyone he meets, especially young people. As he says, “they refresh my way of seeing things.” At the beginning of his artistic career, the theatre taught him to communicate with young peo- ple; he made them laugh and they remem- bered his explanations.

But he avoids letting that role take him too far outside his own area of expertise and interest. Although he is an extremely well-known face in Brussels he is careful to never get too involved. Not long ago following a serious incident in the Congolese quarter of Brussels where a young Congolese man died, he was asked to advise the bourgmestre (mayor) of the community concerned. But he admits to avoid- ing taking up roles like this because he prefers to promote culture, not break up fights. He concluded, “Culture is extraordinary. It is capable of performing miracles and preventing damage and destruction. That’s why it fills me with wonder.”

H.G.

For Dieudonné Kabongo’s recent Theatre, Filmography, Discography visit, among others:

“Othello” Théâtre Le Manège (Mons, Belgium) From 9 to 12 January 2008 at 8.30pm, 13th at 4pm +32-(0)65/39.59.39 www.lemanege.com

Directed by Franco Dragone. Freely adapted from William Shakespeare by Yves Vanseur with Vincent Engl.
Fossil finds illuminate the history of Earth that was utterly dark for modern-day researchers. National Geographic’s April 2003 cover story titled ‘The rise of Mammals’ attests that studies on DNA have complemented and enhanced research capacity on fossils. Similar history has been made when a fossil found in Dogali along the eastern escarpment of Eritrea in 1997 gave scientists new ideas about the evolutionary trend of elephants. In 1998, Jeheskel Shoshani, currently professor of biology at the University of Asmara, moved to Eritrea to study a unique population of elephants who had been isolated from other members of the species, leading to inbreeding and genetic mutations. Researching the elephants proved extremely difficult, however, as the herd roamed an area on the Ethiopia-Eritrea border. Participating local and foreign researchers published a scholarly paper in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the United States of America (PNAS) in October 2006.

In November 2006 a similar report was published by the University of Michigan: a pig-sized, tusked creature that roamed the Earth some 27 million years ago represents a missing link between the oldest known relatives of elephants and the more recent group from which modern elephants descended. The study was carried out by an international team that includes University of Michigan palaeontologist William J. Sanders. This group’s findings suggest that mastodonts and the ancestors of elephants originated in Africa—in contrast to mammals such as rhinos, giraffes and antelopes—which had their origins in Europe and Asia and migrated into Africa. The dating of the new fossil, discovered in Eritrea, also pushes the origins of elephants and mastodons five million years farther into the past than previous records, Sanders said.

“The new fossil from Eritrea is important because it shows aspects of dental anatomy in common with the advanced group, including molars with more cusps and complex crowns and the delayed maturation and emergence of molars”. But the creature of the new fossil also had characteristic in common with paralasmataodonts, namely smaller body size and a jaw structure that suggests shorter tusks and trunk.

In the summer of 1997, Melake Ghebrekristos, a farmer in Dogali, found a jawbone in his farm and assessed that it was totally different from the bones with which he was familiar. According to fossil evidence this creature had a long snout and small tusks and it feed mostly on vegetation. Examination of the bones revealed that they were dated between 27 to 28 million years old. This is highly significant. Elephants date back some 55 million years, but modern elephants only assumed their present appearance and size about one million years ago. Until now, scientists had never discovered any elephant remains from between 34 million to 24 million years ago. Professor Shoshani found it hard to place the bone with any other kind of animal known before and dedicated full-time study to the case.

Detailed study and analysis of the teeth on the jawbone are necessary to identify the species of the subject was conducted. It is believed that it belongs to the proboscidea- large mammals with trunks—of which modern day elephants are their descendents. It was found that the formation of the teeth occupied an intermediate structure between modern and ancient elephants. In addition, it exhibited horizontal tooth displacement, that is still found in modern elephants. This feature is believed to be the oldest fossil evidence yet to be uncovered.

Furthermore, the paper lists how the researchers extrapolated the size of the animal: at about 130 cm tall at the shoulder and 484 kg body mass on average. These sizes clarify that it was much smaller than modern elephants, although it was young adult and not yet fully grown. The researchers also indicated that the animal was not a fully grown individual and it probably would have reached a larger size. The analysed data and the animal’s features allowed the researchers to put it between the classes of Elefantiomorpha and Elephantida between which there existed a missing link gap—which is “a hypothesis that was predicted 84 years ago”. This is on the line of evolution of modern elephants. Professor Shoshani also went on to add: “(The disloved individual) is intermediate by size, by physical characteristics, and by date—all these things make it a missing link.” For this reason, the significance of the discovery of this animal is very important, as it sheds light on the evolution of elephants.

Members of the research group did not want to credit themselves by naming the finding in PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America), named the species as Eritreum melakeghebrekristosi, after Eritrea, the country where it was found, and Melake Ghebrekristos, who found the specimen and recognised it importance. He said he hoped this would help encourage the people of Eritrea to assist scientific research.

To Eritrea, this discovery is an important one which complements the already excavated findings—and many more that are likely to be hidden somewhere awaiting further excavation and research. Since Eritrea is in the great African Rift Valley, which is known for its role as a laboratory in the evolution of mammals, it would not be a surprise to uncover more discoveries. However, considerable care should be taken in safeguarding artefacts and relics that carry invaluable history. Speaking on this, Dr Seife stresses that everyone should be aware of the importance of the country’s historical heritage, which is full of untold stories that cannot be retrieved once destroyed.

The findings in Dogoli, Abdur, and Buaya have placed Eritrea as one of the major repositories of human evolution and culture. Protecting the unique natural heritage of Eritrea is an asset to be promoted through ecotourism for this and future generations. This report is the first combined account on the extinct and extant mammalian fauna of Eritrea. Prior to 1993 all publications concerning faunal assemblages from Eritrea were under the heading of Ethiopia, as Eritrea was then a province of Ethiopia. Data presented here, it is hoped, will serve as a basis for future research on the paleozoogeography and neozoogeography of Eritrean mammals.
The American IT and electronics giant Hewlett-Packard (HP) launched a project in September which aims to reduce the impact of electronic waste on health and the environment in developing countries — the main recipients of this kind of waste.

The project, which is being carried out in partnership with the Global Digital Solidarity Fund and the Swiss Institute for Materials Science and Technology, will get underway in South Africa.

The idea is to reduce the potential impact of poor handling of electronic waste on health and the environment, but also to create job opportunities in the most disadvantaged communities. Kalus Hieronymi, head of HP’s Environment Business Management Organisation for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, said: “We see this project as a means to help develop an infrastructure to safely deal with electronic waste based on local habits and structures.”

He added: “We hope that this initial analysis will enable us to create a widespread public-private partnership that will improve health and environmental standards and help disadvantaged communities by promoting skills and creating jobs.”

**Pilot project in South Africa**

The scheme for managing electronic waste in Africa will build on existing recycling plans, with the introduction of the initiative on a large scale between now and December 2008. The pilot project will take place in South Africa followed by Morocco, Kenya and Tunisia. The company set a target in 2004 of recycling 500,000 tonnes of electronic materials on a global scale by the end of 2007. Having achieved this objective six months earlier than anticipated, HP is now proposing the recycling of an additional 500,000 tonnes between now and 2010.

**Africa used as a dustbin**

The waste produced by electronic and electrical equipment is estimated at millions of tonnes a year and, according to the United Nations, represents more than 5% of all household waste. The UN has just launched a worldwide programme called STEP (Solving the E-Waste Problem). According to the Basel Action Network (BAN), an international non-governmental organisation fighting trade and trafficking in toxic materials, 400,000 used computers and screens, in varying states and of all ages, enter Nigeria each month. François Ovassa, an electronics specialist from Cameroon and author of the book, “Les Nouvelles technologies de l’information. Enjeux pour l’Afrique Subsaharienne” (The New Information Technologies. So Much at Stake for Sub-Saharan Africa) (www.ridadc.org/blogs/francoisovassa/), said that, under the pretext of giving gifts, “thousands of obsolete computers are dumped in countries that do not have any capability for recycling which is still complex to master at a technological level.” He added: “When a friend of mine who works for a women’s association in Cameroon called me two years ago to help her install computers that she received as a gift, we were extremely surprised and disappointed to find out that, of the eight computers received, just one worked and that was an IBM from the 1980s!”

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**Timor-Leste**

Timor-Leste recently joined the ‘concert of nations’, the climax of an epic and heroic story of a people’s struggle to win their sovereignty. A story of men who became living legends, like José Ramos-Horta: revolutionary, man of ideas, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize; and Xanana Gusmão: revolutionary, poet and painter, winner of the Sakharov Peace Prize.

Formal independence of this tiny state in South-East Asia on 20 May 2002 ended one of the cruellest episodes of a country in recent times, but sadly Timor-Leste has since suffered further upheavals of a kind only to be expected after such a long, tormented history. However, despite all of this, Timor-Leste has emerged with its democratic principles intact and is proud to be one of the few countries in the region to champion the values it shares with the European Union. Clearly well placed for future development, its economy is relatively healthy and free of debt and serious corruption. Moreover, there is the promise of future exploitation of its oil reserves on a sustainable basis as well as its upcoming membership of ASEAN. This is a country rich in natural beauty, ready for discovery by anyone seeking to venture off mass tourism’s well beaten track.
The emergence of Timor-Leste as an independent nation is the result of a people’s epic effort to win their sovereignty. It was only after the hardest of battles that this small South-East Asian nation won its formal independence on 20 May 2002. Prior to this, during the 25 years of Indonesian occupation, there were an estimated 200,000 deaths in a population of just over 700,000. Moreover, it was a freedom won almost alone without the help of outside assistance and for the most part in the face of complete indifference by the international community.

The barbarity of the Indonesian occupation caused people to forget the neglect in which the earlier Portuguese colonisation had left the country. After five centuries of rule, the Portuguese left the nation in a state of abject poverty, without infrastructure and virtually without the human capital to develop a new nation.

A quick history lesson is useful. More than 3,000 years ago the island was already inhabited by the Atoi, a Melanesian population. About 2,500 years ago successive waves of new immigrants began to arrive from various tribes.

Colonial adventures began at a time when Islam was in the process of taking root in the region. But Portuguese missionaries landed on the eastern part of the island where they converted the Tetum (Bélu) to Catholicism. During the 16th century the country went to war against the Muslim kingdom of Sumbay, which was established in the west of the island and protected by the Dutch.

The Dutch were victorious and established rule over the greater part of the region. They held Indonesia and western Timor, while the Portuguese had to settle for eastern Timor and the enclave of Dili in the north of western Timor – borders that were not legally recognised by the International Court of Justice in The Hague until 1914.

By this time, the beginning of the 20th century, Portugal had virtually abandoned Timor. Its interest in the island was only reawakened with the start of World War II in the heated context of ideology clashes. However, while the Portuguese government opted to support the Allies, eastern Timor soon found itself at the mercy of Japanese invasion forces. The small South-East Asian nation put up a heroic resistance to defend the Allied cause, losing 50,000 lives and suffering total devastation in the process.

When the war was over there was little recognition of Timor’s heroism and life simply returned to ‘business as usual’. The Salazarist military dictatorship was reinstalled in the east. Eastern Timor’s population rose up in revolt against the fascist regime in 1961, but the dictatorship was not about to lose its grip on the country.

Portugal’s Carnation Revolution overthrew the extremist Lisbon regime on 25 April 1974, and the new Portugal quickly recognised the rights of its colonies to independence. Political parties began to form in Timor and three political groups took shape:

- A rightist party, advocating joining with Indonesia (the Timorese Popular Democratic Association, Apodeti);
- A conservative group, seeking autonomy within the framework of a Portuguese Republic (the Timor Democratic Union, UDT);
- A revolutionary and separatist left-wing organisation (the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor, Fretilin), which is still a part of the political scene today.

Back in Lisbon, the Portuguese Parliament organised the election of a popular assembly on Timor as a prelude to granting the country its independence in October 1975.

But in November 1975, in reaction to Lisbon’s decision, the UDT and Apodeti launched hostilities against Fretilin. The country was plunged into civil war, finally won by Fretilin which proclaimed the country’s independence on 28 November. But the victory was to be short-lived and just 10 days later, on 7 December 1975 Indonesian forces invaded the country, plunging it into a quarter century of unprecedented suffering.

The first five days of the invasion brought the deaths of 5,000 Timorese. But the resistance proved to be more resilient than the invaders had expected and in retaliation the Indonesians resorted to the full range of barbaric practices, including concentration camps, the use of civilians as human shields, torture, deportations, summary executions and the burning of vegetation. In all, there were 200,000 deaths linked directly to the Indonesian occupation out of a population of 700,000. Indeed, Timor was officially annexed as one of its provinces. The guerrilla war that ensued lasted for almost a quarter of a century and was very effectively organised. This despite the almost total lack of international support, mainly due to Fretilin’s Marxist tendencies.

The world left Indonesia to do as it pleased with Timor. Despite Fretilin’s extreme resistance they gradually lost their control. This was a period that saw a strategy described by the occupiers as ‘surround and annihilate’ that was assisted from 1978 by the use of ground-attack aircraft supplied by the United States. As part of their efforts to annihilate Fretilin, the Indonesians put into place in 1981 a human barrier that forced 80,000 Timorese men (including boys) to form a human chain to trap the Fretilin guerrillas in the centre of the country. The operation failed.

As the 1980s drew to a close, Fretilin still didn’t give up the struggle. Then on 12 November 1991 came the Santa Cruz massacre, which proved to be one act of barbarity too far. The Indonesians confessed to 19 dead, but the actual figure was more than 250 and Santa Cruz became a visible symbol of the real horror of Timor. But with the guerril-
Post-crisis optimism

Political and economic background

Steped in a serious crisis in 2006, it has taken the arrival of UN forces and other foreign troops to return Timor-Leste to a comparatively peaceful situation. The crisis claimed scores of lives and saw nearly 200,000 displaced people end up in makeshift camps. Although free and fair elections took place last April they were followed by a disturbing ‘black hole’ of inaction. Now, although most of the key domestic and international players appear to think the crisis is over, it is universally agreed that it is too early to pull out foreign troops.

The terrible struggles of the Timor nation and the international iconic stature of its leadership have tended to overshadow the all too real risks of upheaval in a country that is, after all, emerging from a historic trauma. The price to pay for the so-called unity of the population when independence finally arrived was forgetting, if not actually pardoning, what may have been seen as collaboration or complicity with crimes against humanity. And certainly every family is able to recount heart-aching stories.

Tens of thousands of people, fearing for their lives, became refugees in their own country, ending up living in camps where since the beginning of the crisis 70,000 have sought shelter in Dili and a similar number in the area around the capital.

The UN was quick to return to the area, dispatching only police officers, most of them Portuguese. At the same time, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia sent large contingents of troops but didn’t place them under UN command. The outcome of this crisis was the Prime Minister’s resignation on 25 June 2006, even though he still had the support of his powerful political party, Fretilin. This was followed on 10 July with President Xanana Gusmão appointing
José Ramos-Horta, the former Foreign Minister in the outgoing government, to take over. His ability to generate dialogue helped defuse the tense situation in the country to such effect that less than 12 months later, he was able to announce open presidential elections (9 April 2007) and later legislative elections (30 June 2007).

Unfortunately, in the wake of these open and free elections, the newly formed government was tied down with numerous difficulties. The appointment of the prime minister succeeded in lighting a fire of controversy. Additionally, supporters of the opposition party Fretilin took the opportunity to voice their dismay, and once more gangs took to the streets, creating yet another refugee crisis. Fretilin won the elections (with 29% of the votes, giving them a greater majority than any other party) even though it was predicted they were heading for disaster. But the appointment of a new prime minister was hailed by Fretilin as unconstitutional, as he was the leader of a coalition formed after the results were announced. The constitution states that the formation of a coalition must be announced prior to the elections.

Eventually, the arguments included the suggestion to appointing a Fretilin party member as Premier, who would have three months to present a programme of government to MPs and then — if it was rejected — to present it again three months later. If defeated both times, he would have to resign. The idea never took off as President Ramos-Horta thought that with the country in crisis he couldn’t afford the luxury of losing six months. A practical but anti-constitutional decision.

> What are the roots of the crises?

Opinions differ and Alkatiri has spoken to The Courier about this. He is the head of the current opposition and the uncontested leader of Fretilin, which some observers regard as one of the country’s most powerful institutions, alongside the Catholic Church. Bishop Bacus has also offered his views on the situation.

Some observers say that the growing pains of the country were experiencing were obviously predictable. Administrative negligence in the final years of Portugal’s colonial rule plus the disaster created by the Indonesian occupation prevented Timor-Leste from having enough human resources or an effective infrastructure to help the country quickly develop. Equally serious tensions continue to simmer among the population, owing more to geographical locations than any ethnic rivalry. For example, eastern parts of Timor-Leste were home of most of the resistance fighters during the war for independence, while the western areas close to Indonesian Timor were less involved.

> Grounds for optimism

In spite of all that, this young nation’s growing pains are regarded by many as par for the course. Grounds for some optimism are already there. The most encouraging sign is that less than 12 months after the 2006 crisis the country was able to hold open and free elections.

Another encouraging sign is that Timor’s economic policy is comparatively sound. While the country is not rich, it is debt free. Furthermore, Timor-Leste stands to benefit from the deal struck with Australia over revenue from oil reserves located in the territorial waters between the two countries.

Today, the majority of international agencies, observers and military experts in the country are relatively upbeat. They believe that the crisis is over and what’s needed now is support in establishing a sustainable development strategy. Yet another asset is the geopolitical importance of the country. Its bid to join ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) is virtually a foregone conclusion. Its international financial supporters remain optimistic, reflected in the European Commission’s decision to establish a high-level delegation there in the immediate future.

H.G.

* ASEAN. Set up in 1967, the Association of South East Asian Nations has a goal of economic growth, social progress, cultural development and regional peace and stability amongst its current 10 members: Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

José Ramos-Horta is a matchmaker, a go-between, a man of ideas. Even during the struggle for independence he was able to smooth things over between the rival nationalist factions, notably between the guerrilla leader Xanana Gusmão and the then-exiled, Mari Alkatiri. This is as true today, and he continues to be the go-between, the peacemaker for both individuals and groups on the often fraught Timorese political scene.

Ramos-Horta has stepped in each time there was trouble between the church and the previous government, and during the recent constitutional crisis he sought to promote a reconciliation between the “striking” troops and the government. Initially Foreign-Minister-in-exile, he was appointed the country’s first Foreign Minister and served until 2006, when he resigned to express his disagreement with [now] Premier Alkatiri over the management of the crisis. This was a move that only added to the respect in which he was held by the islands. Eventually, the prime minister also had to resign but doesn’t seem to harbour any ill will towards Ramos-Horta, even though he was called upon to replace Mari Alkatiri as the head of government in the countdown to the elections.

The question is: a trouble-shooter of this calibre too good for a country that still mourns its old ways of relying on amicable settlements and alliances to iron out any disagreements? What are the priorities of your presidency and what are Timor’s current priorities?

The all-important issue is the need to combat poverty. Political stability and building on the peace process are universally acknowledged as priorities, but rooting out poverty means the government has to make a start next year on channelling major investments into facilities to create jobs and provide transport systems for people living in the countryside. Here 70% of the working population is employed in the farm sector.

This kind of programme can obviously only be rolled-out if the crisis is over. Do you think that is the case?

Of course the situation is quite normal. We were able to hold elections that the international community recognised as being open and fair and in a secure environment. Law and order has been completely restored in Dili. Minor problems do crop up from time to time, just like in France, Denmark or the United States, not to mention countries like Haiti or the Philippines where the challenges are much more daunting. The problems you see are only to be expected in a country faced with unemployment and poverty.

Nonetheless, one lasting sign of the crisis may be the camps for displaced people that we see in various places around the country.

The UN mission here recently conducted a survey among the refugees – the displaced people. They concluded that the security situation wasn’t even on anyone’s list of concerns. That is in direct contrast to last year, when the security issue would have appeared high on the list. Let me add that a great many of these so-called refugees are there because they have got into the bad habit of relying on free humanitarian aid. And unfortunately, the refugee camps are at the mercy of opportunist groups and gangs. True, there are some honest people who have had their homes burned down or destroyed, but most of the camp inhabitants – the majority – are there to claim the humanitarian aid being distributed by UN agencies, the Timor-Leste government and others.

You outlined the broad themes in your programme but now that Timor-Leste is in a position to enjoy the benefits of oil revenues, how...
What about your relationship with the European Union in the light of your special ties with Portugal?

We enjoy an excellent relationship with the European Union as a community and we have very strong ties with individual countries - Portugal in particular, but also with others such as Spain, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Italy. Also, we have extremely good – and historic – relations with the European Parliament.

During the darkest days of our struggle for independence when the East Timor issue was thought to be a lost cause (even the UN was reluctant to discuss the question although it was on the General Assembly agenda), it was the European Parliament that worked the most for the cause of the Timorese people and their right to self-determination. Now the European Commission President is José Manuel Barroso, who is a true friend. In his capacity as Portugal’s State Secretary for Cooperation and then Foreign Minister that he personally waged a hugely important diplomatic campaign on our behalf, particularly to the UN. Owing to his present status as Commission President, we are sure Timor-Leste continues to copy a special place in his affections.

Apart from the historical ties between Timor-Leste and Portugal, it should be stressed that since our independence in 2002 we have always voted with the European Union on all human rights resolutions. We have done so in the UN, in the Commission on Human Rights and nowadays in the Human Rights Council in Geneva. We share the same key ethical values as the EU countries and our ties with the European Union are very special because of these values.

What about your relations with the African and Caribbean countries?

It is mainly with the African countries that we have historical ties, particularly with PAOP countries (Portuguese-speaking African countries), Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe. But we also enjoy a close relationship with South Africa, owing to the historical contacts with the ANC and with Nelson Mandela. In the UN Security Council, for example, South Africa is now arguing the case for the Timor-Leste support group and acting as its sponsor. Also, in spite of the geographic distance between us, history has produced brotherly relationships with a great many African countries, including Tanzania whose President, Julius Nyerere, fought in our corner at the UN even when the world seemed to have forgotten Timor-Leste.

Mari Alkatiri, leader of the opposition

I agree to that, but the Prime Minister’s appointment is unconstitutional. Under the terms of the constitution, the government has to be headed by the party that won the elections. That is Fretilin. The constitution spells out clearly what to do in such a situation. A coalition has to be announced prior to the election. Indeed, the electoral law is quite clear on this point.

We are not going to help this government to succeed. Let me tell you that this government doesn’t have a programme, just vague declarations of intent. Now it has tabled a motion for emptying the State’s coffers. When I handed over the reins of power the treasury was full. Some say your disciplined management policy resulted in a paradox: a rich country with an impoverished population.

That’s not right, it’s just talk. In fact, the budget situation improved tremendously during our time in office. In August 2005 the figure was US$15 million, but the oil resources helped us to raise this to US$140 million. By August 2007 it stood at US$327 million. Also, there’s more to a budget than money. Experience is of vital importance and this is something the present government seems to lack. I think it is wasteful. Consider this, US$4 million has been spent in the last two and a half months on the tourism industry. And for what?

Remember, the public sector is the country’s largest employer, hence the need to boost the sector’s capacities. The private sector must also be assisted to become a true private sector.

Mari Alkatiri, as head of the Fretilin party, is adamant about never letting his colleagues cut the government any slack. When his party won 29% of the votes in the latest elections the other three parties were struggling far behind. But this trio quickly formed an illegal coalition to seize power. What followed was the first forcible demonstration of Fretilin’s resolution to have its voice heard during a parliamentary budget debate and MPs were compelled to continue debating non-stop, day and night, for an entire week in early October. Alkatiri told The Courier that from the outset:

We will not incite people to use violence, but we will deploy all the legal methods and means we can to oppose the initiatives of what is a de facto illegal government. We will do this by hook or by crook. Right now, we are giving it 12 months to show just how incapable they are of solving the country’s woes.

Mari Alkatiri.

The government is the outcome of free elections and your party is in a minority position compared with the ruling coalition.

I agree to that, but the Prime Minister’s appointment is unconstitutional. Under the terms of the constitution, the government has to be headed by the party that won the elections. That is Fretilin. The constitution spells out clearly what to do in such a situation. A coalition has to be announced prior to the election. Indeed, the electoral law is quite clear on this point.

Owing to his present status as Commission President, we are sure Timor-Leste continues to copy a special place in his affections. So, the two most powerful institutions in the country are apparently the church and Fretilin?

I’d like to think so. When I left office the country didn’t owe one penny to anyone. People talk of poverty, but I have lived for years in Africa, so I know what poverty really is. This country has the resources to plan its development in a considered fashion rather than rushing headlong into what knows what. Following independence, I gave myself six months to eradicate the major pockets of poverty. In late 2002, 17% of the population had access to electricity; by the end of 2004 the figure was 47%. Furthermore, we had 400 doctors in 2004 compared with just 20 in 1992.

As for good governance, here’s an example: in 2002 in Dili the electricity was free. The rate of recovery was 80% in 2005. In light of the government’s outrageous pronouncements – the collection rate sank again to 20%. Take another example: the government has decided to give churches cumulative subsidies — direct subsidies and other donations so parents do not have to pay school fees. But in reality, the schools haven’t phased out these fees at all. Surely, it would have been wiser to pay the teachers in the Christian schools.

Not really, but the private sector here is almost completely made up of contractors involved in implementing projects for UNDP, the European Commission or the government. It is not a real private sector and it so needs help in developing into one. During my time in office, I was responsible for agreeing a World Bank project to properly develop the private sector.

So, the two most powerful institutions in the country are apparently the church and Fretilin?

Mari Alkatiri, leader of the opposition

No Violence Please!  
Toppling the government by hook or by crook

We are not going to help this government to succeed. Let me tell you that this government doesn’t have a programme, just vague declarations of intent. Now it has tabled a motion for emptying the State’s coffers. When I handed over the reins of power the treasury was full. Some say your disciplined management policy resulted in a paradox: a rich country with an impoverished population.

That’s not right, it’s just talk. In fact, the budget situation improved tremendously during our time in office. In August 2005 the figure was US$15 million, but the oil resources helped us to raise this to US$140 million. By August 2007 it stood at US$327 million. Also, there’s more to a budget than money. Experience is of vital importance and this is something the present government seems to lack. I think it is wasteful. Consider this, US$4 million has been spent in the last two and a half months on the tourism industry. And for what?

Remember, the public sector is the country’s largest employer, hence the need to boost the sector’s capacities. The private sector must also be assisted to become a true private sector.

Mari Alkatiri, as head of the Fretilin party, is adamant about never letting his colleagues cut the government any slack. When his party won 29% of the votes in the latest elections the other three parties were struggling far behind. But this trio quickly formed an illegal coalition to seize power. What followed was the first forcible demonstration of Fretilin’s resolution to have its voice heard during a parliamentary budget debate and MPs were compelled to continue debating non-stop, day and night, for an entire week in early October. Alkatiri told The Courier that from the outset:

We will not incite people to use violence, but we will deploy all the legal methods and means we can to oppose the initiatives of what is a de facto illegal government. We will do this by hook or by crook. Right now, we are giving it 12 months to show just how incapable they are of solving the country’s woes.

Mari Alkatiri.

Joseph Paulo Horta

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Understanding the Timorese

Listening to Bishop Basilio Nacimento

Not long after the Portuguese arrived in Timor in the 15th century, the Catholic Church acted as a foundation for a society built on a complex patchwork of tribal, linguistic and cultural alliances. And at each turning point in the country’s history the church turned out to be the unifying factor, the link or the power-maker. In the past, clergy support for the guerrilla movement’s struggle for independence had a decisive impact, as did its recent opposition to the previous government’s plans to regulate religious instruction in the classroom, marking the beginning of the end for Fretilin’s term in office.

Despite its angry reaction to the current government’s generosity towards the Catholic Church, Fretilin’s leaders are careful to pay reverential respect towards the clergy, knowing that they are a key link between the various leading political players as well as offering guidance to the nation.

Here, Bishop Basilio Nacimento, one of the main figureheads of the church, offers his views about the Timorese people and explains why their legendary air of serenity sometimes gives way to violent eruption.

Rift between the resistant movement at home and abroad.

The people of Timor had very high hopes. During the struggle the dream of gaining independence implied that all their needs would be met and every aspiration realised. However, the focus was on the struggle, not at all on the leadership. Those who stayed behind in Timor may have placed too much confidence in the diaspora [those in exile], while those outside the country may have succumbed to honing their diplomatic skills they did not have sufficient practical knowledge of future human resource requirements.

Independence also arrived very suddenly. There was a wide gulf between the views of those inside and those who had been outside the country. The political class was mainly comprised of people who had left the island and I think they had a poor understanding of what changes had occurred during their absence. Their strategy was built on the situation in Timor back in 1975.

National character

Our island’s rivers help to depict our national character. Here in Timor, the rivers are almost dry throughout the year, but when it rains and the water rushes down from the mountains — pity those poor souls who try to cross its path. Like our rivers, most of the time we are kind and gentle, but from time to time our thoughts are seized by something inexplicable that alters our social behaviour.

Portuguese historians know us the best and their investigations have mostly focused on tiny kingdoms with an intricate structure of groups; clans that allowed no external interference in each other’s affairs. These clans managed to live together as a result of forging alliances, but as soon as problems arose, they would rise up against each other. A dispute could flare up over water, cattle, romantic attachments, etc. But in the end the people could always rely on a conflict resolution system: each clan’s council of elders. There were symbols in which people saw deep meanings. Ours is a culture in which symbols are highly treasured. Indonesia succeeded in shattering this symbolic culture of ours. The checks and balances, wisdom, old people and elders were replaced by a new system whose rules were a complete mystery to the people. We had our foundations swept away and we didn’t discover any new ones.

The roots of this local, feudal authority still go deep. In Europe the courts are called upon to resolve disputes, but it is a new development for the Timorese people. In the event of violence people go to the police, but the law enforcement officers may refrain from making any arrests if nobody has been caught red-handed. But, according to local custom, this kind of dispute was very easily settled. Both sides had a chance to make their side of the story, and if the guilty party was found, the individual admitted to the wrongdoing and agreed to be penalised.

> N. 3 N.E. - NOVEMBER DECEMBER 2007
Surviving splendours and curiosities: Discover them before the tourists come

Timor-Leste can boast a truly rich history, a long line of people who have shaped history, a fully-fledged political democracy and, most recently, a strong female presence in the corridors of power. Today, more than a quarter of MPs are women. But the country is a lot more than a socio-political story. It is a country of breathtaking, lush landscapes and cultural curiosities that need to be discovered now, before the tourists turn up by the thousands.

Few people know much about Timor. For a start, there is even some confusion about its name. Is it East Timor, Timor-Leste, Timor Lorosae, Timor Loro’sae? The official title may be the Democratic Republic of East Timor, but the most commonly used names are the simplified Portuguese and Tetum ones: Timor-Leste and Timor Lorosae/Timore Loro’sae, the two written forms in the local language, Tetum. Leste means ‘east’ while Lorosae also refers to the ‘east’ or ‘the rising sun.’ And while the country has experienced several painful upheavals since independence in 2002, the dire warnings against travel to the country posted on the Internet sites of various Western governments seem to be more than a bit exaggerated. Admittedly, the civil strife of 2002 caused large numbers of the population to flee their homes and forced the UN to maintain troops in the country to help protect the new government. During this time, though, foreigners have remained relatively safe, away, but the city is well maintained. There is little evidence of poverty on the streets and it is the same in the refugee camps where the displaced people have settled.

Dili’s waterfront offers a range of welcoming restaurants. There, visitors can watch the sun turning the waters pink as it slowly sinks into the bay and you can delight at the view as you wait for the fish and seafood you have chosen. For the more adventurous, a climb up the steps to the statue of Christ the King exposes a panorama of mangrove, white sand and streams.

To discover the country’s geographical treasures it is necessary to head north from Dili to the country’s second largest city, Baucau, 140 kilometres away. This drive quickly reveals that Timor resembles nothing less than a large piece of crumpled paper. The southern plains apart, there is nothing but mountains, split from place to place by valleys. Some of the mountains rise to a height of over 3,000 metres. Visitors can break the journey at Lalei to admire the church and paddy fields that spread out around the town like a nature park. Manatuto is also worth a visit again with its paddy fields.

In Baucau there are remnants of the Portuguese colonial era – a town that still exudes a distinguished air and its pousada [country inn] is worthy of one in the Portuguese Alentejo. But there is much more for the visitor to see, including the heights of the Gunung Tatanhulu (2,965 metres) in the centre of the country, the southern plains and the high valleys are just a sample of its unforgettable geography.

Timor’s culture and customs are curiosities in themselves. A country of barely one million people has 15 language groups and these are further divided into hundreds of dialects that have little in common. And although one language, Tetum, might be understood by more than half the population, Indonesian is probably the most widely spoken. However, Indonesian is no longer recognised as an official language having too many unhappy associations with the past, as it was imposed on the islanders following the invasion of the country.

The music of Timor is starting to be appreciated, a mixture of four and a half centuries of colonisation and local traditions. There is the Tebe-dai, mainly played in church and during official ceremonies in the traditional sacred houses (uma lulik) as well as during the rice harvest. It is reminiscent of certain types of Portuguese religious music, all pump and ceremony. But the most popular music is the koremetan. Domingos de Sousa explained that, “During the time of the Portuguese the sport was held in the bazaar and there was an admission charge and official permits. Today, there are not so many controls, but it is still a passion.”

Finally, although only a few remain, the Futabucks houses reflect a once typical and original form of architecture. With their sculptures of wood or horn, pottery and woven baskets, they form part of the catalogue of must-see cultural artifacts in Timor. These cultural pieces, places and practices have survived in spite of the long dark years that make up the recent history of this small country. Perhaps its very survival reflects in the people’s will to resist and their eventual reward of freedom. H.G.
Slovenia’s route to independence after the break-up of the former Yugoslavia was less troubled than that of its Balkan neighbours (see box). Its current history seems full of firsts; the first state of the former Yugoslavia to become an EU member in May 2004, the first amongst its fellow batch of 10 EU newcomers to join the Euro-zone at the beginning of January 2008 and the first to open its legal system to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. There’s a newness right from stepping off the plane at the upgraded Jože Pučnik Airport outside Ljubljana, just one of key projects to promote economic growth. Sharing borders with Austria to the north, Hungary to the north-east, Italy to the south-west and the Balkan neighbours, it will showcase the country’s natural assets too: forests, mountains, lakes and Mediterranean coastline.

An independent nation for just 15 years, Slovenia is relishing the prospect of being at the helm of the EU, January–June 2008. Both the EU and Slovenian flags fly together on all public buildings. The period in the EU Presidency seat will spotlight the country’s policies to attract more foreign investment and to promote integration into the EU of its Balkan neighbours. It will showcase the country’s natural assets too: forests, mountains, lakes and Mediterranean coastline.

Strengthening institutional capabilities and rural development: responding quickly to crises

Timor-Leste and the European Union

Timor became a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group (and a party to ACP-EU cooperation) in May 2003. Since its de facto independence in 1999 it has benefited from EU aid for the countries of Asia and Latin America (ALA).

Additionally, since Timor ratified the Cotonou Agreement – which governs relations between the EU and ACP – it has also been eligible for aid from the European Development Fund (EDF). In total, the EU has allocated more than €200 million to Timor from 1999 to 2006. Europe’s total aid for this period (from the EU and individual Member States) was half of all the aid to Timor, a total €400 million.

EU contributions to the trust funds created by different donors through UN agencies came to €85.5 million, with humanitarian aid for emergency assistance and rehabilitation reaching €56.5 million. That sum included €6 million for the EU’s humanitarian aid office (ECHO), €6 million for stockpiling food and the remainder (€35.5 million) to NGOs. Rural development received €34.5 million, the health sector €24.5 million and a further €2.5 million went to the improvement of ministry operations and those of the ACP countries (EDF). This was set out in a strategy document presented in June 2006 and given a budget of €18 million.

> Two priority sectors

EU aid within this framework is concentrated in two specific sectors.

First, three projects aimed at strengthening institutional capabilities:

- Creating an office of the National Authorising Officer – the local government representative responsible for managing the aid.
- Support in holding presidential, legislative and municipal elections. This in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- Support to assist the country deliver on its budget in association with the World Bank programme.

Second, rural development. The ACP have completed back-to-back programmes dedicated to rural development and the EDF will be running a third, focused mainly on infrastructure creation (roads, bridges, canals) and methods of bringing agricultural products to market. A programme that fits into the framework of the 10th European Development Fund (2008–2013) is currently being prepared with an initial allocation of €63 million planned for Timor. Again this will be concentrated on rural development and strengthening institutional capabilities as well as health. In rural development, emphasis will focus on the quality of agricultural products and services, including training. Support for institutional capabilities will once again concentrate on the justice system – the weakest link in the Timorese administration – as well as the strengthening of the Timorese Parliament. Europe’s aid for the health sector will be in conjunction with other donor countries such as Australia and support for budgetary control may be included at a later date.

It was during the latter years of the Indonesian occupation that Europe’s institutions first showed an interest in Timor-Leste. This began with the European Parliament’s award of the ‘Satharaw Prize’ for human rights to Xanana Gusmão, hero of the Timorese struggle for independence, now the country’s Prime Minister. As for the European Commission, its President, José Manuel Barroso, has always shown a particular interest in this small Asian country. Stressing this, and following the crises of April, May and June 2006, Barroso sent a special envoy, Miguel Amado, to evaluate the political, economic and social situations in the country. Subsequently, the Commission decided to open a delegation in Dili, where previously it had been represented by only a technical office.

However, the EU’s activities were already considerable and its head, Günter Verheugen, played an active role in the implementation of the Commission’s aid programmes and coordination with the representatives of the EU Member States in the Timor-Leste capital. For those asking why there is a need for an EU delegation in such a small country at a time when others are being closed, Colombo stresses the geopolitical importance of this small country that lies so strategically between Australia and Indonesia. That geographic accident is attracting the interest of many, including China, the United States and Japan. Could it perhaps be a sign of an emerging geopolitical policy on the part of the European Union?

H.G.
Towards the capital there are signs of an economy in transition. In the midst of the patchwork of small holdings of mainly maize and cabbage, an advertising billboard attached to a redundant factory, an old tobacco factory, displays the word ‘Rizal Pharmaceuticals’. The company is one of the biggest players of the economy, says the Chamber of Commerce and Industry including; Lek Pharmaceuticals, Ljubljana; Krka Pharmaceuticals, Novo Mesto; Telecommunications Telekom Slovenije, Ljubljana and the retail group, Mercator, Ljubljana.

Trade is mostly with other EU countries, 67.9% of exports going to this market in 2005 with 17.2% to its former Yugoslav neighbors. Slovenia has a large bilateral trade surplus with Italy, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The country has a surplus of 20.7% of GDP in 2007, twice the 13-member Eurozone average. Some blame uncontrollable factors like high fuel prices, others, the rounding off of prices when the Euro came in. There are questions too about the pressure of public project spending triggering inflation.

The country has a lot vested in the EU to promote regional economic integration and pull in more foreign investors. Growing areas of the economy are technology-related industries, freight and knowledge-based services such as computing, finance and telecommunications, insurance and business services. Inward investment is mainly from Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands in descending order with most of Slovenian investment going to Croatia, the Netherlands, Serbia and Montenegro in that order, according to data for the Public Agency of Slovenia for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments (JAPFI). JAPFI feels tourism harbours a lot of economic potential (see separate article). Ljubljana’s ‘Old Town’ has jaw dropping architecture. Each corner rounded is to turn a page of European history. The authorities of the capital city also have a fresh vision encapsulated in – ‘Ljubljana 2025’ – promoted by deputy mayor, Janez Kolež. It’s a 20-year master plan for the capital including a nature park, a new railway and bus station, sports stadium and business and residential areas notably whole new urban areas such as Tobašna city, to be built on the grounds of an old tobacco factory.

Ljubljana’s rich past seems to stimulate contemporary creators. The Slovenian capital’s biennial of graphic arts, exhibiting printed matter, computer, web-based art, video and photography, is the biggest such event for reproductible art internationally and has been held every two years in Ljubljana since 1955. And an old military prison of the former Yugoslav republic has been converted into ‘Celtica’, a youth hostel in Metelkova, a zone of the city known as a meeting point for artists. Each of the 20 cells has been originally decorated with the help of 80 Slovenian and foreign artists. Opened in 2003, you have to book your cells well in advance since it’s extremely popular with foreign tourists drawn by the romanticism of the more distant aspects of Eastern Europe – military gaols. “We can whisper to each other through the walls,” said a fellow hostel inmate looking forward to a night of incarceration.

Wines gaining a global reputation

Slovenian supermarkets are not stacked with wines from the new world but ‘Produce of Slovenia’ fermented on home soil. Slovenian shoppers are loyal to wines from the country’s three main growing regions; Podravje in the north-east, Posavje in the south-east and sunny wines from the hinterland of the Mediterranean coast in the south-west.

There’s a chinking as visitors leave; the sound of bottles of great tasting finds uncorked during their stay. Wine growing has been going on for 2,000 years in Slovenia. There are all varieties of wines; dry to sweet, red to white and some that sparkle. “We have fantastic natural conditions for wine growing,” says Dušan Brejc, Director of the Commercial Union for Viticulture and Wine of Slovenia, at his office in Ljubljana.

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Slovenian wines are on the wine lists of restaurants of New York, London and Berlin. So why are they rarely in major outlets in the EU? Firstly, Slovenia cannot currently compete with the sought after easy drinking wines of the new world. “We could probably produce a blockbuster Chardonnay,” says Brejc, but neither the size of Slovenia nor its topography are in its favour.

Slovenia is a country of small-scale of producers, says Brejc. Some 20,000 wine growers have under 0.7 hectares of land, with only 400 owning over three hectares. “Sixty-six per cent of Slovenian vineyards are on steep slopes. It means that everything has to be done by hand,” explains Brejc. This raises the price per bottle above the UK sterling 4.99 buying barrier (approximately €7), which occupies a big share of the major UK market.

“State socialism was probably not a positive image for wine,” he adds. He says that wine producers in Slovenia are changing their marketing, including simple, clutter-free labelling with a more contemporary look. Brejc adds that the fear of a fall in sales of Slovenian wine by 20% in the domestic market after EU membership did not happen, proving a loyal customer base at home. He now thinks the time is ripe to put Slovenia more firmly on the map as a wine buyer’s destination. And in 10 years time he says, why not a light, easy drinking wine to com-pete with the new world?
In the aftermath of the Austro-Hungarian defeat, the Croatian assembly in Zagreb and a national gathering in Ljubljana called in October 1918 for national freedom and the formation of an independent state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in Zagreb. This State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs united with the Kingdom of Serbia to form the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in December 1918, which was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. This disintegrated at the onset of the Second World War and Slovenian territory was divided between Germany, Italy and Hungary. The Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation was founded in Ljubljana in 1941 presenting armed resistance to occupying forces and the Communist party taking a leading role in the cause. The assembly of representatives of the Slovenian nation decided to include Slovenia in the new Yugoslavia and two years later, the Federal Peoples’ Republic of Yugoslavia was declared, renamed in 1963, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) with President Josip Broz Tito at its head.

**Josip Broz Tito’s death in 1980 led to the end of the SFRY within 10 years. Slovenia called for independence and in 1988 the first political opposition parties were created. In May 1990 the declaration of the Sovereign state of Slovenian nation was followed in April 1990 by the first democratic elections where 88% voted for independence. There was a subsequent declaration on independence 25 June 1991. This prompted Yugoslav army attacks on the state. A truce followed a 10-day war. The Yugoslav army left and the EU formally recognised Slovenia mid-January 1992. UN membership was gained in May 1992.**

Unfortunately, Ljubljana fell asleep decades ago, and we have just started to wake the city up. The main projects of Ljubljana are more than 20 years old. We intend to change that, which is also the reason for creating this vision of the city – Ljubljana 2025.

Its main aim is renewal in all spheres of city, life, ecological, cultural, social, business, urbanistic, architectural, etc. The target is traffic reduction to save energy and cut back on emissions and maximise the use of space through.

In 2004, Ljubljana represented 35.6% of the Slovenian gross domestic product (data for 2005 will be available this December). It is expanding fast, becoming a regional city. Its region numbers more than 500,000 inhabitants.

Creative culture, innovative science, high-quality universities, top-level healthcare and openness to international cooperation form the character of this European capital city, which is competitive in terms of quality of the environment, development opportunities, safety and hospitality.

Ljubljana will develop into an ideal city – a historical city of creative people tailored to people’s needs, an environmentally friendly city situated between two clean rivers and a pan-Slovenian metropolis, a cosmopolitan city at the centre of the national territory, at the intersection of European macro-regions. The EU presidency is important for the city of Ljubljana, mainly from a promotional point of view. We intend to present our city as an open, tolerant, modern European capital with great development potential. In May 2008, we are preparing a European conference, where two main topics will be discussed: relations and cooperation between the state and its capital, and multicultural dialogue.

**WAKING UP LJUBLJANA**

Popular mayor of Ljubljana, Zoran Jankovic, and founder of Mercator, one of the country’s leading retailers has plans to put Ljubljana firmly on the EU map.

Tourism: A sleeping giant

Slovenia gets a lot of transit-travellers on their way to Croatia’s Mediterranean coast and other destinations. The Slovenian government says it has every attraction to make them linger longer in Slovenia and thinks tourism should play more of a driving force in the economy and attract more foreign investment.

To anyone who’s visited the country, this comes as no surprise at all. Just in Ljubljana alone, you are transported into another era by the sumptuous surroundings of the Old Town, the 12th century castle, Renaissance, Baroque and Secessionist buildings and the famous Triple bridge of the 20th century Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik.

Around every corner be stunned by another sculptural surprise, or take a leisurely pit stop at Vodnikov Trg (square) with the freshest chocolate-stuffed bread or a have a rip of Slovenia’s famous plum brandy in the university quarter near Kongresni Trg. It’s only an hour by train to the Triglav National Park, Slovenia’s highest peak and at the foot of this Alpine range, the much photographed Lake Bled. You can take your pick of the health spa at the Spas and the health spa throughout the country or tourist farms where ‘potica’, a sort of cake filled with walnuts, poppy seeds, and cheese is served up. Then there are the caves of Postojna and Škocjan and primate forests and casinos along the border with Italy.

With everything going for it, Slovenia should have no trouble in reaching its target of raising visitor numbers by 6% between 2007-2011, with 8% more revenue to come from the sector.

*1 Euro = 0.69 sterling*
All fields of artistic activities were on display: music, theatre, dance, literature, cinema, comics and the visual arts. Beyond hope, Freddy Yambi was regarded as a major event not just for Brussels but also for the Congolese artists taking part. “Having a work of mine shown in Brussels is something that encourages me to continue, it’s very important, explains Bostjančič, its Head of Department for International Relations, at the body’s headquarters in Ig, just outside. Starting out to tackle the vast problem of contaminated land in Bosnia Herzegovina, its work quickly extended to other parts of the former Yugoslavia and south-east Europe, notably Croatia and Albania’s northern border with Kosovo and Serbia. Registered local contractors are hired through tender to carry out the work. To date, ITF has decontaminated 76 million square metres of land in the Balkans. Areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina are still very contaminated, explains Bostjančič and likewise the Croatia-Serbia border. Croatia itself was declared mine-free at the end of last year. Macedonia is also now mine free. Montenegro will be at the end of 2007, she says and Albania too soon according to ITF’s close monitoring.

Beyond hope, Congo on the move

The International Trust Fund (ITF) for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance was similarly set up in March 1998 by Slovenia’s Ministries of Defence, Health and Foreign Affairs to respond to the huge problem of landmines and unexploded ordnance which still maim and cause fatalities in the former Yugoslav Republics, says Bostjančič, its Head of Department for International Relations, at the body’s headquarters in Ig, just outside. Starting out to tackle the vast problem of contaminated land in Bosnia Herzegovina, its work quickly extended to other parts of the former Yugoslavia and south-east Europe, notably Croatia and Albania’s northern border with Kosovo and Serbia. Registered local contractors are hired through tender to carry out the work. To date, ITF has decontaminated 76 million square metres of land in the Balkans. Areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina are still very contaminated, explains Bostjančič and likewise the Croatia-Serbia border. Croatia itself was declared mine-free at the end of last year. Macedonia is also now mine free. Montenegro will be at the end of 2007, she says and Albania too soon according to ITF’s close monitoring.

EU funding

To date, ITF has worked with 27 donor countries and a large number of private donors and institutions like the EU which funded several projects to clear mines from border areas of the Republics of the former Yugoslavia 2003-2006. Particularly successful has been cooperation with the United States ‘Matching Fund’. Every dollar raised by ITF is matched by the US Department of State every dollar, contributing over US$100 million so far for the body’s work. Projects include going into schools to warn children about the dangers of landmines. The bright yellow, red and blue tops mean that children often try to pick them up. Sabina Bostjančič stresses the ITF’s ‘holistic’ approach to demining. There’s a constant need for projects to rehabilitate mine victims. An adult needs a new prothesis every 2-3 years, a child every year. There’s a need to work in communities, the NGO is also working in countries of the South Caucasus, Central Asia, Cyprus and Lebanon. It also plans to work in Laos, Cambodia and Colombo – the country that currently registers the most fatalities from landmines. “If land is mined, nothing happens. If agricultural land is cleared this is a precondition for development,” says Sabina Bostjančič.

De-mining expertise

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Beyond hope, Congo on the move

Yambi was regarded as a major event not just for Brussels but also for the Congolese artists taking part. “Having a work showcased in Matonge, an intercultural crossroads, is wonderful!” says Freddy Tumba, the man behind the first contemporary African work of art to be put on display in the capital of Europe. Called Au-delà de l’espoir (Beyond hope), Freddy Tumba’s sculpture is made from bullets the artist collected from the Kisangani battlefields. It represents a woman carrying a crippled child in her arms. “A plea for life” is how the artist sums it up.

EU funding

To date, ITF has worked with 27 donor countries and a large number of private donors and institutions like the EU which funded several projects to clear mines from border areas of the Republics of the former Yugoslavia 2003-2006. Particularly successful has been cooperation with the United States ‘Matching Fund’. Every dollar raised by ITF is matched by the US Department of State every dollar, contributing over US$100 million so far for the body’s work. Projects include going into schools to warn children about the dangers of landmines. The bright yellow, red and blue tops mean that children often try to pick them up. Sabina Bostjančič stresses the ITF’s ‘holistic’ approach to demining. There’s a constant need for projects to rehabilitate mine victims. An adult needs a new prothesis every 2-3 years, a child every year. There’s a need to work in communities, the NGO is also working in countries of the South Caucasus, Central Asia, Cyprus and Lebanon. It also plans to work in Laos, Cambodia and Colombo – the country that currently registers the most fatalities from landmines. “If land is mined, nothing happens. If agricultural land is cleared this is a precondition for development,” says Sabina Bostjančič.

De-mining expertise

The International Trust Fund (ITF) for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance was similarly set up in March 1998 by Slovenia’s Ministries of Defence, Health and Foreign Affairs to respond to the huge problem of landmines and unexploded ordnance which still maim and cause fatalities in the former Yugoslav Republics, says Bostjančič, its Head of Department for International Relations, at the body’s headquarters in Ig, just outside. Starting out to tackle the vast problem of contaminated land in Bosnia Herzegovina, its work quickly extended to other parts of the former Yugoslavia and south-east Europe, notably Croatia and Albania’s northern border with Kosovo and Serbia. Registered local contractors are hired through tender to carry out the work. To date, ITF has decontaminated 76 million square metres of land in the Balkans. Areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina are still very contaminated, explains Bostjančič and likewise the Croatia-Serbia border. Croatia itself was declared mine-free at the end of last year. Macedonia is also now mine free. Montenegro will be at the end of 2007, she says and Albania too soon according to ITF’s close monitoring.

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Yambi is obviously a testament to the fact that Congo is more than a nation where everybody is shedding tears in a landscape full of mud and battlefields. These artists represent 60 million Congolese citizens who are anxious to come through, to stake their claims, stresses Mitko Popovic. However, the war has made a serious impact on the country and its inhabitants, so it is no coincidence that the profound marks left on people’s hearts should reappear in several works in the key exhibition of contemporary art “Congo on the move”, showcased in Brussels Botanique Arts Centre. The exhibition includes an “installation” by Vitshois Mwilambwe called Le Congo sous perfusion (Congo being drip fed): a photograph of a man riddled with tubes and covered with plasters. “This is a country that has to be able to cure an illness that has lasted four decades,” explains Alain Mwilambwe, the man behind the photography.

After Yambi

Alain Mwilambwe claims that Yambi represents a “way of being projected, being there on the international stage”. Yambi is also a way for artists to try to emerge from a dire social situation where they have to struggle for government funding. The social situation is also reflected in the working conditions. The studios are cramped for space and the artists have to use what materials they are lucky to find. Amongst the forms of expressions highlighted by Yambi, the comic book was well positioned with the “Talatala” exhibition by Congolese authors portraying the diurnal round in Kinshasa in all its epic features, not least the never-ending police harassment of citizens, the desire for Europe and the art of resourcefulness. Another major event was the 12-13 October gathering of 20 or so novelists, poets, and short story writers with the Belgian public and writers as part of a “major Congolese literary salon”. Sponsored by the Brussels Association for Educational and Cultural Cooperation, this event was completely unprecedented! However, Yambi seeks to be more than a one-off spectacular event. “A meeting between two nations via artistic activities” aspiring to underline a sense of dignity, creative talent, identity, while fostering emotional and aesthetic exchanges between people: Yambi also seeks to plant the seeds of future cooperation on the basis of a programme of exchanges and cooperation. The General Commission for International Relations has in the way, according to Popovic. There will be follow-ups. AfricaNet has published an anthology of the works by 20 or so photographers. The Commission has produced a promotional CD, to be available at Midem 2008, and featuring the percussive sounds of La Sanza, Balladeurs Goufand and Lokas, the Groupe et la Confluence Brass Band. Similarly, a promotional DVD has been published with short films by Congolese video makers. All of these items act as highly valuable calling cards for artists who were unheard of up to now. “Charleroi danse”, the contemporary dance institute for the French-speaking Community in Belgium, played host to Congolese choreographers, while the Mons Dramatic Centre is planning to embark upon a two-month tour of Congo. And last but not least, Mitko Popovic is looking to Yambi to make its mark, the artists’ act of creation itself came face to face for first time with other forms of expression, was confronted by criticism. The head of Africultura predicts, “Some artists will be doing a great deal of soul searching, and seeking new ways of asserting themselves”.

WHY AFRICA?

FOLLOWING the new cultural line dedicated to the collecting issue, the Giovanni and Marella Agnelli’s Picture Gallery, flagship of the Turin-based family that founded the FIAT group, has launched the exhibition “Why Africa? The Pigozzi collection”, managed by André Magnin, art director of the Contemporary African Art Collection. For the first time the Pigozzi collection, the most important collection of contemporary African artworks, has been unveiled in Italy. The collection started in 1989 thanks to Jean Pigozzi and André Magnin, co-curator of the exhibition Les Magiciens de la Terre, which at that time was held at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The Turin exhibition, which includes 16 artists and about 100 artworks, showcases very famous artworks and some classics in a selection that perfectly reflects the strong identity of Magnin’s choices: a taste for self-taught artists operating in big cities of sub-Saharan Africa where artists usually tend to use the same techniques, styles and topics for which they have been ini-
tially appreciated. This also now allows them to build a strong visibility and enforce their placement in the market. These artworks have a strong political content clearly visible in figurative representations, sometimes even written, as in the paintings by Chéri Samba and in postcards by Frédéric Bruly Bosso. André Magnin says, “the most recurrent theme of the works exposed is the deep bond with the territory to which the artists direct their attention, proposing a personal experience of reality. This is therefore an ‘inclusive’ art, rooted in the present and past history, counter to each form of racial division. An art that comes from the people, that is addressed to the people and that goes back to the people”. And from our point of view in this characteristic lies the market and critics success of the style of authors as Samba or Bosso, Sidibé and Kingelez. These artists are in fact perfectly capable of negotiating, in a profitable way, with art dealers and collectors. They do not put themselves in an ‘artistic vanguard’ – a space of conceptual challenge with con-
If it were any other country, even in Africa, the event would pass unnoticed. But in Rwanda, a country still scarred by the 1994 genocide, it takes on quite another dimension: a... guide since the holocaust of the Great Lakes signals some sort of return to normality. As the author of Le Petit Fûté Rwanda, Belgian journalist François Janne d’Othée, explains, the genocide had such an impact on the country’s image and on people’s... of the volcanoes, the occasional contact with our ‘cousins’ the mountain gorillas, the exuberant flora. True to the genre, Le Petit Fûté Rwanda lists some good addresses for the traveller and suggests itineraries to suit various types of tourists, whose preference may be for hiking, climbing a volcano, watching wildlife or perhaps just being captivated by the voice of the great singer and composer Cécile Kayirebwa. At the same time the guide doesn’t shy away from looking at those darker episodes of recent history. ... visiting this ‘land of a thousand hills’ is not only a trip for the toughened traveller, it is also for those who don’t mind paying for the privilege. In other words, it isn’t cheap, especially if your itinerary plans to take in several of the... of the most important private collection of contemporary African art, seems to be a good starting point. - WHY AFRICA? The Pigozzi collection 6 October 2007– 3 February 2008 Lingotto – Giovanni and Marella Agnelli Picture Gallery Turin, Italy


The cover of the Rwanda’s guide published by Petit Fûté.

The cover of the Rwanda’s guide published by Petit Fûté.


Actually, it must be said that the approaches of some Anglo-African-American curators have opposed Magnin’s taste for ‘primitive’ and ‘caricature’ styles, for usage of recycled materials and references more or less ironic – to traditional culture. This is the case of Clémence Deliss in ‘Africa95’, Okwui Enwezor in the Johannesburg Biennale 1995 and 1997, Salan Hassan and Ou Ougibe in ‘Authentic-ex-centric’ in Venice Biennale 2001: exhibitions where more conceptual languages, as video, installation and performance, were used. However, André Magnin contributed to the international acknowledgement of artists he discovered, inserted in the collection and promoted internationally.

The stories of the exhibition’s artists are success stories: the 72-year-old photographer Malick Sidibé won the Golden Lion for his career at the 52nd Venice Biennale; Rosniul Azoumé was awarded at Documenta 12; Kingelez’s works are highly quoted. In African countries there doesn’t exist a normal ‘system’ of contemporary art with a certain number of qualified galleries making a sort of guarantee both for artists, regarding their promotion and profits, and for buyers, regarding the originality and value of the works. Within this context, Magnin has had the merit to discover a certain number of artists who have seen their condition changed thanks to their inclusion in the collection: from artists who operated just for tourists and a small market within the NGOs and embassies (a condition in which other artists still remain), to artists who are now a powerful position and great importance due to their presence in museums, international collections and within the art market. The situation of relative anarchy in which some authors have affirmed their position has brought violent disagreement and legal problems with respect to the authenticity of the works of deceased artists like Seidou Keïya and Georges Lilanga.

After many years of passionate discussion about the identity of African contemporary art, it now seems more important to reason and work on the art system and market and on the cultural industry. In this context, in fact, the art collection’s theme seems to be crucial.

To do this, the initiative of Giovanni and Mairella Agnelli, which has brought to Italy a portrait of what is the most important private collection of contemporary African art, seems to be a good starting point.


N. 3 N.E. - NOVEMBER DECEMBER 2007
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Aimé Mpane, 16 portraits gravés et peints sur bois. 149x149x10. Courtesy of Collection Jean-Paul Blachère.