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## Not All Dark and Gloomy

**The Year In Africa with  
Dr Chris Fomunyoh**



**Africa Defies The Odds In  
COVID-19 Response**

**Nigeria: Buffeted On  
All Sides, The Buhari  
Administration Gropes For  
Space**

**Cameroon: Another  
year ends with no solution  
in sight for Anglophone  
Crisis**

**Kenya: Towards Palpable  
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# The Bright Sides of A Dreadful Year

By Ajong Mbatndah L

Like most parts of the world, 2019 was a year of reckoning for Africa on many counts. A year where lofty plans were scurried by the COVID 19 pandemic. Precious lives were lost, stretched economies became over stretched, businesses wrecked, tourism stymied, and even electoral calendars in some countries were impacted. While many may see 2020 as a year to completely write off or forget, a lucid appraisal will point to a number of positives for the continent to build on.

According to statistics from Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Africa currently has 2,361,271 confirmed cases of COVID 19 cases, with Deaths 55,989 deaths, and 2,004,985 recoveries. Knowing the kind of acute health care challenges and the sad state of infrastructure in most countries, it is a miracle that Africa has those numbers. At the forefront of the continental wide response was the Cameroonian born Director of Africa CDC Dr John Nkengasong. From lockdowns, to travel restrictions, testing measures, and others, many African countries worked hard to mitigate the ravages of the pandemic.

In a sign of changing times, Africa was proactive in seeking its own solutions instead of waiting on the rest of the world to bring solutions. We saw this in the efforts of Madagascar with COVID Organics which was widely touted by President Andry Rajoelina as a remedy. While many questioned the scientific validity of the Covid Organics, the effort deserves credit especially when President Rajoelina went the extra mile of making it available to so many African countries. Equally salutary were the efforts of Archbishop Samuel Kleda of Douala, Cameroon who came up with his own herbal therapy which was credited by many for their recovery. We saw Ethiopian Airlines transporting supplies donated by the Jack Ma Foundation to beef up the African response. Morocco came up big in its own way with donations to support the response in some African countries in yet another

salutary gesture of things changing on the continent.

Moving forward, now could be the time for Africa to focus on alternative or traditional medicine. Beyond COVID, encouraging research on local remedies that could help other ailments could be useful. For all its importance, health care has never received the desired attention in most African countries. For even common ailments, there are many African leaders who will rush to Europe, the US, or Asia for treatment. COVID 19 highlighted the need to rethink and overhaul health care infrastructure in the continent. Thanks to COVID and travel restrictions, the taxpayer funded incessant travels of African leaders abroad for health reasons, vacations and other mundane reasons were kept under check. Just the savings from such curtailed activities could be enough seed money to start a thorough overhaul of health care systems and infrastructure to better serve people instead for waiting on the next crisis to start scrambling again.

On the political front, while many will think the year was defined by leaders like Alpha Conde of Guinea and Alassane Ouattara of Cote d'Ivoire doing away with constitutional provisions and imposing themselves on third terms, the most exciting development may have come from Malawi. Presidential elections deemed to have been rigged by incumbent President Mutharika were annulled by the courts with an order of a rerun which effectively took place, and he was beaten by the opposition challenger. This development represented a huge step forward for democracy and hopefully the example can be emulated in other African countries.

Building on these positives, there should be a reason to hope that 2021 will be a better year for Africa. In institutions like the African Development Bank-AfDB, the continent has a solid and reliable development partner. Solidly backed by African countries, when external partners threatened to scuttle his reelection to a richly deserved second

term, its President Dr Akinwumi Adesina has spared no efforts in providing a robust response from the Bank to help African countries.

At the African Union-AU, with elections coming up, hopefully the new leadership will be one that reflects the aspirations of Africans and not those of leaders who have visions at odds with those of the people. More often than not, the AU has been absent in moments when it is most needed. It is shocking to see the AU remain so indifferent to the crisis in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. It speaks volumes when the AU goes mute in the face of leaders doing away with term limits against the wishes of their people. When an Institution is quick to castigate a military coup popularly backed by Malians, but indifferent to phony constitutional changes in Guinea and Cote'Ivoire to do away with term limits to enable their leaders remain in power, there is a serious problem.

In addition to the elections at the AU, many will actually be looking at progress on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement-AfCTA. Touted as having great protentional to profoundly transform the continent, COVID 19 slowed down plans for the launch of its effective implementation, the hope is that things will pick up on that front in 2021.

The year 2020 ends on a dramatic note for African football with the fall of Ahmad Ahmad the President of the African Football Confederation, indicted on charges of corruption. While this was not the end many would have wished for him, it comes as no surprise as the man seemed lost and clueless from the get-go. How he replaced the venerable Issa Hayatou a man who toiled hard for decades to earn global respect for African football defied logic. In less than one term of office, the ineptitude of Ahmad reduced CAF to a laughingstock in global football. Few may miss him, but restoring the credibility, independence and forceful voice that CAF had under Issa Hayatou will take hard work.

As is customary we use this



Ajong Mbatndah L, Managing Editor

December issue of PAV revisit key issues that defined 2020. Taking a look on the year in retrospect is Dr Christopher Fomunyoh, Senior Associate for Africa at the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, NDI. A leading voice in Africa for decades, Dr Fomunyoh sheds light on major socio-political and economic events that defined the year in Africa.

As a global power, elections in the USA always generate great excitement and interests, and just as opinions were sharply divided in the USA on the two candidates, so was the case in Africa. From men of God indulged in all forms of ridiculous prophecies on the eventual winner, and offering answers as to why their prophecies could not come through, to fanatics who still believe the outcome as it stands now will still be overturned, many Africans have been passionate about US politics this year, but are Africans actually conversant with the US-African policy? Lawrence Freeman a political and economic analyst with thirty years of experience working on the continent takes a hard look at the state of US-African ties in an interview.

From the continental response to COVID 19, to the travails of Buhari in Nigeria, the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon with no end in sight, Kenya's quest for a new dawn for its acrimonious politics, to the heroes and villains, a tribute to departed icons, the good riddance of Ahmad at the Confederation of African Football and more, the December issue paints a portrait of Africa in 2020. Happy reading!!



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# Africa Remains The Land Of Promise For Billions of People-Dr Christopher Fomunyoh

By Ajong Mbapndah L



*In the midst of all the challenges, it was not all dark and gloomy for Africa, says Dr Fomunyoh*

Africa remains the land of promise for billions of people and we owe it to posterity not to destroy or squander what the Lord and nature have graciously put in stock for us, says Dr Christopher Fomunyoh, Senior Associate for Africa at the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, NDI. In an interview to review the year in Africa, Dr Fomunyoh says Africa must play to its strength.

“We are the youngest continent on the face of the globe, we have the most youthful and resilient population, the most diversity and untapped resources and wealth; and if we don’t value all of these assets, the rest of the world will continue to turn us a blind eye. We must respect our own lives and our own people for no one else will do so in our place,” says Fomunyoh.

Fielding questions on major socio-economic and political developments

that defined the year in Africa, Dr Fomunyoh opines that in the midst of all the challenges, it is not all dark and gloomy for the continent.

*Thanks for accepting this interview to review the year in Africa with PAV and we would like to start with COVID 19, what assessment do you make of the African response to the pandemic?*

To a large extent, Africa has been luckier than other continents in the sense that our worst fears and the cataclysmic projections about likely deaths across the continent have not materialized. Yet we must acknowledge that, like on every continent, the COVID 19 pandemic has had disastrous consequences in loss of lives and disruption of economic and political activity. As of this interview, based on statistics from the World Health Organization

(WHO), for the continent’s 1.4 billion inhabitants, we have had approximately 1.4 million Coronavirus cases and approximately 33,400 COVID-19 related deaths. That’s far less than other continents, but it’s still regrettable and heartbreaking. We must remain vigilant and respectful of preventive measures such as mask wearing, social distancing and other health measures. We must not lower our guard, especially because the public health, social and economic infrastructures of most of our countries are not robust enough to withstand all the shocks of this pandemic.

*From people like Archbishop Kleda in Cameroon with his herbal cure, to President Rajoelina of Madagascar touting the merits of COVID Organics as a cure, may we get your take on these efforts*

*from Africans to be proactive in seeking solutions and instead of waiting for others to bring solutions for them?*

We cannot discount that our rich flora and the unique species of medicinal plants that our continent possesses can boost immune systems and contribute to other healing therapies for coronavirus and other ailments. The difficulties we face for such a global pandemic are in being able to scale up and sustain production on a national level and maintain quality control over therapies like the ones you mention.

*What impact did the pandemic have on politics and democratic progress on Africa which you are well versed with?*

The overall impact of the Coronavirus and COVID-19 pandemic on African politics has been very negative, as it has made it extremely

difficult for citizens to exercise their rights and continue their advocacy for political space and good governance. We saw that in a country such as Burundi, the government pushed through presidential elections in the heat of the crisis, and then the former Head of State who had been campaigning vigorously through that period lost his life from COVID-19 complications. Eswatini (former Swaziland) just lost its prime minister to the pandemic. Ethiopia was forced to postpone its elections because of the pandemic, and the inability to find consensus on the matter then led to a political crisis between the central government and leaders of one of the country's regions - Tigray - that has now convulged into a full-blown armed conflict with thousands of casualties and lots of refugees and internally displaced persons. In other countries such as Uganda and Guinea Conakry, regimes with autocratic tendencies are using the excuse of the pandemic to further clamp down on citizens' rights and various freedoms, hence aggressively shrinking political space, and that is so shameful!

***In Malawi, we saw a court overturn the results of Presidential elections won by an incumbent and ordered for a rerun won by the opposition, can you put some context on this and what lessons Africa could learn from this?***

Malawi turned out to be a beautiful story in the midst of otherwise dark clouds. We must thank the justices of the Supreme Court of Malawi for their courage and independence in applying the law. We also must salute the tenacity and peaceful commitment of political parties and civil society organizations which, on finding weaknesses in the previous elections, sought legal redress instead of resorting to violence as we've seen in some countries. There's something unique about Malawi as its people have faced several challenges in the path of the country's democratic transition but have always risen to meet and surpass these obstacles. I remember the 1993 referendum on



***With the youngest continent on the face of the globe, the most youthful and resilient population, the most diversity and untapped resources and wealth, if we do not value these assets, the rest of the world would not, says Fomunyoh***

have taken two steps forward during which even the Malawian Defense Forces sided with citizens for political pluralism and good governance. Lots of lessons to learn, and surely much that the rest of us Africans should be grateful to the Malawians for.

***We also did notice the resurgence of the disturbing trend of leaders especially in French speaking Africa changing term limits to remain in power with Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire as key examples, what accounts for this setback for democracy and what needs to be done to avoid this becoming the new normal for African countries?***

Despite the positive experiences of countries such as Senegal and Niger Republic, the alternation of political power and renewal of political leadership remain constant challenges in Francophone Africa. To date, only Benin, Mali and Senegal have seen multiple peaceful transitions from one elected president to the next at the end of two terms - and Senegal only after former President Wade was defeated as he ran for a third term. Other countries

have taken two steps forward and multiple steps backward, hence giving the impression of very fragile or yet uncompleted transitions. As many of the Francophone countries are located in West Africa, the regional body (the Economic Community of West African states - ECOWAS) has in the past played an important role in upholding democratic norms in the region, and around 2015 came close to amending its protocol on governance to provide specific protections of presidential term limits. However, those efforts deserve to be reinforced to avoid further backsliding.

***Today, many ask why should people trust the opposition when leaders such as Professor Alpha Conde in Guinea who fought for democratic reforms most of his adult life, and even Alassane Ouattara in Cote d'Ivoire, get to power only to perpetuate and excel in the same undemocratic practices they vowed to fight?***

That's a very valid concern, and I believe pro-democracy advocates and civil society, as well as development partners should be urging these leaders to think about their legacies and how they think they will be

judged by history. Africa today years for leaders that can emulate the examples of South Africa's Nelson Mandela, or Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Botswana's Festus Mogae, Tanzania's Jakaya Kikwete and others that made their countries and the continent proud when they handed over power peacefully after serving their terms in office.

***You were in Ghana for the 2020 elections where President Nana Akufo Addo was proclaimed winner, but the opposition is crying foul, how did the elections go from your perspective?***

In fact, although in the past 20 years, Ghana has always experienced very close and competitive elections, the 2020 polls seem to be the closest both for the presidency and the parliament. Ghana's two main parties -- the National Patriotic Party (NPP), and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) -- are both quite solid and do start every election with a substantial base of support. As per the official results of the Electoral Commission, the next parliament will be divided right down the middle and will require a lot of tact and parliamentary agility and

collaboration to get elected officials on both sides to work together. With regards to the presidential race, the two main candidates and their respective parties set up their own data centers where they collected results from polling stations to track those officially announced by the Electoral Commission. I'm therefore hopeful that once they clean up their numbers, they will come to the same conclusion as the Commission. I'm very confident that both presidential candidates are men of peace and committed democrats who mean well for Ghana and the continent of Africa. They will not allow Ghana to go down the path of other countries that have experienced violence in the post-election period.

**What lessons do you think other African countries can learn from Ghanaians?**

Many lessons indeed: For example, that regular peaceful elections can be the norm in Africa. By holding its elections on schedule every four years, and also taking steps to engage in electoral reforms after every exercise, Ghana is proving that all that comes out of African elections is not doom and opacity, and Ghanaians should be commended for that. There's open political space in Ghana that allows civil society and media to independently monitor the polls without any incumbrances, to the point where a coalition of civic groups (CODEO) now conducts parallel vote tabulations as a permanent fixture in the process since 2008. Ghana also has strong and effective political parties that make it easy to gain citizen input into the policy formulation process and to run issue-based campaigns. I hope that Ghanaians will share freely of these experiences as they exchange views and compare notes with other Africans.

**What do you make of the ENDSARS in Nigeria, with a myriad of problems across the continent, is there something that other African countries could learn or draw from that?**

In my opinion, the ENDSARS



*Dr Fomunyoh with President Issoufou of Niger whose country is cited today as one of the success stories in Francophone Africa in terms of democratic progress*

movement in Nigeria was a spontaneous demonstration of how citizen dissatisfaction with government performance can erupt in unexpected ways. It all started as a protest against police brutality, but then other grievances popped up in ways that the Nigerian government may not have expected. A couple of lessons stand out for me, including the fact that police brutality and violence is unacceptable and must be stopped, and governments must put in place mechanisms to listen to citizen responses to their performance. I am pleased that commissions are being set up in various states across Nigeria to look into matters of social justice and policing, and that Nigerian youth and civic leaders are having a seat at the table to make their voices count and their views heard.

**May we get your take on the Building Bridges Initiative in Kenya where fierce political rivals are trying to chart a new political discourse and path?**

That too is getting extremely heated and polarizing, and we can only wish that Kenyans, who have gone through similar experiences with past constitutional debates and reviews, are reminded to do the right

thing for their people and the country.

**In Cameroon, the Anglophone crisis continues to rage on with no end in sight, at this point in time, what do you suggest as a way forward to a lasting solution?**

It is incredibly sad and revolting to see what began as a citizen's petition regarding legitimate rights and grievances morphed into a crisis and now a full-blown armed conflict with its daily dose of killings and atrocities. As I have said since 2016, when the crisis first broke, a military solution is the worst approach to settling grievances that are long embedded in historical facts and missteps. The only solution is for genuine negotiations among all parties, and with third party facilitation. So much death, damage and destruction have befallen the English-speaking people of former Southern Cameroons. With now thousands of deaths, over 70,000 refugees in neighboring Nigeria, over 800,000 internally displaced and over 4.2 million people at risk of famine, everything must be done to bring the conflict to an end. The international community and friends of Cameroon must do more to help us bring an end to the war and address

the genuine grievances of the afflicted populations.

**Despite the huge toll on people in the North West and South West Regions, the international community has remained so indifferent, why is the international community turning a blind eye to the crisis in Cameroon?**

Some countries within the international community have made multiple declarations on the conflict, but their admonitions have fallen on deaf ears. Even the last session of the United Nation Security Council meeting on December 9, 2020, discussed Cameroon; however, by now, it should be clear to everyone that simple declarations and statements alone will not suffice. People are being killed and innocent lives lost daily in the North West and South West regions. We are in the 21st century, and world leaders should not sit by idly or passively while these atrocities continue with absolute impunity.

**President Biya has been largely absent from the scene, and no one seems to know exactly who is in charge; how**

**important has his absence been as an impediment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict?**

To many descendants of Southern Cameroons, Paul Biya has become a huge part of the problem, and a lot has been documented about how his government's mismanagement of the crisis has exacerbated it. When governing a country in conflict or crisis, leaders are known to exert themselves tirelessly in search for peace - in the Cameroon case we don't see Biya doing that. It's difficult to say who is giving the orders today, but individuals must know that, ultimately, they will be held accountable for their roles in the massacres and atrocities.

**As the succession battle plays out behind the scenes in Cameroon, there are some who have suggested that a President from the English-speaking regions of the country could be one of the confidence building measures, do you agree?**

That was the spirit of the Federation that existed at reunification from 1961 - 1972. At the time, there was an understanding as two equal entities the positions of president and vice president could alternate between leaders from the two cultural and linguistic entities that formed the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Unfortunately, that too was abrogated by Francophone leaders who began a process of over centralization of power and attempted assimilation of the Anglophones. At the fast rate of today's deterioration, I am fearful that if the conflict is not brought to an end swiftly, it'll go past the point where simple elite bargains will be sufficient or credible enough to bring peace and harmony.

And a word on your own political ambitions, if you are called upon by Cameroonians to answer the call for a new leadership in the country, is that something you are willing to consider?

The challenges at hand demand that we all shelf our personal ambitions until we can get our people out of the total mess and sense of



*On Cameroon, Dr Fomunyoh says the only solution is for genuine negotiations among all parties, and with third party facilitation.*

distress and hopelessness in which they find themselves. The situation is heartbreaking and depressing, it is extremely difficult to project into the future while surrounded by the current dark clouds that risk annihilating a whole generation of our people.

**The year in Africa also saw the passing of big personalities from former Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings, to President Nkurunziza of Burundi, South African iconic Lawyer George Bizos, Manu Dibango and any word from you for these departed Africans?**

Indeed, 2020 has been a very difficult year at multiple levels. I knew President Jerry J. Rawlings personally, and had the pleasure on many occasions to visit with him in Accra, and to work closely with him on the African Statesmen's Initiative which was a gathering of former African Heads of State that were very active in humanitarian and other good causes across the continent. His sheer presence and personality, his positive energy and big vision for Africa are unmatched. We will all miss him, just as his fellow country men and women of Ghana would. Manu Dibango was also a class act of a legend - the world-renowned

self-made man whose leadership in music and culture were unrivaled. He too was an African legend and an ambassador for the continent. It's still very difficult to imagine that 'Grand Manu' is gone to his final resting place. May the souls of these departed African leaders rest in perfect peace and their memories remain a blessing.

As we move into 2021, what will the agenda for the NDI look like with regards to its engagement with Africa?

NDI and its various partner organizations are committed to working to reverse some of the backsliding that we discussed earlier. For example, we are looking at providing multiple platforms for Africans to foster discussions on how to safeguard and consolidate the progress that has been made in some countries while drawing lessons from those successes to address shortcomings in other countries. For example, we are gladly joining various African experts, advocacy groups and civil society organizations in what we hope will be a continent-wide conversation on constitutional term limits and the rule of law as tenets of democratic governance. It is important to curb the resurgence of 'life presidents', something that

the continent worked so hard to dismantle in the early 1990s, but that seems to be resurfacing in a number of countries. In that endeavor, we take comfort in knowing that of the continent's population of 1.4 billion people, more than 75 percent are youth 35 years or younger, a vast majority of whom aspire to have a strong say in the politics and public policy of their respective countries, and to be governed justly and democratically.

We end the interview with your wish for Africa in 2021, what will you like to see for the continent?

The new year wish for Africa 2021, is that we give our young men and women the opportunities to lead. Our continent must play to its strength -- we are the youngest continent on the face of the globe, we have the most youthful and resilient population, the most diversity and untapped resources and wealth; and if we don't value all of these assets, the rest of the world will continue to turn us a blind eye. We must respect our own lives and our own people for no one else will do so in our place. The continent still remains the land of promise for billions of people, and we owe it to posterity not to destroy or squander what the Lord and nature have graciously put in stock for us. \_\_\_\_\_

# Buffeted On All Sides, The Buhari Administration Gropes For Space

By Richard Mammah

Though they had spent quite a lot of their political capital attempting to give a good face to the Muhammadu Buhari administration, it is looking quite obvious now that for many of the Northern political elite, the parlous security situation in the region has indeed taken its toll on their faith in the government and they may presently have reached 'the tipping point' in terms of their frustration over the seeming inability of the government to address it.

In the past few days and weeks, the din of criticism coming from the region on the failings of the administration on most notably the security turf have been getting louder. From the Sultan of Sokoto to the Northern Elders Forum and on to members of the National Assembly from the region - many of whom belong to the ruling All Progressives Congress alongside the president - the dam has literally been opened and the torrent of criticism is now almost unstoppable.

Very dramatically, the spate of criticism has since percolated over unto the National Assembly which the incumbent administration had reportedly taken a more than casual interest at its emergence in ensuring that it would not have leaders who would rock the boat. But faced with the reality of body bags everywhere, the lawmakers are also now being compelled to be more than yes-men and women to the Presidency. They are asking tough questions, demanding tougher action and also now summoning the President!

Perhaps the most trenchant of the administration's critics is the Northern Elders Forum, NEF. A body that is composed of academics, technocrats and



President Buhari is assailed by criticisms from all angles in Nigeria.

public servants, serving and retired, NEF in its latest assessment of the administration could almost not find anything to salvage!

In a statement signed by NEF Director, Publicity and Advocacy, Dr. Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, the group lamented the recent beheading of 43 farmers in Borno State and expressed its shock over the remarks reportedly made by the Senior Special Assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari on Media and Publicity, Garba Shehu, that the slaughtered farmers did not receive clearance from security personnel to go to their farms!

'We have consistently drawn

attention to the lack of a political will to fight the Boko Haram insurgency and other threats such as banditry, rustling and kidnapping.

'We had offered suggestions on how the security infrastructure could be improved and the leadership of the military could be made more effective.

'Obviously, along with advice and concerns from many other Nigerians, these have made no impression on President Muhammadu Buhari.

'These particular killings have been greeted by the most insensitive response by spokespersons of the President.

'The lame excuse that farmers

had not sought permission from the military to harvest produce merely expose the misleading claims that our military had secured vast territories from the insurgency.

'These killings and the reality they expose will make relocation of citizens and resumption of economic activities a lot more difficult to achieve even for a leadership that attaches priority to them, and this administration does not.

'Elsewhere in many parts of the North, many farming communities have not been allowed by bandits and kidnappers to plant crops. Those who did are being prevented from harvesting by these same criminals.

'The prospects for famine are real in the face of limited production of food in many of our communities.

'Under this administration, life has lost its value, and more and more citizens are coming under the influence of criminals.

'We do not see any evidence of a willingness on the part of President Buhari to honour his oath to provide security over Nigerians.

'In civilized nations, leaders who fail so spectacularly to provide security will do the honourable thing and resign,' the statement very tersely expressed.

Other long-term and newly emergent critics of the administration are not left out. The main opposition political formation, the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP is enraged and scores of civil society activists have also risen up in arms to call the administration to order. Indeed in some extreme cases, the calls go beyond faulting the administration's tepid approach to security sector management and go on to asking the President to resign and quit the nation's top-rank political stage. Predictably, spokespersons



The Northern Elders Forum has slammed President Buhari for not doing enough to curb rising insecurity. Photo courtesy

for the administration have lampooned these calls.

**A tough year Indeed**

The distressing security crisis in most notably, the Northern part of Nigeria is not the only point of concern in the country today. Indeed, Nigeria has had a year like not many before it in recent times in terms of the toll that a lot of the untoward developments that have been recorded this far in the year have taken on citizens and residents of the country. It has been the year of the #EndSARS protests by young people who are demanding an end to police brutality in the country. It has also been the year when Nigeria slipped into its second bout of economic recession in the five years that General Muhammadu Buhari has held sway in the country. It has also been the year of the most debilitating COVID-19 pandemic and the associated season of lockdown that followed.

Going further, it has also been the year of the closure of Nigeria's land borders with its West and Central African neighbours and in the midst of this also, the time of Nigeria's eventually commencing the process of ratifying the landmark African Continental Free Trade Agreement, AfCFTA. The departing year has indeed been a mixed bag, a challenging season whose tough demands for discipline and adjustments can now no longer be faulted. Without putting it in very many words, it is a year that many in Nigeria would not very quickly forget in a hurry.

**More than casual solutions**

As the Nigerian crisis continues to fester and produce quite convoluted expressions, discussions are going on everywhere as to how best the challenges are to be addressed. In all of the brainstorming, one idea that is gaining massive traction is the call for a comprehensive restructuring of the country.

While there is no consensus yet on the exact shape that the exercise should take, some of the component elements that have been raised this far in the discussions include suggestions



The Endsars protests have rattled Nigeria for the last couple of months . Photo AP,Sunday Alamba

for the introduction of a six-zone structure, the implementation of a regime of fiscal federalism that incorporates the principle of resource control, and the reorganization of the policing framework of the country to now formally allow for the introduction of state and regional police formations that would more frontally assist the Nigeria Police Force in the countrywide resolution of security threats and incidents.

**What does Buhari want?**

In the midst of all the hoopla going on in the country currently, commentators say that the entire season of discontent is being further fuelled by the fact that President Muhammadu Buhari may not be responding as vibrantly as the people would want him to.

For many of his critics, the administration's continuing to keep the embattled service chiefs in office and its failure to respond to cries of business players and residents of closed border communities continue to sustain a negative image for it. This has equally not been helped by the clearly not very empathetic tone used by senior administration officials when they come out to the public domain to clarify actions taken by the administration.

There is the equally perplexing turn of events which came to the fore

with the tepid management of the #EndSARS protests and the police now formally moving to not only delegitimise protests but to get the courts to quash the ongoing work of the judicial panels of inquiry that had been put up this far. While the Inspector General of Police, IGP has since disassociated the force from the suit and now taken steps to discontinue it, the claim by Police Spokesman, DCP Frank Mba that the Force Legal Officer whose office reportedly initiated the process has been queried over his role in the entire saga raises further questions as to how decisions of such a weighty nature could have been taken in the first place and effected without due clearance by the IGP or even by the President himself. So who is in charge?

It may very well be some of these acts of chicanery that continue to upset many of the young people of Nigeria who have now begun to mobilise on twitter once again for a resumption of the shelved #EndSARS protests.

Across the country also, polity watchers are raising questions as to what should be done at this time to address the many political, economic and security challenges in the land going forward.

Says Izuchukwu Ahuchaogu: 'I think the Government should

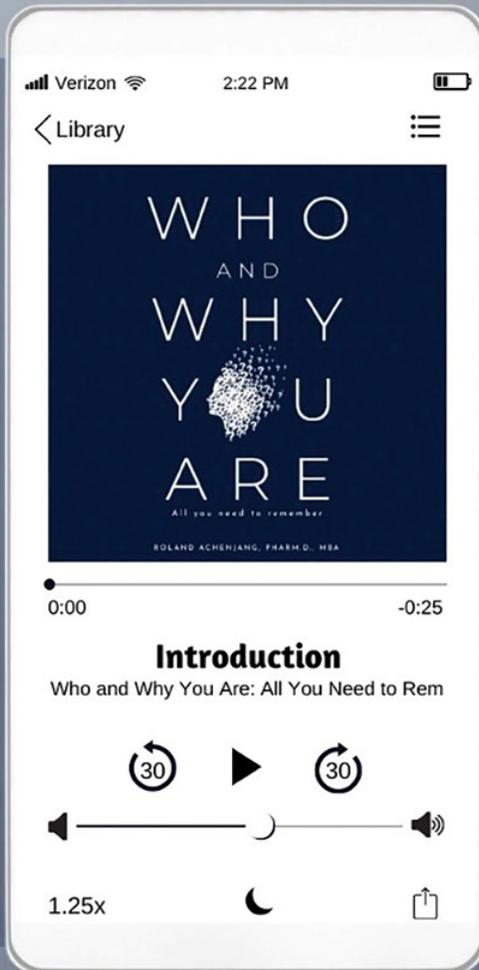
stop borrowing to pay senators and funding their expensive lifestyles. With what we saw in 2020, it's obvious that the older generation has not gotten what it take to move the country forward. We now need more young people in government; they understand more how the 21st century works.

**The journalist and commentator adds a caveat:**

'Not young people from the class of the sons and daughters of our politicians but young people who have groomed themselves through reading and proper learning, as without this we don't expect to see any real change. It will keep taking us back if we have someone like Buhari as president in the future again. Nothing will change'

For Maurice Okoro, an educationist, public affairs commentator and reading promoter, some of the required adjustments he would want to see at the moment would include the immediate opening of the nation's land borders, the sacking of the current service chiefs, the restructuring of the country, undertaking a probe of the Buhari administration and the resignation of the President and the Federal Executive Council. Clearly, Nigerians are simply in no mood to take hostages!

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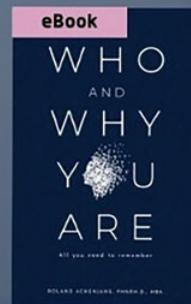
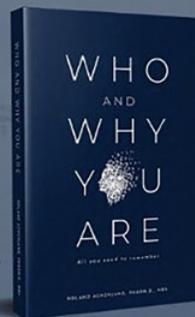


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# COVID-19: Despite grim predictions, Africa leads in response, as the western world dabbles

By Andrew Nsoseka

When COVID-19 was declared a health pandemic by the World Health Organisation, many experts expressed predictions and fears that the virus will turn Africa into a graveyard, especially as it was overwhelming health systems throughout the developed world.

Relying on the fact that the continent is mostly covered by fragile health systems, many said such health systems doted over the continent will crumble, when the virus gets into Africa. Also, many, judging from the fact that poverty still remains a stumbling block in the continent, said Africans wouldn't be able to follow the prescribed measures because most live under the poverty line, and as such, cannot afford to stop work and isolate.

Egypt reported Africa's first case of COVID-19, when a Chinese national flew into Cairo, and tested positive for the virus. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the first case was reported in Nigeria on February 28. When first cases of the virus were reported in the African continent, fear was rife, because judging from expert predictions and with reports of how the virus was devastating Europe and the rest of the western world, whose superior health systems were overwhelmed, most people, including Africans knew that the continent had no fighting chance.

"We watched with total fright and awe what was happening in Europe. We knew we had no chance if that happened here on that scale." John Nkengasong, the Director of Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Africa CDC told The Financial Times.

After the virus was reported in Africa, many expected a speedy spread, and a corresponding number of deaths. Faced with this, many African states quickly introduced lockdowns to slow the spread of the virus. Many equally put in place



A traveller has his temperature taken at Kotoka Airport in Accra, Ghana. Photo Francis Kokoroko, Reuters.

travel restrictions to limit the number of those who get into and out of the country, to ensure that they were not helping to spread the virus. In some countries like Cameroon, fines were instituted for those who broke some COVID-19 prescriptions, like moving around without putting on a mask.

Africa quickly erected and implemented strict lockdown and barrier measures, some of which were prescribed by the World Health Organisation. Such measures, including those of the government were forcible implemented and in some cases, corporal punishment meted out on defaulters in some states throughout the African nation.

Several weeks after the virus touched down on Africa, the many predictions from scientists and commentators were not coming to pass. The continent recorded thousands of cases, and also deaths, the magnitude of which was nothing near the grim predictions made about the impact the virus was expected

to have on Africa. Given the fragile health systems and lack of structures and trained experts, coupled with poverty that was expected to worsen the COVID-19 fight in Africa, the world feared for the continent.

However, Africa shocked the world, as it has continually proven to be the least affected continent in respect to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the midst of the widespread and corresponding deaths, many began to question why the African continent was seemingly doing well compared to the rest of the world. Explanations like the absence of widespread testing in Africa did not hold water. This was because even if the continent had massive undiagnosed cases, deaths throughout the peak period were judged by experts to be relatively benign.

## Theories to explain COVID-19's benign effect on Africa

At the end of November 2020, Africa had registered just slightly

over two million covid-19 cases out of the world's 62.8 million, and over 51 thousand out of the world's 1.46 million registered deaths. Theories have been propounded by experts and observers to explain why Africa is outperforming the rest of the world.

In an interview with Financial Times, the Director of Africa CDC, Nkengasong said when the virus reached Africa, he convened an emergency two-day meeting of health ministers in Addis Ababa. "I have never been this serious in my life," he told FT. The meeting of Africa's health ministers was quickly followed by that of the African Union leaders, who held weekly conferences to share notes "I don't know any continent that rallied that quickly," Nkengasong told FT.

Some of these moves, equally helped a great length in the continent's handling of the pandemic. However, many other reasons have been provided to explain why Africa seemingly tamed the virus, when the

rest of the world is dabbling in and out of lockdowns and outbreaks that are fast determining their everyday way of life, when most of Africa is gradually returning to life as normal, except for other life huddles that predate the coronavirus.

Atanga Anye Louis, a Public Health Specialist working in Buea, regional capital of Cameroon's Southwest region told Pan African Visions that the season and climate factor may be one of the reason for the huge number of cases in most of the developed world, and for relatively fewer cases and deaths in Africa.

On another reason, he stated "I also think there is the aspect of immunity, because flu or influenza has always been a problem in the developed world, meanwhile flu has never been an issue in Africa, we do sometimes have cases of flu, but it is difficult to find severe cases of flu. I want to think that because of our genetic build, maybe we do have some degree of immunity or resistance, and that is why the impact of the virus is not as severe in Africa, as it is in the rest of the world." Mr Atanga said.

Some theories hold that since the virus is more deadly amongst the old,



**Dr John Nkengasong of Africa CDC is credited for initiating the robust response that came from African countries. Photo Reuters**

Africa with a vast youthful population cannot face the same predicament as the rest of the world. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation states that almost 60 per cent of Africa's population in 2019 was under the age of 25, making Africa the world's youngest continent. The UN's demographic projections points that Africa's 2020 median age is 19.8.

Africa in the eye of the rest of the world, has been the epicentre of

disease outbreaks. Some theories hold that as the centre of the world in issues of health crises, Africa has learned enough and managed considerable outbreaks, and unlike the rest of the world, it managed the coronavirus much better.

The fact the African continent has a spaced population has also been theorised to be one of the reasons the continent is doing better than others.

Apart from very few cities in Africa, the continent is largely judged to have a lower population density than the rest of the world, which slows down the spread of the virus.

Other experts have also claimed that in Africa, the population travels less compared to other continents. Since the virus is moved by humans through travel, experts have claimed that the fact that the continent travels less, has helped it immensely especially with the introduction of travel restrictions.

South African Comedian, and Host of the Daily Show, Trevor Noah joked that the rest of the world only expects Africa to win contests like carrying baskets on the head, but that the continent shocked the world as it emerged as the best responder to the coronavirus pandemic. "Because Africans know first-hand what a disease can do to people, they didn't take any chances with covid-19". Trevor Noah said.

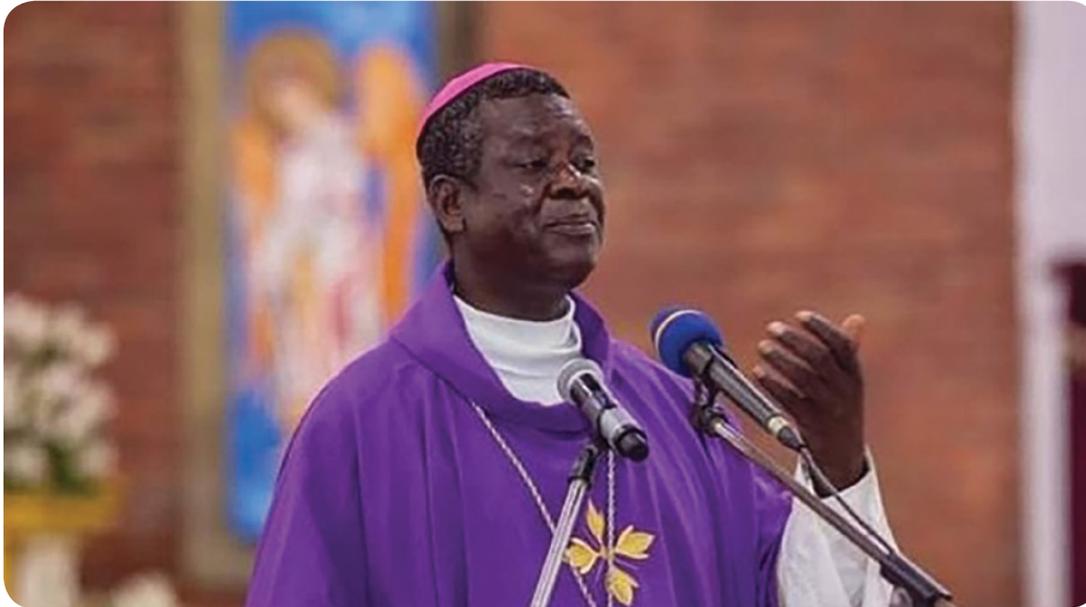
Though only research will prove what Africa did, or has that the western world failed to do, or lacked, the continent is leading the world, when it comes to handling the coronavirus. Africa's handling of the pandemic has perplexed experts and scientists who predicted doom for Africa.



**Story 3 Pic 3. Residents with face masks at a bus stop in Cape Town, South Africa. Photo Dwayne Senior, Bloomberg.jpg**

# African Geniuses Shine As Coronavirus Outbreak Cripples The Globe

By Amos Fofung



Archbishop Samuel Kleda said his COVID-19 herbal remedy called Essential Oils has treated thousands in the Central African sub region

As the sun sets on 2020, many countries are experiencing second and third waves of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), bringing a fresh wave of lockdowns in countries like France, the United States, and United Kingdom or restrictions to daily life with hospitals systems being pushed to the brink.

As of November 25, the global death toll had reached 1,412,223, with 18% (259,976) from the United States alone. The number of confirmed global cases stood at 59,905,468. However, even though no vaccine has been made publicly available, the African seems to have found a better way of handling the pandemic thereby reducing its mortality rate on the continent.

According to the BBC tracker, the total confirms cases in Africa stands at 2,070,981 with only 276,227 active cases and 49,732 deaths.

Epidemiologists had expected weak health systems in Africa to crumble under the weight of Covid-19. But eight months into the pandemic, Africa with a population of 1.3 billion, is waxing strong with most states

relaxing its coronavirus guidelines while the US, with a sophisticated healthcare system as its other Western counterparts, is on its way to its third peak, and has reported more than 14.3 Million cases with over two hundred and sixty-seven thousand deaths.

### The rise of Africa Geniuses

At the Douala Metropolitan Archdiocese, in Cameroon's most populous city, His Grace Samuel Kleda, Archbishop of the diocese had some months ago began concocting a herbal remedy against coronavirus. He initially administered it to 500 people including patients and doctors who after taking the medicine recovered from the virus. The government of Cameroon had since sent health officials to work and collaborate with the priest on how to test its effectiveness and make available the remedy to the population of over 23 million.

Archbishop Samuel Kleda claims the herbal potion he concocted several months ago has healed people in the central African country and beyond of coronavirus. «We have defeated

COVID-19 in Cameroon,» said bishop Kleda who has over 30 years of medicinal plant research experience, especially on herbal treatment.

Cameroon currently has 24,022 confirmed cases, with just 437 deaths, and had long relaxed its anti-coronavirus guidelines.

Away from Cameroon, traditional remedies against covid-19 are also been promoted in Nigeria, Madagascar, South Africa, and many other African states who insist their traditional plants when concocted mitigate and even kills the coronavirus in humans without side effects.

A Nigerian biotechnologist and professor at the University of Jos, Innocent Ogbonna, claims he has an herbal treatment for COVID-19 that is «more potent» than a popular tonic made in Madagascar thus fueling hopes in the plant-based treatment. This has led countries like Tanzania and Liberia to import the brew and to also develop their own.

The most popular herbal treatments making news from Africa is from the island nation of Madagascar where President Andry Rajoelina promoted

a herbal tonic «Covid-Organics. The remedy contains *Artemisia annua*, (Sweet wormwood) a plant often used to treat malaria. Over the year, the remedy continued to gain momentum across the continent and was ordered by Tanzania, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Congo-Brazzaville.

Reports indicate that it will has been distributed to at least 14 other countries in Africa.

At the time of this report, Madagascar had 17,341 confirmed cases of coronavirus, with 251 deaths. This places the island nation among the least affected countries in Africa and the world.

Due to mounting pressure, Madagascar agreed to have its herbal tonic developed by the Malagasy Institute of Applied Research tested by another country.

South Africa expressed willingness to assist Madagascar to undertake scientific analysis of COVID Organics.

«We received a call from the government of Madagascar, which asked for help with scientific research,» Health Minister Zweli Mkhize, said in a Twitter post.

«Our scientists would be able to assist in the research. We will only get involved in a scientific analysis of the herb,» he added.

### Africa CDC's Timely Actions

Since its outbreak in 2019, in the Chinese city of Wuhan, the Africa Center for Disease Control (CDC), under the leadership of its director Dr. John Nkengasong has been instrumental in tackling the spread of the coronavirus across Africa.

Dr. Nkengasong attributes the low mortality of coronavirus to a «joint continental effort», which focused on «scaling up testing and following up contact tracing and very importantly masking», or the wearing of face masks.

«In many countries, including

Ethiopia where I live, if you go to the streets of Addis Ababa you will see there is almost 100% masking.» he added saying Africa's relatively young population also contributed to the low number of cases.

Furthermore, the emphasis on community-driven initiatives, and experience in contact-tracing from fighting diseases like Ebola, had helped countries to tackle the virus, he said.

The Africa CDC boss had held several webinars to analyze responses from the continent since the first case was reported in Egypt on February 14, 2020. His prompt response to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in the continent has greatly reduced the impact of the outbreak in the continent as opposed to elsewhere in the world.

One of the health webinars which sought to assess coronavirus impact on the African and how the diaspora can effectively assist the continent was attended among others by representatives from the Constituency for Africa, allAfrica.com, Harvard University, foreign investment network and the US Chair of congressional black Caucus who doubles as chair of the house of representatives subcommittee on Africa Global Health among others.



Tanzanian Foreign Minister Palamagamba Kabudi speaks in Dar es Salaam after receiving a donation of Covid Organics from Madagascar. Photo Xinhua.

Presenting quantitative data on the impact in Africa, the least hit inhabited continent, Dr. Nkengasong did not mince word when he stated that "globally we are at war with covid-19". A war he went ahead to emphasized

"must be won".

On measures taken by African CDC, Dr. Nkengasong said, "once we knew that we were at risk, we trained technicians to conduct surveillance and airport training, trained countries on risk communication, clinical care, and management, used 3 weeks to train and armed health experts on surveillance and how to test patients and medical response among others."

Thanks to efforts from Dr. Nkengasong, Africa CDC rallied the World Health Organization to launch an expert advisory committee/panel to provide independent scientific advice and support to countries on the safety, efficacy, and quality of traditional medicine therapies.

The 25-member Regional Expert Committee on Traditional Medicine for COVID-19 will support countries in collaborative efforts to conduct clinical trials of traditional medicines in compliance with international standards.



Dr. Nkengasong attributes the low mortality from coronavirus to a joint continental effort

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# Africans Who Made Global Headlines in 2020

By Prince Kurupati

The year 2020 is fast coming to an end. For most people, the year 2020 is one to be forgotten as the world had to fight (and is still) a deadly pandemic known as COVID-19. However, despite the challenges that 2020 brought about, there are some individuals who managed to achieve some incredible feats. Some of the feats relate to humanitarian matters, politics, economics, and science while others made significant strides in finding long lasting cures and vaccines for COVID-19. In this article, we are going to take time in sharing with all readers Africans who made global headlines in 2020.

## Archbishop Samuel Kleda of Douala (Cameroon)

As the world is currently battling the corona virus pandemic, we saw it befitting to start off with one man who announced that he has found a cure for COVID-19. Early on in May when the corona virus was just starting to show off its devastating side, one cleric in Cameroon by the name Archbishop Samuel Kleda made some bold remarks stating that he had found a cure for COVID-19. Archbishop Kleda's cure is a herbal remedy which he concocted himself. In an interview with state media CRTV, Archbishop Kleda said that he had over 30 years of medicinal plant research experience and it is this experience which helped him to come up with the COVID-19 cure which he calls Essential Oils.

Soon after his remarks, many people in Cameroon flocked to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Douala in search of the precious COVID-19 herbal cure. Amongst those who received the herbal cure, many of them who were interviewed by different media houses testified that the cure was of great help as it managed to heal them.

Realizing the popularity of Archbishop Kleda's herbal cure, the Cameroonian government had to intervene sending a team of researchers and doctors to determine the validity of Kleda's claimed cure. Once the outcome of the investigation is proved to be true, the government has promised to make the herbal cure more widely available.

In the meantime as the government researchers and scientists continue doing their work, Archbishop Kleda said he would continue administering the treatment to patients who sought help from him. He said his goal as a servant of God was to help poor and suffering people hence the reason he will continue administering the treatment free of charge to all people.

## Andry Rajoelina (Madagascar)

Earlier in the year when COVID-19 was starting to show its ugly face, the President of Madagascar, Andry Rajoelina made some bold remarks stating that his country had found a cure for COVID-19. The said cure is a herbal concoction made from locally available plants in Madagascar. When the Madagascar president made the remarks, he stated that his government had already done some tests (albeit with a rather small population) and had proven that the herbal cure known as Covid-Organics

was safe and effective.

As soon as Covid-Organics was released, Madagascar began to witness a reduction in the number of infected cases. At one point, the country had to go for several weeks without recording any new cases. For many, including the skeptical, they started to view this as testament that Covid-Organics was indeed a safe and effective cure and thus they started to embrace it. Many African countries approached the Madagascar government looking to get their own share of the miracle cure and found the Madagascar government readily willing to help its African sisters. Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, Liberia, Senegal, DRC and Tanzania are some of the countries that received their own batches of Covid-Organics.

In as much as the Madagascar people and other African countries embraced Covid-Organics, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the African Union including other scientific bodies remained skeptical saying they would only approve of Covid-Organics' safety and efficacy if clinical trials are done first.

Despite the skepticism shown by scientific bodies, the AU and WHO, President Rajoelina remained defiant stating that Covid-Organics is safe and effective for use as a COVID-19

cure. At one point, he stated that the skepticism shown by some emanates from the fact that Covid-Organics was found by an African country, if it had been any other American or European country, the reception would be different.

"What is the problem with Covid-Organics, really? Could it be that this product comes from Africa? Could it be that it's not OK for a country like Madagascar, which is the 63rd poorest country in the world... to have come up with (this concoction) that can help save the world?" Rajoelina asked.



President Andry Rajoelina of Madagascar drinks a sample of Covid-Organics at the launch of the remedy on April 20, 2020. Photo AFP

## Dr John Nkengasong (Cameroon)

Dr John Nkengasong is a virologist who is the director of Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). Africa CDC was established by the African Union to support member states' public health initiatives and strengthen public health institutions' capacity to detect, prevent, control and respond to disease threats and outbreaks quickly and effectively. When the COVID-19 pandemic started to take its toll, Dr John Nkengasong was appointed as the WHO Special Envoy for Africa. In this role, Dr John Nkengasong has worked tirelessly in coordinating the African response to COVID-19.

In an interview of ReliefWeb, Dr John Nkengasong said his work was made easier by the fact that COVID-19 didn't start in Africa. This gave him time to quickly strategize on how Africa could best prepare for the pandemic. As the pandemic was starting to cause havoc in other continents, Dr John Nkengasong realized that Africa by the second week of February only had two countries (Senegal and South Africa) that could diagnose COVID-19. To address this challenge, Dr John Nkengasong together with his team quickly brought together

representatives of laboratories from 16 African countries, trained them and gave them diagnostic equipment. They repeated the exercise in cohorts with representatives from other African countries to ensure that every country on the continent could diagnose COVID-19 on its own.

After this, Dr John Nkengasong's focus turned towards infection prevention and control. Recognizing that it would be devastating if health personnel in African countries would be infected in large numbers (as this would derail the fight against COVID-19), Dr John Nkengasong together with his team brought representatives of 35 countries in Nigeria and trained them on infection prevention and control. Another training was done in Kenya which brought about representatives of more than 30 countries for training in enhanced airport, airline and port-of-entry screening. The next task was to train health personnel on communicating risk to the general public and this was done in Tunisia.

As a last step in coordinating an African response to COVID-19, Dr John Nkengasong working with the African Union convened a meeting of all health ministers where it was agreed that there need to be a coordinated continental strategy that hinges on cooperation, collaboration, coordination and communication. This led to the establishment of the Africa Task Force for Coronavirus Preparedness and Response.

**Jack Ma (China) \*Not African but included owing to his generosity in helping in Africa's fight against COVID-19**

This article seeks to expose Africans who made global headlines in 2020. The first part of the article focused on Africans who have achieved great feats when it comes to fighting COVID-19. When it comes to Africa's response to fighting COVID-19, it would be a miscarriage of justice to exclude one man (albeit non-African) that is, Jack Ma whose generosity with COVID-19 donations greatly helped many African countries to better fight the novel corona virus pandemic.

When most African countries were struggling to raise adequate funds to purchase personal protective equipment and other necessary tools required in the fight against COVID-19, Chinese business magnate Jack Ma announced that he through his Jack Ma Foundation would be helping the African continent to better fight the pandemic by availing COVID-19 donations. The donations came in three rounds with all African countries benefitting.

On each round, Africa received masks, swabs and test kits, ventilators, sets of protective clothing, face shields, temperature guns, body temperature scanners and pairs of gloves.

Speaking after receiving donations for the third round, the director of Africa CDC Dr John Nkengasong said, "Getting diagnostics and medical equipment for COVID-19 response is a global challenge. Africa is in a fierce competition with the developed world with respect to the availability of commodities. These donations from the Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation have been an incredible initiative helping to feed the need for medical supplies by African countries."

**Lazarus Chakwera (Malawi)**

In a historic development certainly on the African continent, a constitutional court managed to annul the results of a presidential election and ordered fresh polls! Africa for so long has been marred by allegations of electoral fraud and violence. However, despite the numerous reports of electoral fraud and violence, only once (Kenya in 2017) had an election been annulled based on the reports. That changed in 2020 as Malawi's Constitutional Court annulled the country's 2019 presidential results ordering fresh polls.

Reading his ruling earlier on this



**Dr Akinwumi Adesina earned a second term and has placed the AfDB as one of the most credible partners in helping Africa bounce back from COVID 19**

year, Malawi's Constitutional Court judge Healey Potani said, "In every election there are irregularities. However, in the present case, the irregularities were widespread and systematic and affected the result... We order the nullification of the election... We further order that a fresh election be held in accordance with the law and pursuant to directions we will make soon. We also order that elections should be held within 150 days."

The landmark ruling was warmly greeted by many both within the borders of Malawi and beyond as it demonstrated the independent nature of Malawi's Judiciary. The plaintiffs were then losing opposition candidates Lazarus Chakwera and Saulos Chilima. The two challenged the result, alleging that the tally sheets were tampered with and that some polling stations used correction fluid to alter the results.

Soon after the Constitutional Court ordered fresh polls, Lazarus Chakwera and Saulos Chilima joined forces as they entered into an alliance. The objective – to force then incumbent Peter Mutharika out of office. 6.8 million Voters cast their

votes and Lazarus Chakwera was duly declared the winner of the fresh polls with 58.57 per cent of the vote. An elated Chakwera speaking after the election re-run said, "This is a win for Malawians, it is a win for democracy, a win for justice... It is a win that will enable this nation to really reset and begin to build a new kind of Malawi in which all of us together will be involved."

**Akinwumi Adesina (Nigeria)**

2020 saw Akinwumi Adesina being reelected to run for a second term as the president of the African Development Bank (AfDB). However, Adesina's path to his second term in office was by no means smooth sailing as he faced numerous challenges that threatened to derail not only his reelection but also taint his career.

According to the Business Day Nigeria, Adesina's re-election can be likened 'to a warrior who won an almost impossible battle as he was faced with a lot of issues which would have posed as threats for a second tenure'. Three months before he was expected to be re-elected, the former Nigerian minister of Agriculture was questioned after a string of corruption

and abuse of office allegations from his own staff.

The staff calling themselves 'Group of Concerned Staff Members of the AFDB' claimed that Adesina was using the bank's resources for self-promotion and personal gain while also paying out huge but underserved severance packages to staff who resigned mysteriously, and favouring his fellow Nigerians. AFDB using its own internal investigation unit opened an investigation to look into the allegations but found no evidence to prove any wrongdoing on the part of Adesina. The outcome however wasn't accepted by the US Treasury Department which immediately called for an 'independent' investigation.

US Treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin said, "We have deep reservations about the integrity of the committee's process. Instead, we urge you to initiate an in-depth investigation of the allegations using the services of an independent outside investigator of high professional standing." Soon after, a tribunal was set up chaired by former Irish President, Mary Robinson. The tribunal just like the ethics committee before it exonerated Adesina.

The tribunal's findings paved the way for Adesina to compete for a second term and he was unanimously reelected by the Board of Governors with a 100 per cent vote at the end of the Bank's 2020 Annual Meeting on 27 August. After his win, President Adesina had this to say, "I am deeply grateful for the collective trust, strong confidence and support of our shareholders for electing me for a second term as President. It is yet another call for selfless service to Africa and the African Development Bank, to which I will passionately devote myself... The future beckons us for a more developed Africa and a much stronger and resilient African Development Bank Group. We will build on the strong foundations of success in the past five years, while further strengthening the institution, for greater effectiveness and impacts."



*Samantha Muzoroki provided food for hundreds of people in Chitungwiza, Harare, when Zimbabwe was on lockdown. Photo Jekesai Njikizana, AFP.*

**Paul Kagame (Rwanda)**

Rwanda has become an emblem of economic development on the African continent and beyond. This has largely been necessitated by the country's president, Paul Kagame who has been at the forefront in pushing a development oriented agenda. The year 2020 was no different with other recent years as Rwanda continued its developmental trajectory. However, what makes 2020 particularly special to Rwanda is the fact that 2020 is the year that Rwanda set as the year it would achieve its economic deliverables as outlined in Vision 2020. Suffice to say, there is much to celebrate as the country managed to achieve a lot of its economic deliverables.

Rwanda's accomplishment of the objectives laid out in Vision 2020 is part of the reason for its high growth. The country's government created Vision 2020 intending to become a middle-income country by 2020 – this was later on postponed to 2035 but there is sufficient evidence on the ground that the country is on the right path to achieving the goal way before the targeted year that is, 2035. This largely necessitated by widespread

development from infrastructure to service sector investments.

**Samantha (Zimbabwe)**

They say heroes and heroines emerge during troubling times. During the troubling COVID-19 pandemic, one heroine has emerged in Zimbabwe by the name Samantha Muzoroki. Samantha Muzoroki is an immigration lawyer by profession but she found a new 'profession' during the national lockdown in Zimbabwe that of, feeding children, the poor and vulnerable in society.

Samantha Muzoroki runs a relief kitchen in Chitungwiza, one of the most populated towns in Zimbabwe which is a few kilometers away from the capital Harare. Her relief kitchen offers free food to children, the poor and the vulnerable. Samantha says she realized that many children were going the whole day without anything to eat as the national lockdown implemented by the government to combat the spread of the novel corona virus pandemic was having an economic toll on families that survived on doing menial jobs in and around the town – restrictions of movement which is part of the lockdown meant

the shrinking of incomes for many families hence hunger. With the little she had, she decided to offer children something to eat every morning.

Unbeknown to her however, her work inspired many and soon, individuals and cooperates began to donate food and money to help her continue her excellent humanitarian work. Nowadays thanks to the donations she receives from various individuals and cooperates, Samantha is able to provide two meals per day (breakfast and supper) to children, the poor and the vulnerable. Her work has also inspired other individuals in different parts of the country to establish their own relief kitchen initiatives with the intention of helping the less fortunate in society during these troubling times. In the tourist town of Zimbabwe, officers from the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare in partnership with local municipality officers and members from the business community joined hands to launch the Victoria Falls Children's Feeding Scheme. The Scheme has one aim which is to provide every child with a hot nutritious meal 5 days a week.

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# Kenya: More Dividends From Uhuru - Raila Handshake

By Samuel Ouma

«If there had been no handshake, this country would have been brought to its knees by perilous forces—the reckless aggressiveness of some and the triumphant chest-thumping and stone-walling by others,» said President Uhuru Kenyatta while reflecting on the ungovernable state of the country after the 2017 presidential polls.

Kenyans turned against each other following the disputed polls that pitted President Uhuru Kenyatta against his former political nemesis Raila Odinga. Their supporters engaged each other in battle as well as name callings splitting the nation down the middle. As a result of the disputes, innocent lives were lost, the property of untold value devastated, and the economy declined as businesses remained closed and investors were shutting down their operations in the East African nation.

To save the country from plunging further into chaos, Kenyatta and Odinga reached a consensus famously known as a handshake to work together. Their main objective was to build a nation responsive to the urgent need for prosperity, fairness, and dignity for all Kenyans.

«That is why we saw it fit towards the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, after seeing what was happening in various parts of the country—Kenyans fighting among themselves. We decided, together with Raila, that we need, as leaders, not to sit back and watch as Kenyans shed blood because of us and because of politics,» reiterated the Head of the State.

After the handshake, stability was achieved, normalcy resumed, and the economy started to pick up well until early this year when the coronavirus pandemic led to an economic downturn though it is a global challenge. The handshake provided the President with a conducive environment to deliver his promises to the electorates during his second and final term in office. Kenyatta's



Deputy President William Ruto, President Uhuru Kenyatta and ODM leader Raila Odinga at the launch of the Building Bridges Initiative report on October 26. Photo PSCU.

administration has made some significant progress thanks to unity and peace the East African nation has enjoyed since 2018. Some of the achievements are:

### Launching the Kenya Coast Guard Service

In November 2018, President Kenyatta signed into law the Coast Guard Service Bill to allow Kenya's coastline to be guarded by a special force. The Kenya Coast Guard Service has been tasked to enforce maritime security and safety, pollution control and sanitation measures, and prosecuting offenders. Reports state that Kenya loses about \$100 million annually to scrupulous traders engaging in illegal commercial activities.

«For too long, we have experienced multiple problems with marine security including illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing by foreign trawlers, smuggling of contraband goods, degradation of marine ecosystems through discharge of oil, toxic waste dumping, and the destruction of coral reefs and coastal forests.»

«It will enforce security, safety, and protection of Kenya's maritime resources,» he said, noting that apart from illegal fishing, Kenya faces other security concerns such as drug and human trafficking and trans-shipment of illicit arms which come through the sea because of lack of proper surveillance mechanisms,» said Kenyatta during the launch.

### Anti-graft fight

The government has stepped up its effort to fight against corruption. So far, several former and current leaders have been arraigned in court and charged with corruption-related offenses. Some like Governors Mike Sonko and his colleague Okoth Obado have been denied access to their offices until their cases are heard and determined.

President Kenyatta had signed deals with Switzerland and the UK's governments to help Kenya recover stolen funds stashed in Swiss and UK banks. During the signing of the agreement, Swiss President Alain Berset promised to return assets to Kenya.

«We have a history and a policy of

freezing and returning stolen assets, and we need partners like Kenya in all those two duties. It is also through a partnership that an agreement can be reached on how to return assets in a way that benefits the people of the country concerned,» he said.

### Deal with the US

Kenyatta entered into a deal with the US government that saw two companies invest \$23 million in Kenya. The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and Kipeto Wind Energy agreed to construct and operate a 100-megawatt grid-connected wind power plant in Kenya's capital.

### China Trade Deal

Kenya and China had also reached an agreement to allow Kenya's fresh produce such as avocado, mangoes, and cashew nuts to be exported to the Chinese market.

The handshake gave birth to Building Bridges Initiatives (BBI), an initiative to unite Kenya through inclusivity. The document has proposed numerous changes in the political arena and other areas

to achieve a united nation. On November 25, 2020, Kenyatta and his handshake brother unveiled the collection of at least one million signatures to back the Constitution's amendment.

The BBI secretariat noted that they intend to collect the signatures within seven days. Those supporting the document would be required to state their name, ID number, county, constituency, county assembly ward, polling station, phone number, and email addresses. The signatures will be subjected to a verification process by the electoral commission to ascertain their validity.

“To enable the voter verification process and to ensure completeness of the supporters’ records, all the fields in the said approved format/template should be duly filled,” said the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) chair Wafula Chebukati.

The document is expected to address the gender disparity which the country has struggled with for decades and do away with the ‘winner takes it all’ policy that has promoted political animosity since independence. BBI will also address

rampant corruption, devolution, and negative politics. It will also ensure Kenyans’ human and civil rights are respected, and those affected by human-made and natural disasters are secure.

Once the IEBC verifies signatures, the document would be tabled in all of the 47 county assemblies, and 24 county assemblies are required to endorse the document to move to the next stage, the National Assembly and the Senate. When the document sails through in both the houses, it would be taken to people to decide.

However, the document is expected to face stiff opposition from a political faction led by Deputy President William Ruto. The group has been calling for the review of the report so that everyone’s view is accommodated. The second in command wants the proposal to create the position of a judiciary Ombudsman appointed by the President amended. The



President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga signing the BBI report on November 22, 2020. Photo Courtesy

draft proposes the nomination and appointment of the ombudsman for a five-year term by the President with the National Assembly’s approval. Ruto termed the proposal a derogation of Judiciary independence, a claim that has been rubbished by Odinga.

«We must be careful about the independence of institutions. We are coming from a history where judges received phone calls after meetings were held at night. We do not want to

go back there,» the DP asserted.

Ruto and his allies are also against increasing the number of lawmakers and the executive’s expansion as proposed by the draft. Some have described the report as the real tower of Babel, while others call on President to deal with urgent matters such as the Covid-19 pandemic, insecurity, loss of jobs, evictions, and failed Universal Health Care (UHC), graft impunity, and political thuggery.

«Since greed, the myopia of BBI fraud overrides common sense and logic; since #BBI is a desperate do-or-die conspiracy for 2022 Cartel that’s ignoring all the cries and all advisories for a reason, let them bring it, they’ll know majority Kenyans are fed-up. BBI deception must fall,» said ex-MP Kabando wa Kabando.

The electoral commission will have 30 days from December 2 to verify the signatures before submitting the bill to county assemblies between January 11-18. The Assemblies will deliberate on it from January 19 to February 19. Parliament will have to discuss the bill between February 20 and April 5 before taking back to IEBC to prepare for a referendum set to be held latest June 6, 2021.



Deputy President William Ruto has expressed reservations on some of the developments taking place.

# 2020 A Year Malawi's Political And Legal Systems Faced A Huge Test

By Joseph Dumbula

Malawi's democracy faced a stern test in 2020 with a landmark fresh presidential election that followed as heated legal contention of the election of Peter Mutharika in 2019.

As of January, the Constitutional Court was yet to make a ruling in a case in which Lazarus Chakwera, who now won the fresh presidential poll and Saulos Chilima (Now vice President) challenged irregularities that were in the previous election.

Chakwera petitioned the court seeking nullification of the May 21 polls results- in which Peter Mutharika was declared a winner arguing that the whole results management was marred by irregularities.

A five panel member of judges sitting as the Constitutional Court went ahead to nullify the poll, sparking a heavy contention from Mutharika who described it as a plot against his regime.

This led to massive protests by the judiciary and the legal fraternity who also stood against a decision by Mutharika to send Chief Justice Andrew Nyirenda on forced leave.

At the same time, there was a huge case in court as business mogul, Thom Mpinganjira was alleged to have made



A rare political feat in Africa as fresh elections ordered by the court saw President Mutharika floored by his opposition challenger. Photo Thoko Chilondi, AP.

attempts to bribe the judges. His case remains in court now.

Currently, all judges have testified against him stating that they felt Mpinganjira wanted them to favor Mutharika and the Malawi Electoral Commission, who were defendants in the case.

Around April, as Covid19 cases started being recorded, Mutharika ordered a 21 day lockdown. However,

the decision saw the civil society reacting angrily and an injunction against the order was successfully sought.

This meant two things; the image of coronavirus was painted with negatives and that Mutharika's reign was facing heavy criticism.

By June 27th 2020, the Malawi Electoral Commission had declared Chakwera winner. He had partnered

with Saulos Chilima whose defunct UTM from Mutharika's DPP, has also been growing.

Analyst Wonderful Mkutche describes the year as one in which political and legal systems were ultimately tested.

So far, some top DPP politburo have been jailed for various corrupt acts. For example, DPP leader for the South and ex minister of Homeland Security Uladi Mussa has been jailed for five years while DPP Governor Mzomera Ngwira is also in jail for five years.

The DPP has however, described the arrests as merely political.

In his first ever public appearance after losing the presidency, Mutharika said he felt that the nation needs to move on. He however declined to comment on whether he has met Chakwera or not.

Malawian judges also earned the Chatham House awards through the case that led to the nullification of the polls.

Currently, Chakwera's immediate tasks remain to halt corruption and highly reported cases of gender based violence.



President Chakwera is resolute on profoundly transforming Malawi ,Photo credit Thoko Chikondi, AP

# Another year ends with no solution in sight for Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis

By Andrew Nsoseka

Another year is fading out, yet the crisis in Cameroon's Anglophone regions remains in a stalemate, with no feasible solution in sight, while young people in their numbers continue to have their dreams, and in the worst-case scenario, their lives snuffed out.

The crisis that has dragged on for four years running, is showing no signs of taking a logical end much-desired by those trapped in the conflict. The stalemate has left many confused and frustrated as they live not knowing what could happen in the next minute or day.

The year 2020 in Cameroon, has largely been preoccupied with the supposed implementation of a 24-year-old constitutional provision of decentralisation, largely described as a sham by many. There has also been much talked about implementing the Special Status granted the Northwest and Southwest regions where separatist campaigns have been going on for over four years. The Special status for the two English speaking regions has generally been very unpopular, especially as it was a result of 2019's Major National Dialogue mostly attended by the ruling CPDM's bigwigs and a few opposition leaders. Separatist fighters and activists who were expected to be the main party dialoguing with the government bench, and reaching a compromise were absent, thus making the much-trumpeted national dialogue seem like a monologue among flunkeys. In the end, it was just a constitutional clause from the country's constitution that was reactivated to confer on the crisis regions, a special status, whose substance many still largely describe as inadequate for a people who are seeking greater autonomy and a say in matters that concern them.

In 2020, the Cameroon government rather focused its attention on organising local elections, for municipal and parliamentary seats.



*Funeral of school children killed by armed men in the town of Kumba, little progress has been made towards a lasting solution to the crisis.*

The elections were greatly mired in malpractices amidst a historic low voter turnout. The ruling CPDM largely 'won' the elections, even in some hotspots like in the Anglophone zones, where their militants mostly tiptoed in, using armoured cars, and then dashed out in like manner. Some of the supposedly elected officials are operating in regional headquarters and abhor the idea of staying within their constituencies to serve those who supposedly elected them.

Most of those who turned out to vote massively, were security and defence forces, who in some cases were accused of moving around and voting severally, especially as their names did not feature on the electoral registers. Most of them were from different regions, but were allowed to vote local representatives and councillors for communities they do not belong to. Court cases filed regarding the issue were simply thrown out in their multitudes on the guise that the servicemen had a right to vote, even when they do not know the candidates and did not belong to the community whose leaders they voted.

The issue of elections has dragged on, with the governing CPDM party making complete and total gains from it. In the regional elections, the CPDM is running unopposed in several regions, as those to vote, are councillors and traditional rulers who in their overwhelming numbers, are CPDM militants or flunkeys. With the exhibited mistrust for the electoral process in Cameroon, and corresponding voter apathy, the ruling CPDM has in its scramble, secured a sickening obese number of seats in councils, and well as parliament, that are not a sign of any healthy democratic society. They are expected to control all regional councils too. The country now rather looks like the days of the one-party system.

A government of hardliners and side-lined pacifists

In mid-2020, some government representatives met with leaders of the separatist movement for the first time, to discuss the possibility of a ceasefire. The meeting which held outside the prison premises was the first of its kind, and thus gave a feeling hope especially in the Anglophone

zone where hope has been sapped away by the four-year and running conflict.

The sigh of relief was rather short-lived when the hard-line faction of the Cameroon government rose against holding peace talks with the separatists. Following the meeting, information filtered out that the first talks have been held with the separatist leaders serving life sentences. The information would later be confirmed by Separatists' leader, Julius Ayuk Tabe, who affirmed that talks were held, to discuss a possible ceasefire. He also told his followers and believers in the Ambazonia dream that they are resolute and will not settle for anything short of complete independence for the two regions.

Shortly after, the hardliners in the Biya regime who were seemingly blindsided on the underground talks came up strongly against the move. The disagreement was publicly manifested when the Minister of Communication, Mr Emmanuel Rene Sadi was asked to produce a public note, disclaiming the meeting with separatist leaders. In his statement, the Minister craftily stated that news

of the talks, was not consistent with the reality. The Minister, however, did not categorically state that the meeting did not hold.

It is alleged that the government, is operating in two camps, with one faction, extremely invested in the military option, while the other with people like Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute, favours talks with the separatists as the best option to a lasting peace deal. The disagreement within the government bench in Cameroon lead to the crumbling of the glimmer of hope people had, when news broke out that talks were ongoing between the government and separatist leaders.

The year 2020 will again, like other years, end in a deadlock for the Anglophone crisis, which is steadily and gradually taking new dangerous twists. In 2020, several reports of explosives going off in the regions, as well as the economic and political capitals of the country have become too frequent. Such explosive attacks have largely been blamed or attributed to separatist activities.

In 2020, the country too has been dragged down by several other conflicts, especially protests from one of Cameroon's political parties, the Cameroon Renaissance Movement, CRM, of Prof. Maurice Kamto. A protest to oust the Biya regime organised on September 22 led to the brutal crackdown and arrest of protesters. The leader of the CRM

has equally been placed on house arrest since then. Some women who protested half-naked demanding the release of Prof. Kamto were also arrested, before later released.

Towards the end of the year, lawyers too got into another fracas with the government, when an issue in court deteriorated and the police used teargas, and also brutally subdued lawyers. The issue also degenerated as lawyers were arrested, before later been slammed suspended sentences and fines. Due to the treatment meted out on lawyers, they announced a nationwide protest from November 30, to December 4.

**President Biya- the ever missing leader**

Meanwhile as the country is chocked in a stalemate in its most serious conflict that threatens Cameroon's territorial integrity as the world knows it, the President, Mr Paul Biya has played the absentee landlord. With Several things going on, the president has used his traditional silent tactic to rule from the shadows.

Throughout 2020, there have been widespread rumours that the President has died. In his



*Even with the myriad of crisis plaguing the country, President Biya continues to be heard and seen sparingly.*

characteristic manner, the president who is seemingly unaccountable to anyone, and whose schedule is an issue of privacy is rarely seen or even heard from. As such Cameroonians only hear through rumours, or gossip what their president is up to. On rare occasions, the president is only spotted on photographs granting audiences or receiving a few diplomats at the Unity Palace in Etouidi, Yaounde.

Even Cameroon' opposition Maurice Kamto, sometime seemed to have believed that the President was truly dead. In one of his outings,

the CRM leader threatened that if President Biya does not show a sign that he was alive, then he, Kamto, was going to assume duty as the President of the republic. The outing by Kamto did not go well with CPDM Members. Kamto also expressed fears that there was an underground ploy for Biya to be succeeded by his son, Frank Biya. The rumours went wild, for quite a long time, then the President appeared receiving the French Ambassador to Cameroon, Christophe Guillhou.

While Biya remains as President, he is generally judged as been tired after almost four decades in office, as the President. The President who cannot keep up with the daily activities of the state as its president, had earlier delegated his signature to Ferdinand Ngo Ngo, a loyalist who is also much liked by the First Lady, Chantal Biya.

President Biya's constitutional successor, is the President of the Senate, Marcel Niat Njifenji. Niat himself is aged out, and has spent much time abroad, where he receives medical attention. Many have also joked about the idea of Niat taking over the management of state affairs when he too appears to be more sapped of energy and strength like President Biya.



*A year after the Grand National Dialogue chaired by Prime Minister Dion Ngute at the behest of President Biya, the recommendations geared at resolving the Anglophone crisis remain fallow.*

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# Zimbabwe after Mugabe: New Man in Charge but Challenges Still the Same

By Prince Kurupati

At one point, 'Zimbabwe' and 'Mugabe' became synonymous. Whenever one name was said, the other quickly came to mind. This really was not surprising considering that Mugabe had become the face of Zimbabwe as he had been involved in the country's politics for far too long starting off as the leader of the opposition during the last days of the colonial era and later on Prime Minister of the newly independent Zimbabwe before becoming the executive President in 1987, a position he held till the time he was forced out of office in November 2017.

The exit of Mugabe from the political scene in November 2017 saw the entrance of another man in the mould of Emmerson Mnangagwa taking the supreme position of the President of Zimbabwe. Since the time Emmerson Mnangagwa was chosen to lead Zimbabwe after the fall of Mugabe, he has gone on to win an election which will see him lead the southern African country for a 5-year term which will end in 2023.

The Zimbabwean Constitution allows a maximum of two terms for anyone aspiring to be a president. This essentially meaning Mnangagwa can be the Zimbabwean president till 2028 if he happens to win the 2023 presidential race. While there is a new face in the presidium in Zimbabwe, a face which may be around till 2028, nothing has really changed in the country both on the political and economic front. Despite there being a new man in charge of the country's affairs, Zimbabwe still finds itself in deep socio-economic turmoil and political crisis.

## Socio-economic turmoil

Zimbabwe became the first nation in the world to record inflation figures running into millions in 2008. This on its own proves just how dire the economic situation was during that time. A year later, then leader Robert Mugabe was forced to enter into a



President Mnangagwa has been faced with enormous challenges since he took office. Photo Credit NewZimbabwe.com.

Government of National Unity with two leading opposition candidates (Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara) to save the country from falling further into the hopelessness abyss. At the advent of the unity government, Zimbabwe adopted a multi-currency system. The system immediately brought some sanity on the economic front but didn't help much in overturning the country's economic fortunes. That situation prevailed till Mugabe was ousted from office and Mnangagwa inherited a country that was economically struggling.

The confidence that engulfed the nation as well as the international community soon after the disposal of Mugabe briefly brought some economic joy to the country. However, that was all too short-lived as many in a matter of months began to realize that Mnangagwa just like his predecessor was following the same disastrous economic pathway. The lack of confidence in Mnangagwa's economic trajectory soon showed on the country's local bourse, the

Zimbabwe Stock Exchange as stocks began to drastically drop. In an effort to save the situation, the Mnangagwa administration began to target some traders accusing them of sabotaging the economy and this did not help matters as it alienated the government and the private sector.

On the black market, which since Zimbabwe's hyperinflationary days (late 2000s) had started operating parallel to the formal economy, the lack of confidence in Mnangagwa's economic trajectory showed as the country's local currency (at the time known as the Bond Note) rapidly began to lose value against the greenback. The Bond Note's rapid loss of value made the salaries of workers worthless. The government itself felt the effects of the Bond Notes' loss of value leading several government departments to increase the prices of their services and products. Surprisingly, the government did not see it fit nor prudent to adjust the salaries upwards to commensurate with the rising prices of commodities. This paved the way

for many social problems as protests, demonstrations, and stay always became the order of the day.

After realizing that the country was heading towards a disastrous outcome, Mnangagwa decided to solve the problem by reverting back to the decision taken at the advent of the government of national unity that is, adopt a multi-currency system. The hope here being that people could freely use whatever currency they so wish to conduct any transaction they so wish. While this problem certainly eased the liquidity problem as well as allowing citizens to conduct their business more freely without checking their shoulders for law enforcement officers, it created another problem. Commercial outlets started to favour transacting in foreign currency over the local currency citing high volatility on the part of the local currency. Customers thus were now expected to use foreign currency - herein however lays the challenge, the government and other private sector workers were still paying their workers in the local currency. To get the foreign

currency required to purchase goods and commodities in commercial outlets, they had to exchange the local currency for the foreign currency on the black market which was charging exorbitant rates. In trying to solve one challenge, Mnangagwa therefore created another.

Some challenges that Mnangagwa is currently facing most notably social problems talk of extreme government criticism and demonstrations have been ushered in by the lackadaisical approach that Mnangagwa has been taking in addressing graft cases. When Mnangagwa assumed office, he stated that there were some ‘criminal elements’ surrounding then President Robert Mugabe. He thus promised to flush out these criminal elements so as to allow the country to function more efficiently and effectively. With many people pinning their hopes on Mnangagwa to arrest some top government officials who for so long had been accused of corruption, the so-called ‘criminal elements’ were only arrested, detained and after a few days in remand prison released on bail. Their court cases would drag on and on and some are still going to this day. No convictions on any top government officials have been effected. This has frustrated many who now claim that Mnangagwa’s declaration to arrest all those implicated in corruption cases is just a façade and the few arrests made (albeit with no convictions) is just a ploy to hoodwink the masses.

Without looking at the criminal elements who were supposed to be flushed out soon after the ousting of Mugabe, several graft cases have been exposed by investigative journalists in the country. One such case is the CovidGate scandal which implicates members of the First Family, then Minister of Health, and officials from the Ministry of Finance. Reports by investigative journalists exposed that the government had purchased COVID-19 personal protective equipment at highly inflated prices. Face masks which were readily available in the country and in neighbouring South Africa for around US\$3 were purchased at a whopping



Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube has been fighting hard to get it right on the economy

\$17! Several other PPEs were also purchased at overly inflated prices from a company which had just been registered whose proprietor had close links to the First Family. The report stated that over a million dollars had been systematically stolen by purchasing the equipment at overly inflated prices. Soon after the release of the reports, the public started to make calls to the President and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) to look into the reported corrupt deal. Both the President and ZACC took time to deal with the issue. Only after several weeks did the President fire the Minister of Health on abuse of office charges. From the whole ‘stinking’ deal, that was the only real consequence faced by anyone of the officials implicated as no arrests were made. The handling of the CovidGate Scandal not surprising angered many hence the reason many people believe that the First Family links to the proprietor of the company that supplied the PPE at inflated prices is real. Not to help matters is the arrests of investigative journalists on flimsy charges as is the case with Hopewell Chin’ono as this paints the presidency in a bad way as from a distance it looks like the arrest is a way of

silencing journalists while at the same time instilling fear in others that if they dare to expose corruption linking the First Family and top government officials, they too will find themselves in jail. To gain public confidence, it’s imperative for the President to ensure that such issues of grand corruption are dealt with ruthlessly without fear, favour or bias.

**Political Crisis**

President Mnangagwa is facing a political crisis both at home and abroad. It’s no doubt that Mnangagwa ascension to power in 2017 heralded a win for one ZANU (PF) faction over the other. Mnangagwa was regarded as the kingpin of the Lacoste faction which was fighting against the G40 faction led by the wife of Robert Mugabe, Grace Mugabe and younger ZANU (PF) officials Jonathan Moyo, Patrick Zhuwawo and Saviour Kasukuwere. From the onset, this meant that Mnangagwa had to outsmart the opponent at all times during his tenure if he is to finish it. At this point, he indeed is doing just that but day by day, the divisions that exist in the party continue to emerge. Several top government officials who are also ZANU (PF) members have lost their government positions and

others even suspended or fired from the party. From within his party, Mnangagwa therefore faces a stern task of retaining power at all costs otherwise his dreams of running for a second term come 2023 may not come to fruition.

On the national front, the country’s political situation has been deteriorating day by day as the political space is slowly being closed. Soon after the 2018 presidential race, there were protests in country largely in the capital Harare where opposition supporters clashed with security forces. Estimates say that at least 7 people lost their lives during the protests as the security forces opened fire on unarmed civilians. To clear his name, Mnangagwa set up a commission of inquiry led by former South African president Hlalema Mthlathe. The commission of inquiry at the end found out that security forces did have a case to answer and those responsible were supposed to be exposed and tried for their offenses. However, to this day, no officer has been tried or even named for being responsible for the August 1 atrocities.

Political space has also been shrinking day by day as government critics from journalists, members of

the civil society, opposition leaders, and student leaders and outspoken clerics have all been arrested on flimsy charges including that of undermining the authority of the president. Even more worrisome is that the Mnangagwa administration has used COVID-19 national lockdown to implement measures which hinder political expression. Under the current COVID-19 national lockdown regulations, all elections are banned. However, this is despite that almost every other public sphere has been opened.

On the international front, President Mnangagwa has found his reengagement drive under threat. When Mnangagwa assumed office, he promised that he would ditch Mugabe's isolation policy. Mnangagwa promised that the only way forward for the country is if it works in partnership with other global countries and as such, he would be launching Zimbabwe's reengagement drive to the West. At first, things looked like they were going in the right direction as

envoys from the UK and other countries visited Zimbabwe. Mnangagwa himself had quite a cordial relation with then UK Ambassador to Zimbabwe Catriona Laing. However, as months passed and many began to realize that things were just the same as before with the Mugabe era, the goodwill that Mnangagwa had enjoyed with the international community dissipated. The coming in of the corona virus pandemic did not help matters as it meant that Zimbabwe's

reengagement jaunts to the West abruptly stopped. In America, the coming in of the Biden administration presents another chance for the Mnangagwa administration to charm America to resume ties with Zimbabwe. This however won't be an easy feat at all as it is the Democratic administration of the early 2000s



*Health Minister Obediah Moyo was fired by President Mnangagwa for corruption.*

which included Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton that penned the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA), a policy document that effectively ushered targeted sanctions towards top government officials, business people and businesses aligned to ZANU (PF). Mnangagwa and his ZANU (PF) party will

therefore need to convince the people who applied sanctions on them that they have reformed and there is need for the sanctions to be removed – something which basing on the current situation on the ground is difficult to sell.

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# Is Benin Turning Rogue Under Talon?

By Ambassador Omar Arouna, MBA\*

The African Court of Justice and Human Rights (ACJHR) is an international and regional court in Africa. It was founded in 2004 by a merger of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Court of Justice of the African Union. It is the primary judicial agency of the African Union.

The court is based in the city of Arusha, Tanzania, as is the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and as was its predecessor the Court of Justice of the African Union.

The court has two chambers, one for general legal matters and one for rulings on the human rights treaties. Within this the court has both an advisory opinion role and adjudicative role. The court is competent to interpret its own judgments in an appellate chamber.

On November 27th and December 4th, 2020, The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights issued several orders and judgments against the Republic of Benin.

By these decisions, the African supranational court found that the State of Benin was the author of several human rights violations and ordered the annulment or repeal of several institutional and constitutional reforms in the country.

- The Court considers in particular that Benin has violated
- The right to strike
- The right to life, the right not to be subjected to torture and the right to an inherent human dignity.
- The right not to be discriminated against,
- The right to freedom of association and the right to participate freely in the conduct of public affairs in one's country.
- The rights of victims
- The right to freedom of association
- The right to independence and impartiality of electoral bodies
- The right to the independence of the judiciary

It is worth noting that the violations



Omar Arouna is a former Ambassador of Benin to the USA.

of the rights to life and not to be subjected to torture were perpetrated in the context of the post-electoral crisis of the legislative elections of 2019 where several demonstrators were shot and killed by the military.

The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights also denounced the lack of «guarantee of the independence of the judiciary» in the country and ruled that the recent «constitutional revision was adopted in violation of the principle of national consensus», without public debate or referendum as required by the African Charter on Human Rights.

It should be remembered that this constitutional revision was carried out overnight on November 1, 2019 and in emergency procedure, in violation of constitutional rules, without the Beninese people ever having been informed and not having been able to discuss it in prior, all by a National Assembly composed exclusively of the only deputies of the two parties of the Head of State, the Beninese opposition having been excluded from the legislative elections of April 28, 2019.

These decisions come some 5 months before the presidential

election in April 2021 and when the Beninese regime has put in place an institutional system which de facto excludes the presence of opposition and independent candidates from the presidential race.

The African Court noted that all the texts adopted by the current regime have created a situation constituting a risk to the peace and security of the people of Benin.

The supranational court thus ordered the State of Benin to take all measures to withdraw, annul or repeal the incriminated texts and violating the human rights of Beninese.

The Beninese authorities, through the government spokesman, announced that the Beninese state does not intend to comply with these decisions, brandishing national sovereignty.

This position of the Beninese government is confirmed by the withdrawal of the declaration of competence of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights allowing Beninese citizens to seize the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights in the event of human rights violations.

Deprived of rights in their country,

Beninese citizens are thus deprived of seeking justice in other's African Judicial processing's.

Considering that the Constitution of the Republic of Benin in its preamble, Reaffirm its "attachment to the principles of democracy and human rights as they have been defined by the Charter of the United Nations of 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted in 1981 by the Organization of African Unity and ratified by Bénin on January 20, 1986 and whose provisions make up an integral part of this present Constitution and of Béninese law and have a value superior to the internal law";

Considering that the people of Benin and the entities in whose favor the judgment was rendered are determined to execute said judgment by any available means necessary;

Considering the constant tendency of the Government of the Republic of Benin to systematically reject the execution of any decision rendered by the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights but also by the Court of Justice of West African Economic and Monetary Union (also known by its French acronym, UEMOA) which are unfavorable;

Considering the potential negative consequences (in the short and long term) of these latest decisions of the Court on the socio-economic and political stability of the country, since in the long term it is the legal signature of Benin which is in question.

For any observer it is clear from what is described above and all that transpired these past four years in the country under the Administration Talon one could conclude that the country once dubbed as the cradle of the democracy and now fully settled in an autocratic state of affairs is now taking a rogue approach vis-à-vis international treaties.

It is the legitimacy of the Beninese political authorities and hence the

legal value of the contracts signed with the State of Benin that are in question and could have serious implications for development partner organization of the Benin government and their stakeholders. Many of those organization are reviewing their internal policy choices and the decision to engage and contract with a country which has distinguished itself and is still illustrated in “the violation of the right to life, the right not



President Patrice Talon has been accused of taking the shine off the strong democratic credentials that Benin has built for some three decades now

to be subjected to torture and the right to respect the inherent human dignity”. As they are concerned about their corporate social responsibility, the court of public opinion as well as institutional cores values.

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## -Most US Administrations Have Not Had Good Policies On Africa-Lawrence Freeman

By Ajong Mbapndah L

As the Biden -Harris administration warms up to take power, questions are been asked on how their African policy will look like. To Lawrence Freeman, while the potential of stronger ties and bonds are real, it is best not to have high expectations as successive U.S administrations have not had good policies on Africa.

The political and economic analyst with thirty years of experience working on Africa says the last President who engaged Africa in a substantive way was President John Kennedy in the 60s. Though the relations seemed to have reached an all-time low during the Trump administration, Freeman opines that successive administrations including the more recent ones of Clinton, Bush and Obama all considered Africa as a low priority area, giving the Chinese an opening to hold sway. Freeman who runs a blog on Africa and frequently travels the continent, says his goal is to see poverty eliminated in Africa in his lifetime.

**Pan African Visions: It is not every day you see an American whose work has focused on Africa for some thirty years now, could we start this interview with what motivates or makes Lawrence Freeman passionate about Africa?**

Lawrence Freeman: It started in the



Many of the Presidents in recent periods have not had very good policies for Africa, says Lawrence Freeman.

second half of the 1960s. Some people will remember that it was a time of political activism, and I was involved in High School and later on in College. One of the things I began to think about was the conditions in Africa – the fact that it is a large continent with so much land and why will the people go hungry. About 30 years ago I began to focus on Africa, and I began to write, had meetings started with some Cameroonians, Liberians, and then I ended up going to Nigeria

in the 1990s which I have been many times. I now teach a course on African History and it has been my passion increasingly and every year I am more and more involved. 3 years ago, I set up my website so I can publish my articles. I am a researcher, journalist, consultant and my goal is to eliminate poverty in Africa in my lifetime.

**Pan African Visions: How will you describe African policy under President Trump, what**

**were some of the changes that you observed?**

Lawrence Freeman: US policy under President Trump was not effective. I have to say many of the Presidents in recent periods have not had very good policies for Africa. Many of them do not understand Africa, and they already have an interest which is a low priority on the President's list. The last President to engage himself in Africa was John F. Kennedy. He established a very unique relationship with Kwame Nkrumah and the latter was the first Head of State that John F. Kennedy brought to the United States on March 8 before any other country in the world. Trump has done very little; he has a programme called Prosper Africa which does not do much but focus on Trade and not a real development programme. He has involved himself in the Ethiopia dam issue in a very provocative manner by suggesting that Egypt may bomb the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam which was very unfortunate.

On the other hand, he has been very supportive of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in his confrontation with Tigray and also very supportive of President Ouattara in the election in Cote d'Ivoire. But overall, I would not give him a very high mark, but that is not very different from President Obama or President Clinton.

**Pan African Visions: Some people have described him as been dis-engaged, for African countries that yearn for genuine independence, was this not an opportunity to let them handle their affairs while pushing other colonial powers notably in Europe to scale back their influence on Africa?**

Lawrence Freeman: The problem is the lack of a coherent policy for Africa from the United States. Africa should be independent but there are ways that a country like mine (USA) could help which China is doing to a great extent. We can provide long term loans with credit for infrastructural development; to assist and collaborate with African countries and not to dictate and tell them what to do. This is a big omission on the current administration and the previous.

**Pan African Visions: The USA opposed the election of Dr Akinwumi Adesina for a second term as AfDB President despite his huge accomplishments and unanimous support from African countries and other international partners, and most recently the candidature of Okonjo Iweala at the helm of the WTO was also opposed, can you put some context on these controversial options from the USA?**

Lawrence Freeman: For the case of Iweala it was clear that the Trump administration was supporting another candidate – this hurt the African nations as they wanted to have someone of prestige in that position. The question of the African Development Bank I do not understand that. I believe President Trump was giving some false information about President Adesina and somehow his people in the administration acted on this in a way to try and undermine the President of the AfDB. The AfDB has its procedures for investigating internal fraud or mishandling of funds and that should have been left alone for the AfDB to handle and they did and cleared him (Adesina) of any

wrongdoings. I am not sure why or who gave President Trump this false information, but it was something that did not help build a strong relationship between the United States and Africa.

**Pan African Visions: What kind of changes do you anticipate seeing on US-African relations in the Biden-Harris Administration?**

Lawrence Freeman: Unfortunately, the group of people for the most part that President-elect Biden has been bringing out to the public represent long-term establishment figures, people who were in the Obama administration, and people from the Clinton administration which is going back some 20 years. These are people who do not have a vision for the development of Africa the way I do, and the leader of the United States should do. The interesting possibility lies with his pick for the UN Envoy Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield. She will not be in the state department where policies are made but she will be a member of the cabinet as UN Ambassador. She from contacts I have on the continent is viewed as a reasonable, thoughtful, even-handed representative in terms of dealing with problems in Africa and some of my friends in Africa think highly of her.

Because of her background as Ambassador to Liberia, working as secretary of State for Africa under President Obama, she has a background in Africa which very few people on the cabinet-level bring in. I do not know if she will be, but she could be a type of person that introduces some positive policies for Africa that are useful. The main problem we have now is that Africa needs development, specifically infrastructural development; electricity, roads, hospitals and this is where the United States could play a major role. Unfortunately, under several administrations and more emphatically under the Trump



**Tapped to serve as UN Ambassador, Linda Thomas Greenfield could introduce some positive policies for Africa that are useful, says Freeman.**

administration, they define the Africa policy not as simply for Africa but as countering China. They saw Africa as playing the game between the US and China and they used Africa as the chessboard rather than developing our positive policy.

China has done many good things for Africa such as their investment in infrastructure, rail and energy and I would like to see the United States do more, and for the United States to allow other nations like Russia and India to put their investment in infrastructure in Africa. I do not think that is going to happen during the Biden administration, but I am hopeful some positive steps will happen even though I don't think Africa is going to be top on Biden's agenda.

**Pan African Visions: If you were advising the administration what would be some of the priority areas that you see prospects of engagement with Africa?**

Lawrence Freeman: We have a list of very important infrastructural projects in Africa that the United States should be involved in. For example, a project I have been working for over 20 years called Trans Aqua and it is a great water project to bring water to build a canal (2400km) into the Central African Republic and which will lead to the filing up

of Lake Chad. Lake Chad is drying up and it is 90 per cent from where it was in 1960. More importantly by building this canal it will increase trade and development to all the countries around the Great Lakes; Congo, Tanzania, Uganda and the countries around Lake Chad which are without water such as Nigeria; Cameroon, Niger and Chad. We are very close to the completion of this project from the Italian Government. The United States has had no role to play and has not even supported the project. This is a great project. These kinds of projects will transform the continent, and this is where economic powers like the US, China and other nations could contribute to providing long term low-interest credit because infrastructural projects take many years to complete. Nuclear energy is another area where I think the United States can contribute because the electricity deficit on the continent is so huge. I think most politicians think very narrowly – they think about tomorrow and I think about 40 years ahead.

My thinking is better – you have to think 20 to 40 years ahead to plan policies. The United States like other European leaders have no vision of a future 20 years to advance. This is very unfortunate, and the Biden administration is bringing the same old people who did not have a vision when they were in government 10 or 20 years ago and I do not think they

are going to have one now. If they are smart, they will make me their economic adviser and maybe I can win them over to some of these long-term plans that we are developing.

**Pan African Visions: For many Africans and African countries that look up to the USA as a model for the kind of democracy worth emulating, what message or lessons could be drawn from the recent US election?**

Lawrence Freeman: The main thing is that the United States has a great constitution written by some brilliant founding fathers. In that constitution, they take care of all concerns concerning elections. The idea of having electorates is correct; all the procedures outlined in the US Constitution are working. The basis of the US constitution is the preamble and not all the separate by-laws. No matter what goes on there are rules set, dates set, the electors have to be certified, read to congress and the constitution works. We have not had any coup, but we have had several Presidents assassinated but we survived that. My recommendation to African Presidents is for them to study the constitution of the United States and all the documents involved. We are not going to have a civil war, we will not have riots, and we will move on to the next government - whether that government has any good ideas that is another question. A government will continue in the United States.

**Pan African Visions: On the conflict in Ethiopia, you described it as a war won to preserve the nation-state, and seem to support the position of President Abiy who opted for force and not dialogue, can you shed more light on your arguments?**

Lawrence Freeman: I have studied the Ethiopian constitution and the history of Ethiopia for several years. The main problem is that ethnicity became the basis of the constitution - they wanted to comprise with the various ethnic groups, and they set



*Africa needs development, specifically infrastructural development; electricity, roads, hospitals and the US could play a major role, says Lawrence.*

ethnic regional states. This caused a problem because it did not establish an Ethiopian identity with the same problem existing in Nigeria. The Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) was the leading group that carried out the coup. They maintain power not only in the Tigrayan region but all over the entire country. PM Abiy set up the Prosperity Party which was not based on any linings and the TPLF rejected that and made different moves to undermine the government.

From my standpoint, it was a necessary action to preserve the nation. If that action was not taken Ethiopia would have ceased to be a leading nation in Africa.

**Pan African Visions: Coming less than a year or so after he bagged the Nobel Peace Prize, is the world right in faulting Prime Minister Abiy for not doing more to explore a peaceful resolution or opening up to third-party mediation?**

Lawrence Freeman: The situation in Tigray is that there was an attempt to set up negotiations, there was a dialogue going on. The problem is that the TPLF violated national law and the government declared they could not carry out their election in May due to the COVID-19 crisis and set it forth for next year. The TPLF went ahead and had elections and

they took military actions. At that point, it went on a leeway that I think the PM did what he could do giving the conditions that existed in Ethiopia where you had this ethnonationalism which does not help respect the centralize power that existed in Addis Ababa that represented the nation.

**Pan African Visions: The conflict comes at a time when Ethiopia was grappling with a crisis over the Nile, what do you make of the insistence of Ethiopia to proceed with the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam?**

Lawrence Freeman: First of all, the Grand Renaissance Dam is 75 per cent complete and nothing is going to stop its completion. This is a matter of national identity for the people and they have funded the Dam by themselves. The Dam is on the Blue Nile which comes down from Lake Tana which is inside the sovereign state of Ethiopia. The Egyptians have a right to request that they not be without legitimate water. What needs to be looked is that Egypt is not deprived of necessary water. But the Egyptians are using the legacy of the colonial period that nobody can disrupt the Nile unless they approve it.

The 1929 Water Agreement on the distribution of the Nile allocation

was Sudan gets ¼ of the Water and Egypt gets ¾. In 1959 when both Sudan and Egypt were independence there was another agreement and this time between Sudan and Egypt. Again, Ethiopia was not allocated the Nile and told no one can build on the Nile without completely unacceptable approval. Ethiopia is an emerging nation and has very bold economic programmes. The biggest problem in Africa is the lack of electrical power. Agreements on the water can be worked out and it should be worked out.

**Pan African Visions: You were in Cote d'Ivoire for the elections and surprisingly spoke favourably about the controversial polls, what is it you saw that influenced the optimistic outlook that you painted of developments in that country?**

Lawrence Freeman: This was my first visit to Cote d'Ivoire. Most of my visits have been to Nigeria. I did not know the significance of the Port in Abidjan which is the largest port in West Africa and has a railroad that goes into Burkina Faso and Mali. This has a lot of economic potentials and I also realized that the government of Cote d'Ivoire under President Ouattara has had good progress on the development of its infrastructure and economy, reducing poverty, increasing access to electricity and clean water. I met with some officials and attended some lectures which indicate to me that the country is moving forward.

As an observer in the election, I could see what was going on and I found that the population was very orderly. It was a hot day and hundreds of people were standing in line, no fighting, carrying out their affairs in a good manner. Even though there was a controversy around Ouattara going again for a new term it is legitimate under the new constitution which was supported by the people in 2016. It is something I believe he did not want to do - he had indicated that he will resign but the chosen candidate died unexpectedly. This is almost the same situation

in the United States where you had several Presidential candidates that were in their 70s and you had many members of the congress and senate who are septuagenarians who seemed to dominate politics in many parts of the world. I believe there is a new commitment to the new government for economic empowerment and I am optimistic about that.

The people who opposed the election did not provide a viable alternative. They just attacked the government and called for a boycott which they got no vote. After the election was concluded on October 31, they declared themselves a new transition government. In 2010 3,000 people in Africa were killed because President Gbagbo would not leave the palace. Now in 2020 to have a group of people declare that they are the government it was uncalled for. I believe there is a lot that must be done but they are getting there.

***Pan African Visions: Your position kind of mirrored that of the US Ambassador who said the US supported the sovereignty of Cote d'Ivoire in the elections which many considered as controversial, and in countries like Tanzania the US picks issues with the elections, does this selective criticism or biased critique based on interests not hurt healthy relations between the USA and Africa?***

Lawrence Freeman: There are mixed signals, that I have no question about. The Ambassador in Cote d'Ivoire before the election said this election belongs to the people of Cote d'Ivoire and their institutions. And when the opposition tried to meet with the Ambassador (Richard Bell) after the election he did not meet with them. The Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Affairs at the State Department supported the sovereignty. That was very strong support for Cote d'Ivoire, and I was pleased to see it. In other areas that does not exist, and the mix signals is coming even in the same country. Like in Ethiopia you have President Trump who is criticizing Ethiopia for

building the Dam and making provocative statements and then when PM Abiy intervenes in the Tigray Region Tibor Nagy of the state department came out in support of the Ethiopian government.

The problem is that there is not a coherent conception coming from the United States on what Africa needs. There is a loud discussion on «democracy», but they do not understand democracy. It is not about how regularly you have elections but the ability of the citizens to discuss and debate important and profound ideas about the future of the country. In the United States we do not have that – everybody talks in 20 to 30sec sound bites, but real democracy like we had during our founding fathers, for that to take place in Africa everybody needs to have a minimum standard of living. Without economic development, real democracy cannot exist. Without a clear idea of what our policy for Africa should lead us to, we give mix signals.

***Pan African Visions: The crisis in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon have been raging for some four years with the US and the rest of the international more or less indifferent, may we know the US position on the situation in Cameroon from your understanding?***

Lawrence Freeman: The problem of Cameroon is indicative of what we have done to Africa. It is a result of the dividing of Africa. A united Cameroon never existed up to this point and because the French and British divided a legitimate nation is similar to the ethnicity we see in Kenya and other parts of Nigeria. What started in 2016 with the demonstrations, protests and strikes with separatist movements that have come in. I do not believe in dividing nations. I was opposed to the division of Sudan to two nations. I do not want to see Cameroon divided up. What has to be is that there has to be recognition of one Cameroon which may be difficult under Paul Biya who has been in power for almost 4 decades,



***On the conflict in Ethiopia, Lawrence Freeman believes that Prime Minister Abiy was right in taking action to preserve the territorial integrity of his country***

this is going to be a problem. What we should do is put forward an idea, a one Cameroon that has to be built under the conception of an economic mission for the country.

Let us establish a goal of where Cameroon should be in 5 or 20 years from now and make that mission a goal that unites all the people in the country and that everyone benefits from the economic benefits. That is the way I know how to unite the people. The prejudice won't go away in the model, but they have the capability of going away in time as people see interest in working together. The interest of myself lies in the interest of another and that is a challenging path. I think the United States has eliminated Cameroon from the AGOA process, but sanctions are not going to do it. They do not work that well and you have to put something positive in its place. I will make a great economic mission for the country and unite everyone together and establish a Cameroonian identity, not a French-controlled identity.

***Pan African Visions: We end with the last word on how you see 2021 playing out for Africa, what are your hopes and fears?***

Lawrence Freeman: If you look at the problems we have now if we do not implement certain measures today, we are going to have problems 10 or 20 years from now. If you have an approximate population of two and a half billion and approximately one billion may be young people; if those young people do not have jobs, see their nation as providing for

them then you can have very nasty operations and demonstrations, regime changes on the continent. On the other hand, we have all these very bright people, if we implement policies today that will bring about the kind of economic growth that is needed then you will not have an increase in alienation, anarchy and protests.

I would like to see the United States join with China and probably Russia to help Africa. They have to unite and assist Africa and not tell them what they have to do, and not seize anything like the Chinese have done. I estimate that Africa needs at least a thousand gigawatts of power to give people access to electricity. These things are primary. If we can begin in 2021 with a robust commitment to developing, then I think Africa will have a very interesting and beautiful future. If we do not, then we could be facing more serious challenges over the years ahead. I am approaching 78 years and I am going to put everything I have to make those things happen. If more people in the United States, Europe, and Africa will work with me on that then I think we can make some improvements that will benefit billions of people that are not only living today but those who will be born in the future. And that is my goal and commitments.

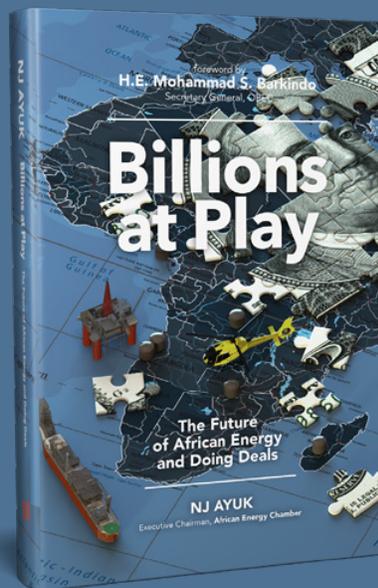
***Pan African Visions: Thanks for answering our questions.***

Lawrence Freeman: Thank you for giving me this opportunity and I appreciate all the work you do. —

# Billions at Play

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# 2020 Presidential elections: The Old Guard stands Firm

By Maniraguha Ferdinand

**B**usiness is not as usual during presidential elections in East African states as it used to be. The wind of change is blowing so quickly that if old ways are not restructured in time, old dictators will find it difficult to amend the ruins.

Presidential elections schedule for East African nations was not busy in 2020, but showed something new. The old tactics to overstay in power are not working anymore. Former president of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza foresaw it after a failed coup in 2015 and announced to quit early in 2018, the decision he stood by it till his mysterious death in June 2020 after organizing elections that put on power his right hand man, General Ndayishimiye Evariste of the ruling CNDD-FDD party.

Tanzanian elections in October 2020, expressed how people are tired of the old system of the ruling party CCM, but especially the ruling model of President John Pombe Magufuli. Over last 40 years, none had ever believed that the time will come when respected international organizations and big countries like USA, would dare to question the credibility of elections in Tanzania, a country that has been hailed as a democracy in Africa.

On 30th October 2020, US embassy in Tanzania reported “credible allegations of significant election-related fraud and intimidation» after



*Venerated by many and loathed by others, Magufuli scored a big win and will continue to shake up Tanzania.*

major opposition party Chadema boycotted elections and some of its leaders got arrested.

The embassy said that the vote was marred by allegations of arrests of candidates and protesters, restrictions on agents of political parties to access polling stations, multiple voting and widespread blocking of social media.

It required Magufuli main challenger Tundu Lissu to flee the country for his life, citing death intimidation, a threat he would not take for granted after death escape in 2018 when he was shot by unknown people.

Maybe Tundu and his supporters were not right or did some offense that needed some judicial investigations, but what is unusual

is the abrupt determination -of many Tanzanians to rush into the streets denouncing Magufuli-or CCM ruling system, which has been on the helm there since the East African country got independence in 1961.

Magufuli’s ascension to power gave hope of new dawn in Tanzania with his charismatic leading style with his prime goals of curbing corruption and dormant leaders who don’t deliver. Two years after he is elected, he was questioned by many especially when he publicly supported decision of expelling from school pregnant girls.

International non-government organizations labelled him as dictator who doesn’t spare his critiques, while closing political space and freedom of expression.

Violent clashes between opposition supporters and government forces, death of least 22 people between the election date and 11 November as Amnesty International reported, shows clearly that the old model of democracy in Tanzania is no longer fitting, needs some amendments.

Now that a new year gets closer, all eyes have shifted from Tanzania to Kampala, where the ‘old man in a hat’ as he calls himself, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni is seeking another five year term after 34 years in power.

Uganda’s presidential elections have in the past marred by violence and clashes between opposition and security forces working on the

government officials command, however this year things may be worse.

The young musician turned politician, Robert Kyagulanyi (a.k.a Bobi Wine) who is also an MP, has sowed fear into the government of the 76 old year Museveni due to a large crowd of people who follow him whenever he goes in villages to campaign. He has on several occasions been blocked from accessing campaign venues, and he often lament of being restricted to being given fair airtime on state owned media.

President Museveni himself, has on Sunday 29th November said that at least 54 were killed last month during the riots that erupted after Kyagulanyi was arrested being accused of not following anti-coronavirus rules.

Museveni is campaigning on the motto of ‘Securing the Future’ however opposition supporters mainly young people criticizes him, asking how what he didn’t deliver during the last 34 years, will be delivered in the future.

Presidential election in Uganda is scheduled on 14th January 2021. Though Museveni’s National Resistance Movement is most favored to win, the rise of Kyagulanyi have shown that old tactics to appease Ugandans are no longer in work.



*A supporter of Robert Kyagulanyi, carries his poster as they protest on a street against his arrest during a presidential rally in Kampala, Uganda, on November 18, 2020. Photo by Bad.*

# A Tribute to African Men and Women We Lost in 2020

By Prince Kurupati

2020 will go down in history as one unforgettable year – certainly not on the positive front. This all as a result of the novel corona virus pandemic which brought about some devastating consequences on the global stage. The number of the infected as of 25 November 2020 in Africa has eclipsed the 1.5 million mark while several thousands have lost their lives. The impact of the corona virus pandemic however is not just seen in regards to the infected and death stats but also includes the millions of people who lost their sources of livelihoods and incomes owing to national lockdowns implemented by African countries in a bid to combat the spread of COVID-19.

It's no doubt; therefore, that the COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating and has negatively affected all individuals on the African continent in one way or the other. However, in 2020, Africa also had to deal with the losses of some top Africans who during their lifetime achieved some incredible feats. In this article, we are going to take time in celebrating the lives and paying tribute to fallen African legends.

## George Bizos (South Africa)

On the 9th of September 2020, Africa lost George Bizos. Bizos was a lawyer by profession who mostly practiced in South Africa. Known to some as the unrelenting crusader for justice, Bizos died at a ripe age of 92. During the course of his career, George Bizos did inspire and impact the lives of many people. On this front, it's best to highlight some of his most popular cases just to demonstrate how his work impacted people seeking justice.

During the Apartheid era in South Africa when the white minority government was systematically discriminating against the black majority, George Bizos decided to be the lawyer for Nelson Mandela, the leader of the African National Congress who was facing persecution.



George Bizos was a prominent Lawyer in the fight against apartheid.

The pair had met while studying law in Johannesburg. When Mandela started his anti-Apartheid activities, he often times crossed paths with law enforcement agents and Bizos was always there to bail him out. Perhaps the most prominent of all bail outs is the Rivonia Trial. In 1964, Mandela together with other anti-Apartheid activists were arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of seeking to overthrow the Apartheid government. When both sides had concluded their closing remarks, Bizos asked the defendant's team to show him the closing remarks. After going through the document, he urged the team to add the words, "if needs be" – this phrase was the difference which determined that Mandela receive a life time sentence instead of a death sentence.

George Bizos also endeared himself with the common man. After South Africa attained independence in 1994, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up. Bizos would go on to represent and work with victims that appeared before the Commission urging them to speak

freely without any fear in exposing their perpetrators and the risks and damages they were exposed to. At times, George Bizos would take his work beyond borders. When the main opposition leader in Zimbabwe Morgan Tsvangirai (now late) was arrested on treason charges, at the turn of the millennium, George Bizos travelled all the way from South Africa to Zimbabwe to face off with the much feared Robert Mugabe representing Tsvangirai. Tsvangirai eventually won the case and was acquitted.

## Jerry Rawlings (Ghana)

Jerry Rawlings, the man who ruled Ghana from 1981 to 2000 passed on 12 November 2020. Jerry Rawlings during his tenure as Ghana's president was known for being a champion of decentralization and municipal movement. His incredible work to ensure that decentralization became a common feature in modern African states saw him win the prestigious distinction award from the Executive Committee political leadership of UCLG Africa in 2013. Rawlings believed that only through

decentralization could Africa emerge from its shells and become a force to be reckoned with on the international stage. In one of his most acclaimed speeches on decentralization, Jerry Rawlings had this to say:

"Decentralization is a system of power devolution that garners respect and confidence from the people who choose us as leaders. Decentralization allows for governments to share their burden with the ordinary people. This is what has been structured and elevated into what we call local government. Everything possible should be done to encourage local government. It shares the central government's burden with the people, demystifies what governance is about and brings people in touch with the problems that central government faces."

Following the death of Jerry Rawlings, Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairman of the African Union Commission said, "Africa has lost a stalwart of Pan-Africanism and a charismatic, continental statesman."

## Pierre Nkurunziza (Burundi)



*In Jerry Rawlings Africa lost one of its iconic elder statesmen*

Former Burundi president Pierre Nkurunziza also passed away this year. Nkurunziza just died a sudden death without any reports of ill-health. Both in his country and beyond, Nkurunziza during his time as the leader of Burundi sharply divided opinion. To some, Nkurunziza was viewed as a dictator, another one of the numerous African dictators. To some however, Nkurunziza was viewed as a great Pan-Africanist, a man who valued African regional integration and unity above anything else. Whichever side one may align with when it comes to Nkurunziza, the one thing that crystal clear from his rule as the Burundi president is that he did all he could to unify a nation that was highly divided along ethnic lines. Before his ascension to power, several top government officials including his predecessor had all been assassinated owing to the ethnic alignments. However, Nkurunziza managed to stamp out ethnic linked political assassinations.

Away from the political realm, Nkurunziza wanted so much for his country to enjoy the same economic benefits as those enjoyed by developed nations. It is against this background that he called upon all industrialists, researchers and economists to come up with strategies that would help in diversifying the economy. Burundi largely depended on exporting two

products that is coffee and tea. However, overreliance on these two was not prudent hence the reason Nkurunziza favoured associating himself with a young generation of technocrats in a quest to come up with ways on how best the country could diversify its economy.

**Abya Kyari (Nigeria)**

Nigerian President Muhammadou Buhari lost his best friend who was also working as his Chief of Staff earlier this year. Abya Kyari was Buhari's right hand man for many years going back before the time

Buhari had even won the Nigerian presidential race.

In his role as the Chief of Staff, many attributed him as Nigeria's defactor president. This necessitated by the fact that the role of the Chief of Staff entails organizing the life of his principal that is, President Buhari. Kyari was also known not to shy away from dabbling in actual governance, something admired by many while also loathed by many. He was instrumental in shaping the contours of the Buhari administration policy thinking on agriculture, defining the government's focus on achieving rice

self-sufficiency. Looking at the stats, its crystal clear that Kyari's work paid dividends as Nigeria now produces more rice annually, about four million tons a year.

In a moving tribute, the Nigerian President had this to say, "Mallam Abba Kyari, who died on 17th April, 2020, at the age of 67 from complications caused by the Coronavirus, was a true Nigerian patriot. My loyal friends and compatriot for the last 42 years – and latterly my Chief-of-Staff – he never wavered in his commitment to the betterment of every one of us. He was only in his twenties when we first met. A diligent student, soon after he was blessed with the opportunity to study abroad – first at Warwick and then law at the University of Cambridge. But there was ever any question Abba would bring his first-rate skills and newly acquired world-class knowledge back to Nigeria – which he did – immediately upon graduation. Whilst possessing the sharpest legal and organizational mind, Abba's true focus was always the development of infrastructure and the assurance of security for the people of this nation he served so faithfully. For he knew that without both in tandem there can never be the development of the respectful society and vibrant economy that all Nigerian citizens deserve. In political



*Many were stunned by the death of Pierre Nkurunziza who was actively preparing to hand over to his elected successor*

life, Abba never sought elective office for himself. Rather, he set himself against the view and conduct of two generations of Nigeria's political establishment – who saw corruption as an entitlement and its practice a byproduct of possessing political office. Becoming my Chief of Staff in 2015, he strove quietly and without any interest in publicity or personal gain to implement my agenda... He made clear in his person and his practice, always, that every Nigerian – regardless of faith, family, fortune or frailty – was heard and treated respectfully and the same. Mallam Abba Kyari was the very best of us. He was made of the stuff that makes Nigeria great. Rest in Peace, my dearest friend.”

**Manu Dibango (Cameroon)**

Manu Dibango popularly known as 'Pappy Grove' passed on from COVID-19 complications on 24 March. Manu Dibango was a Franco-Cameroonian singer of world jazz who was regarded by many as an international symbol of African music. Dibango was one of the pioneering African artists to reach the Top 40 American charts. He would go on to scoop some prestigious accolades and awards for his brilliant music.

While Dibango is popularly known for his musical career, he also was a proud Pan-Africanist. In a touching tribute, Ugandan author

and journalist had this to say, “To understand why Manu was special, it is important to understand the political context in which ‘Soul Makosa’ came out... It was the Cold War, and Africa was caught between inept brutal military dictatorships. They were gloomy times, and along come ‘Soul Makossa,’ which had a unique cheerfulness and cosmopolitanism to it. It was just what people needed, because it brought warmth to people’s lives... It helped, of course, that

he looked cool. He was Issac Hayes without the beard... At that time if folks wanted to be cool, not be political sellouts, and have some Pan-African creds, the Makossa man was the badge they carried.”

Soul Makossa translating to ‘I will Dance’ is the song credited for putting Manu Dibango on the global map.

**Aurlus Mabele (Congo-Brazzaville)**

The King of Soukous, Aurlus Mabele passed on, on 19 March. The Multi-talented Mabele who was a singer, composer and bandleader was known far beyond his native



Manu Dibango was one of the prominent Africans who died of COVID 19

Congo-Brazzaville. Born in Congo-Brazzaville, from an early age Mabele demonstrated a strong passion for music. When he started to craft his own music, he created an up-tempo dance music synchronized from American R&B and funk, West African music and numerous Caribbean genres including bele, meringue, soca, beguine, modern chouval bwa and cadence-lypso. During his time, Aurlus Mabele shared the stage with some great artists including African Fiesta, Papa Wemba, Pepe Kalle and Michael Jackson.

**Amadou Gon Coulibally (Ivory Coast)**

On July 8 2020, Ivory Coast woke up to the sad news that aspiring presidential candidate Amadou Gon Coulibally had passed on. Amadou Gon Coulibally had been a constant feature in Ivory Coast politics for a long period. He rose to the post of Prime Minister in January 2017 and by 2020, he had been nominated as the ruling party’s candidate in the 2020 Ivorian presidential election - he according to many polls was tipped as the favourite to win.

Before his ascension to the post of Prime Minister, Amadou Gon Coulibally had served in various roles in government including serving as the Minister of Agriculture, senior Minister, Secretary General of the Presidency, Director of Economic and Financial Studies as well as Deputy Director General.

Speaking after the passing of Amadou Gon Coulibally, the President of the African Development Bank (AFDB) Akinwumi Adesina said “Amadou Gon was an exemplary leader... He was such a great champion of programs to accelerate the development of his country. He carried the vision of the President and the government wholeheartedly into every meeting, into every discussion.”



Designated to be the successor of President Ouattara, Amadou Gon Coulibally died a few months to the elections. Photo AP



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# Cameroon: D&L Foretia Foundation will Continue Catalyzing Africa's Economic Transformation

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

The Denis and Lenora Foretia Foundation will continue its focus on Africa's transformation through social entrepreneurship, science and technology, innovation, public health and progressive policies that create economic opportunities for all. This per the Foundation's Chief Operating Officer (COO) Fri Asanga, in an interview with Pan African Visions to look back at the year's activities that the Foundation has organized and what is installed for 2021.

Before joining the Foundation, Fri Asanga was the Coordinator for FinScope and MAP Cameroon where she oversaw the activities of the financial scoping consumer survey in Cameroon on behalf of UNCDF and FinMark Trust.

**PAV: 2020 has been a challenging year for everyone and the Foundation is not left out, what measures were taken or have been taken to ensure staff does not contract the coronavirus?**

Fri Asanga: The Foundation educated the staff on the virus, its signs and symptoms, how to prevent it, and other measures necessary for them to protect themselves and their loved ones. In a bid to curb the spread of the disease and protect staff, the Foundation closed its offices in March 2020 and everyone started working from home. When office activities resumed in September 2020, the Foundation ensured that all staff wear masks to work, Wash their hands before getting into the office premise, and maintain social distancing while in the office.

**PAV: At the start of the Coronavirus in Cameroon, the Foundation moved swiftly to create the COVID-19 taskforce. What successes were recorded? And were there any challenges faced trying to communicate to**



Fri Asanga, COO Denis and Lenora Foretia Foundation.

**the population?**

Fri Asanga: The covid 19 community pilot project under the covid task force was launched on the 16th of April 2020. The pilot project was launched in a bid to accompany the government in the fight against Covid-19 through community involvement. Through the project, the following activities were accomplished;

- Training of community leaders on the identification of signs and symptoms of Covid 19
- Distribution of flyers and posters in the simbock neighbourhood.
- Training the community on how to locally produce hand sanitizers and wash hands properly.
- Creation of local volunteers at the community level.
- Translation of messages to local languages (Ewondo and Bamileke) Radio sensitization.
- Myth debunking.
- Creation of a WhatsApp group for better monitoring and follow up.
- Organization of a covid Symposium to crown the project.

The COVID-19 Taskforce published

more than 10 bulletins to educate the general public and advise policymakers about the pandemic. Each bulletin was written both in French and English to reach a maximum number of people. The bulletins covered specific aspects including the management of the pandemic, its implications for households and companies, and the measures to curb the spread of the virus just to name a few.

Also, the task force organized a series of webinar events where key policymakers and health practitioners were invited to share their thoughts and experiences to promote evidence-informed decisions in the country.

During the entire project, the following challenges were encountered: Most volunteers were students and were not available to fully participate in the program due to school activities. Also, some interested people did not have android phones nor computers to participate in the online symposium.

Another difficulty was encountered at the level of planning and organizing

the radio sensitization programme as it coincided with an exam programme of community volunteers where a greater proportion of them was in examination classes. It was a challenge getting community members to attend the virtual symposium via zoom.

**PAV: What are some of the activities that the Foundation has carried out this year?**

This year we organized the SBEC Activities for the year 2020 which involved; Regional forum on Business Networking on January 31st in Douala. Theme «The Pivotal Role of business networking to entrepreneurs in Cameroon»

- Regional Forum on the business network on February 27th in Yaoundé. Theme «Business networking, a valuable tool for entrepreneurial Growth in Cameroon»

- Business plan training online from May 12th to July 1st (5 modules). Theme "Business plan, an ultimate tool for fueling ambitions and entrepreneurial growth in Cameroon"

- Bookkeeping training online on July 29th. Theme "A Practical Guide for Bookkeeping"

- Webinar on «Surviving beyond the Covid-19 as an entrepreneur in Cameroon» on September 11th.

-Webinar on «The effects of Information Asymmetry on business growth in Cameroon» on 27th November.

The Nkafu Policy Institute organized a 1-week intensive training course on policy analysis. Two Nkafu Debates were organized on the themes; "Will more Taxes Increase fiscal revenues in Cameroon" and "Is market competition good for Cameroon's Industrialization?"

Under our Leadership and Democracy project, we organized about 10 events on Peace and Democracy. As part of our COVID-19 project, we organized about 10 webinars and invited experts to gain more insights on the pandemic,

and how Cameroon and Africa are adapting.

We equally organized 2 events to disseminate the research findings of a Thematic Report on Starting a business in Cameroon, and another on Dealing with Construction permits in Cameroon

**PAV: Let's now focus on some activities you carried out this year. Firstly, talk to us about the Emerging Leaders Program for this year and what are some of the peculiarities?**

Fri Asanga: The Emerging leaders program is a program organized by the Foundation to better equip today's youths for transformational Leadership in Cameroon. This training program which identified 20 highly skilled and motivated Cameroonians below the age of 35, took place from the 25th to the 28th of October 2020 with renowned speakers based in Cameroon and the United State of America.

The second phase of this program is underway as these youths equipped with knowledge in leadership and democracy will organize similar events financed by the Foundation in their respective regions of origin.

**PAV: The Foundation organized the STEM Program last year 2019 but this year there was none. Why so?**

Fri Asanga: The STEM Program

did not take place this year due to the advent of the COVID 19 Pandemic. The program was scheduled to take place mid-year but during this period, the COVID 19 pandemic was at its peak and all schools were closed.

**PAV: What are some of the challenges that the foundation has had to grapple with this year aside from the COVID-19 Pandemic?**

Fri Asanga: Moving to the virtual way of doing events was a great challenge as the entire Foundation struggled to adapt to this new system. Participants struggled with attending and using online video conferencing applications.

**PAV: How have you found the situation of working from home or using the zoom platform for webinars by the Foundation better as opposed to using physical locations?**

Fri Asanga: Firstly is the ability to bring in resource persons from all over the world to contribute to discussions during webinars. The distance barrier is broken through webinars. Next is the fact that participants who were interested in our events could now attend irrespective of their location or what they are doing.

**PAV: This year 2020 is about rounding up, what are we expecting from the Foundation**



*Fri Asanga addressing 2020 Cohorts of the Emerging Leaders Programme.*

**in the few weeks left?**

Fri Asanga: The foundation has some events planned out for December. They include the following;

- December 04, 2020 - Le Processus De Démocratisation Au Cameroun 30 Ans Après : Quel Bilan à l'Épreuve Des Crises ?(Online)
- December 08, 2020- COVID-19 and Africa: The Path Forward A Conversation with Dr Bernard Kadio (Online)
- December 11, 2020 - SBEC National Forum (Foundation Headquarters)
- December 16, 2020 - Social Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons for Business Incubation in Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and Ghana. (La Falaise Hotel, Yaoundé)

- December 18, 2020 - One year into the COVID-19 Pandemic. What Lessons can be learnt? (Online)

**PAV: What should we envisage from the Foundation this coming year 2021?**

Fri Asanga: The Foundation will continue to work on 4 major projects

1. The DBI project which focuses on Liberating Entreprises to advance prosperity in Cameroon
2. The COVID-19 Project which is focused on Protecting Liberties while addressing the Corona Virus Pandemic
3. The Social Entrepreneurship Project that focuses on Business Incubator Practices in Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and Ghana

The leadership and democracy project which is aimed at Promoting Democracy and Governance in Cameroon

**PAV: Is there anything you will like to talk about that we left out? If not, what is your last word as we sign off 2019?**

Fri Asanga: The Foundation will continue its mission of catalyzing Africa's Economic Transformation through social entrepreneurship, science and technology, innovation, public health and progressive policies that create economic opportunities for all.

JULY 30, 2020 / 2PM - 4PM CAMEROON TIME (9AM - 11AM D.C TIME)

ASSESSING CAMEROON'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC








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Director of Disease Control Ministry of Public Health, Cameroon

**Prof. CHARLES WIYONGHE**  
Director: South African Cochrane Centre/South African Medical Research Council

**Prof. Emeritus ROSE GANA FOMBAN LEKE**  
Biotechnology Center, University of Yaoundé 1  
QUEEN MOTHER Cameroon Medical Community  
Heroine of Health 2018

**Prof. MBACHAM WILFRED**  
Professor of Public Health Biotechnology  
Fellow of the Cameroon Academy of Sciences

**Prof. NSAGHA DICKSON SHEY**  
Associate professor of Epidemiology; Infectious Diseases of Poverty/NTD  
University of Buea

**MODERATOR Dr. GOBINA RONALD**  
Public Health Fellow  
Coordinator of the Corona Virus Taskforce  
Nkafu Policy Institute

*The Foundation has been a leading voice on COVID 19 themed initiatives*

# Taking on the bottlenecks as AfCFTA takes off

By Richard Mammah

Trade discussions are in the air all over Africa at the moment and it is clear that the continent is all poised for the January 1 take-off of the landmark African Continental Free Trade Area, AfCFTA.

In terms of its conception and planned operations, AfCFTA has set itself the goal of creating a single market that would better guarantee trade in goods and services as well as the movement of persons across Africa.

While the current phase of the project is the culmination of several phases and agreements that began with the African Union Secretariat drawing up the plans for the scheme and working with Heads of States and technocrats to bring it to the current place, its deeper origins however go back much further to sentiments and processes such as the Back to Africa Movement of the Marcus Garvey era, the founding of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 and the drawing up of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 and the take-off of the African Economic Community in 1991. Now all of those teething developments have paid off and crystallised into the reality of AfCFTA.

At the moment, AfCFTA is clearly one of the largest free-trade agreements in the world with a potential market of 1.2 billion people and accompanying gross domestic product of \$2.5 trillion. It has been



AU leaders posed for a picture in Kigali at the Summit that established the AfCFTA in March 2018.

assented to by 54 of the 55 states of Africa and further ratified by no less than 30 of them.

### Periscoping the framework

The focus of AfCFTA is on reducing barriers to free trade within the continent through providing for tariffs exemptions to goods that are proven to originate from within Africa. In practical terms, goods and services that qualify as part of the AfCFTA scheme would have to prove that in terms of source and origin, they have tapped upon and used materials drawn from within the continent.

Through these, the scheme would be progressively uniting the different economies of Africa by liberalizing and facilitating the free movement

of persons as well as the gamut of capital, goods, and services that are domiciled within the continent.

As these are done, the hope and plan is to deepen economic integration, promote agricultural development, food security and industrialization, which would in turn then lead to structural economic transformation of the continent.

Additionally, there is equally the goal of creating an expanded and significantly more secure market for goods and services of member states through boosting overall continental infrastructure, progressively eliminating tariffs and also removing other non-tariff barriers to trade and investment in the continent.

### Prime place for Customs

The respective customs agencies in the continent would be most critical in getting AfCFTA to succeed. This is because, under the agreement, member states would be expected to exchange information in a timely manner. This would involve posting details of persons and goods crossing the respective borders ahead of arrival with a view to processing them and passing judgement in the crucial aspect of the origin of goods.

To help harmonise processes in a continent with diverse customs protocols, currencies, languages,

cultures and political and economic systems, the World Trade Organization's certified harmonized system would be employed.

While many of these provisions relate to exports, the protocol also applies to imports that are also projected to benefit from the tariff-free regime being introduced under the AfCFTA scheme as they would be attracting zero tariffs. .

Already, African Customs officials have formally agreed to adopt a mutual set of continental guidelines to facilitate the free flow of cross-border trade.

This was the outcome of a workshop held at the close of November where they agreed to do so as a critical contribution that would help facilitate the movement of goods, services and people under the AfCFTA treaty.

The virtual session which was moderated by the African Union Commission and which had the UN Economic Commission for Africa participating, was attended by Customs chiefs from all over the continent.

While the move to liberalize 90% of tariff lines as provided for in the AfCFTA treaty will definitely affect customs revenues of member states, more so when about 85% of imports today come from outside the continent, the flip side however is



AfCFTA Secretary General Wamkele Mene.

that across the medium to long term, AfCFTA promises to facilitate exports and production.

*Not yet Uhuru, though...*

Asked to give his down to earth view of AfCFTA as the scheme is set to commence trading in January, and whether there are any real challenges we should expect and how to address them, the political economist, Uche Okoro says:

‘There are fundamental issues involved in AfCFTA, which belie the enthusiasm for it. Our (Africans) challenge is adopting ideas and schemes without understanding underlying issues that informed them and determined their likely performance or success. Every policy or program has environmental factors. But we willfully ignore such cultural, political and social factors. For instance, democracy. Is it working and what is the challenge? Can Nigeria implement AfCFTA with the present state of the economy? What of the border closure? And Nigeria is not alone or unique in this as other African countries also shut their borders now and again. Indeed, Africa is a basket case in terms of policies, leadership, economy, neocolonial influence. Trans-African trade is low. There is also the issue of leadership - who is driving it? Globally, every grouping is led by one or two countries. EU is Germany, France. NAFTA by U.S. ASEAN U.S. and Japan, now China. South America Brazil and Argentina. Who is leading AU and AfCFTA? The policy is good but how do we go about it? How many companies in Nigeria can take it up? Apart from Dangote, BUA Group, and the bigger banks, which Nigerian firms are capable of continental trade? Well, a few South African companies can, and this will even stir fears of trade domination among other concerns. Then there are the other issues. My view then is that Africa must concurrently drive political integration to facilitate its economic union unlike the case with the EU. This is because the core of Africa’s politics today is a clear disaster and vitiates any good policy.



*AU Chair Moussa Faki, AfCFTA SG Wamkele Mene and Ghanaian President Akufo Addo at the official commissioning and handover of the AfCFTA secretariat headquarters in Accra, Ghana. Photo AU.*

*Another commentator, Tony Opara seemingly agrees:*

‘There are real challenges and we really have no leaders to sit down to agree on how to go about things. In Nigeria today, President Muhammadu Buhari does not really seem to be listening to his economic team so how can they tackle and address any and all of the country’s economic challenges, talk less of getting round now to addressing issues of a continental economic significance?’

Reminded that the continent has leaders like South Africa’s Cyril Ramaphosa and Ghana’s Nana Akufo Addo and whether they could be of help, Opara is not impressed as he insists that the problem remains a challenge of leadership.

On his part, the markets watcher, Teslim Shitta Bey sees an even deeper foundational challenge:

‘Africa is as at today still a largely and unproductive continent that is heavily dependent on the export of unprocessed goods, ranging from minerals to agricultural cash crops. This places the continent in a position of global trade disadvantage. The poor processing capabilities of African economies pivots global terms of trade against them. The only economy with strong manufacturing capacity on the African continent is South Africa which is currently suffering from a soft state status that is bedraggled by a weak economy and social disharmony, or what amounts to a double whammy that may take a few years to correct. In real terms

then, Africa would require at least a decade to deepen intra-continental trade. Narrowing it further, a lot will depend on Nigeria being run much better than we have seen in the last decade and South Africa would equally need better or more forward-thinking governance. So, going beyond self-adorulating verbal theatrics, AfCFTA is a beautiful concept in search of purposeful structure. The problem is that African economies are too politically and economically weak to make AfCFTA work. It would be delightful to swallow a mouthful of tasty barbequed beef but the size of the throat forms a barrier. AfCFTA is an elephant’s head that needs more guts and guile to carry than presently is available to the continent.’

*The bigger boys*

As events continue to develop, one of the noted realities at the moment is that some bigger corporates have already begun to take positions that could enhance their bargaining capacity in the AfCFTA era. Ecobank Transnational Incorporated has for some three decades and counting been navigating the pan-African business waters. Today it has relatively firm roots in about three fifths of the states in the continent. The United Bank for Africa has opened shop in close to two dozen African nations and Access Bank was, at the time of going to press, reportedly pushing to conclude an assets acquisitions deal with Atlas Mara as part of its broad objective to continue to play very strong continentally. Beyond the bankers,

the telecommunications player, MTN has already made quite substantial inroads across the continent.

On the mining and manufacturing plain, Dangote Cement with its cross-continental factories expansion scheme and clinker supplies deals is moving to entrench itself further on the continent’s construction field. Given the seeming preparedness of these bigger corporates to do business in distant waters all over the continent, it is clear that the AfCFTA scheme would definitely get some initial engagement from the activities of the bigger organizations who stand to get much from the process as things stand now.

Shitta Bey agrees, noting that ‘companies that have strategically positioned their operations for a continental market may have a preferred seat at the trade table.’ He however cautions that ‘they may also need to have some patience, as the early days of AfCFTA may appear murky. But in the medium to long-term Dangote Cement and Access Bank should squeeze superior value from their continental presence.’

At the moment, countries are putting finishing touches to their preparations. They are setting up sensitization teams, hosting enlightenment sessions and identifying core trading preferences.

Nigeria for example has listed its top exports for trade to include products and services in Agriculture, Oil and Gas, Mining and Tourism. The music is blaring. Let the dance begin.



# THE SONS OF THUNDER

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OKEY SAMUEL MBONU

# Flying The African Flag Even In Crisis: Ethiopian Airlines And Its Fight Against Coronavirus

By Amos Fofung



A donation from Chinese billionaire Jack Ma of masks, COVID19 test kits and other materials arrive in Tanzania. Photo Courtesy.

When the coronavirus outbreak first hit international news outlets, no one could fathom the level of chaos it will create on a global level. Giant economies have been shattered, companies bankrupt, and thousands of lives destroyed. There was no escaping from the novel virus which seemingly throw scientists off their game and challenged world leaders, most of who strived to keep their countries afloat.

Responding to the outbreak and preventing a far devastating consequence was the only viable option. It will be fair to state that European nations and some countries in North America had an easy ride responding to the pandemic due to their economic and developmental standings. But in a continent like Africa, unique in every way, a Pan African hero was needed – especially after the first coronavirus case was reported in February.

On March 15, 2020, Ethiopia Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced

that he had secured a continent-wide coronavirus support from Chinese business magnet, Jack Ma.

The Ali Baba founder confirmed the news 24-hours later following which the materials were flown to Ethiopia on March 22. With coronavirus increasing its spread across Africa, the continent received a much-needed care package but then the issue was how to get the package across the difficult terrain in Africa to the affected population – most of them in secluded areas.

### *Flying the African flag even in times of crisis*

Ethiopia agreed to use its national career, Ethiopian airlines, to undertake deployment to all member states across the continent.

On March 23, the airline which is Africa's most profitable was flying across the continent delivering the supplies and before March 27, Ethiopian airlines had delivered the consignments to 41 countries. This is after the national carrier

had announced major cancellation of international flights to curve the spread of the virus and keep its employees safe.

Destined to each of the 54 African countries was 20,000 test kits, 100,000 masks and 1,000 medical use protective suits and face shields all distributed by Ethiopian Airlines.

A star Alliance member, Ethiopian airlines is branded the pride of Africa and recognized and the best airline of the continent winning three times in a row the prestigious Skytrax World Airlines Award.

Suffering a loss of over \$190 million, the carrier has suspended flights to 30 destinations as demand collapses and some countries impose travel bans to try and contain the deadly pandemic. Aviation is one of the hardest hit industries by the virus, facing billions of dollars of lost revenue.

Despite the difficult times marred with uncertainty, Tewolde Gebremariam, CEO of Ethiopian Airlines remains optimistic saying

the African skies could experience increased activity earlier than other continents.

In an interview with Bloomberg TV he said "here in Africa we expect to be slightly faster in recovery," this is against the backdrop that global flights are forecast to take up to two years to return to 2019 levels.

Air travel was one of the most impacted economic centers as most countries across the world closed their airspaces to passenger flights save in some instances for medical and emergency landings.

The European Union, United States and several western governments had also arranged flights to evacuate their citizens across the continent with Ethiopian at the forefront of some of these operations.

Conversely, African governments – most recently Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, and Uganda have all moved to evacuate stranded citizens from different parts of the world. Again, Ethiopian, one of few airlines that continued operations stepped in to

bring them home.

About bailouts, he stressed that Ethiopian – a continental leader – was not at the stage of seeking any such interventions but that they had other operational areas they seek government support.

“African governments will not be in a position to bail out airlines as much as in Europe and America,” said Tewolde. “Airlines are not flying or generating revenue and governments do not have the resources to bail them out. It is going to be very, very tough for most African airlines.”

**Lessons to other African carriers**

Indeed, the biggest airlines in Africa are reeling from the devastating economic effects of coronavirus. Kenya Airways, the sixth largest airline on the continent, has occasionally asked the country's government for an urgent bailout to avoid going into bankruptcy, and protect the jobs of 3,900 employees. In July 2019, the Kenyan parliament voted to re-nationalize the airline, 23 years after it was privatized.

Small carriers like Air Zimbabwe, a single-plane carrier that's \$300 million in debt, The Associated Press reported. But major airlines are also hurting, including Kenya Airways, Royal Air Maroc and Lome-based regional carrier ASKY Airlines, whose fleet of nine aircraft is still grounded.

In April, the International Air Transport Association warned African airlines could lose \$6 billion in revenue this year, along with about 3 million aviation and related jobs continentwide. The African Airlines Association offered an even darker



**Gambian Minister of Health Dr Ahmadou Lamin Samateh receiving donation from Jack Ma Foundation ferried in by Ethiopian Airlines.**

assessment of \$8 billion in losses. Even industry star Ethiopian Airlines is hurting, reporting revenue losses in millions of dollars.

Aviation experts say the 75-year-old Ethiopian Airlines has both the fleet and managerial capacity to help ease the burden of Africa's struggling airlines.

In the 2017-2018 financial year, Ethiopian owned 111 planes, more than any other airline on the continent, and flew to 106 destinations around the world. It is also one of the few airlines that consistently turn up a profit in Africa.

Ethiopian has invested heavily in modernizing its fleet, which is now

the youngest in Africa at 5.4 years as of March 2019. This compares well above the average of 13.5 years, 15 years, and 10.7 years for British Airways, United Airlines and American Airlines, respectively.

**A long way here**

Ethiopian has come a long way since commencing operations in 1945 with a weekly service between Addis Ababa and Cairo. Early on the airline recognized that a successful future depended on first developing a far-reaching pan-African route network. With this aim now largely fulfilled, the airline's focus is shifting. New destinations and increased numbers

of flights to Europe, the United States of America, Canada, Asia and the Middle East have been launched, as the airline goes about bringing the world closer to Africa.

Internationally, Ethiopian flies to a number of major cities in Europe including Frankfurt, London, Paris, Rome, Brussels and Stockholm; to Bangkok, Beijing, New Delhi, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Mumbai across Asia; to numerous destinations in the Middle East; to Washington D.C, Newark and Toronto in North America.

From its hub at Addis Ababa, Ethiopian serves 116 international and 23 domestic destinations.



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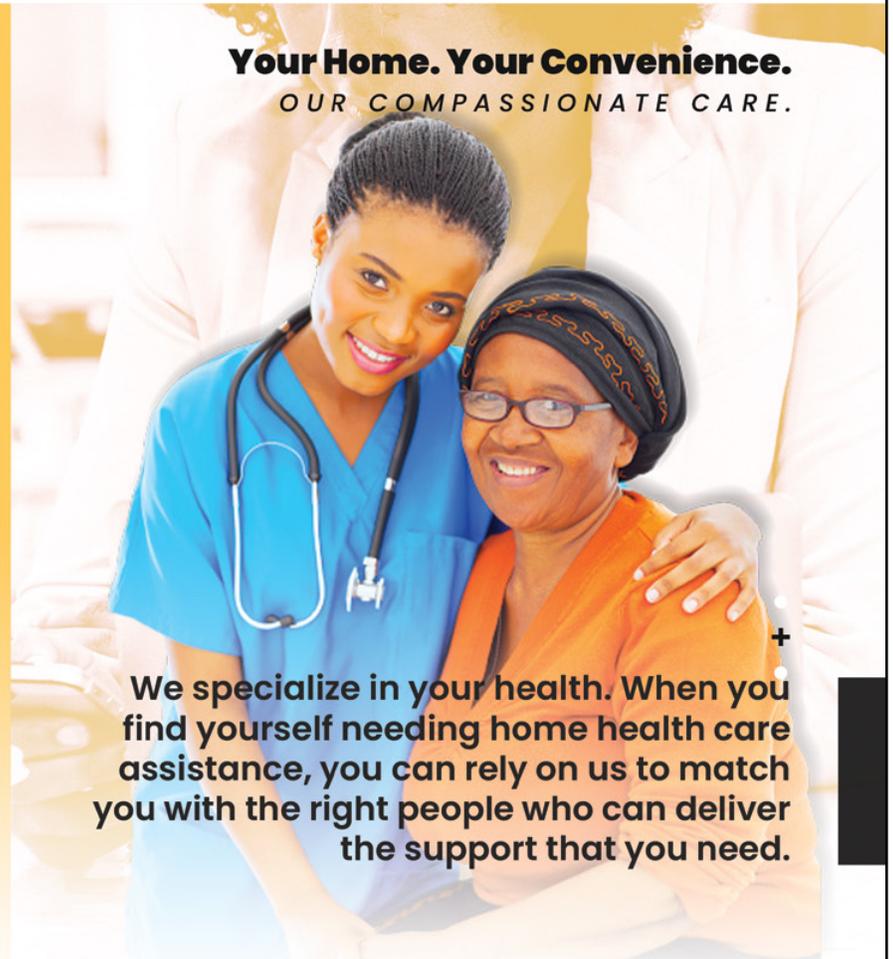


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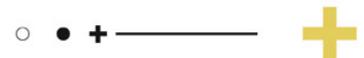
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# Rwanda: Israel NSO company boosts Rwanda Intelligence spy network capacity

By Mohammed M. Mupenda\*

What can you do if you wake up and find yourself in the hands of your enemy or whoever you believed could be a threat to you? This is the trend by Rwanda's spy network that has disrupted many plans of opponents operating in and out of the country.

The tiny central African country has always been accused of cracking down the opponents and spending much money on spying those living in different countries including neighbouring Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Kenya, according to different sources and media reports, citing examples of many people who have been disturbed, warned or surprisingly found themselves in Rwanda.

This was no doubt as, in 2019, President Paul Kagame accepted that during a press conference and even went further to say that the country could be using an excessive budget.

«We have no problem; we spy like other countries do and personally I spend a lot of money on it.»

Many allies believe that Rwanda spy and intelligence network has done great work on having their so-called enemies extracted, killed and arrested or found themselves in a country. This has however been questioned by many opposition activists in a country and abroad. Human rights watch and Amnesty International have never ceased raising red flag on the ongoing crackdown, killing and arresting of opponents.

A number of people have been arrested and charged with terrorism under what observers call injustice and targeting opponents to silence them but in most times it happens with justifiable reason by Kigali government, in that spy network has already established and gathered information that could be a threat to the country's security and peace for citizens.

When Callixte Nsabimana a.k.a



*We have no problem; we spy like other countries do and personally I spend a lot of money on it, says President Kagame.*

Sankara was arrested in Comoros, it is said that the country was stalking him through pegus app following up the chats between him and other opponents; in fact, every country he was living and operating from, Rwanda knew it, thanks to Pegus, an Israel NSO group's application that has helped on tracking all whatsapp and other social media communications.

Rwanda went ahead and crossed continent to make sure the opponents are weakened or warned. In fact, many of them have often claimed they live in fear of being kidnapped by Rwanda's secret service operatives.

Australia has pointed out that Rwanda spy network infiltrated the country as reported by ABC News last year.

Earlier this year, British citizen Faustin Rukundo's phone started to ring at odd times. The calls were always on WhatsApp — sometimes from a Scandinavian number, sometimes a video call — but the caller would hang-up before he could answer.

Whenever he rang back, no one would pick up. Mr Rukundo who lives in Leeds, had reasons to be suspicious because, he is a member of a Rwandan

opposition group operating in exile; he has lived for several years in fear of the security services of the central African nation where he was born.

In 2017, his wife, also a British national, was arrested and held for two months in Rwanda when she returned for her father's funeral. Unidentified men in black suits have previously queried her co-workers about her route to the childcare centre where she works, he says.

His own name has shown up in a widely circulated list of enemies of the government of Rwanda titled "Those who must be killed immediately".

In the two decades since Paul Kagame became president of Rwanda, dozens of dissidents have disappeared or died in unclear circumstances around the world.

In response, those willing to criticise the regime or organise against it, such as Mr Rukundo, say they have learnt to be cautious, masking their presence on the internet and using encrypted messaging services

Kagame has often warned his critics that those who "betray" the country will be dealt with, and the country's intelligence network has been accused by international human rights groups of abducting and killing

former allies in Rwanda and abroad. The Rwandan government has always rejected the allegations.

Patrick Karegeya was strangled in South Africa and Rwanda regime was pointed out as the perpetrator, which prompted feud between the two countries.

Reliable intelligence states that the Rwandan government poses an imminent threat to your life," read the police warning notice given to Rene Mugenzi. "You should be aware of other high-profile cases where action such as this has been conducted in the past. Conventional and unconventional means have been used."

It is said that as immigrants and refugees move to England, many other countries work closely with agencies to have spies infiltrate to monitor the activities for those relocated if they are safe to the countries they are from and that is including Rwanda.

For your records, Rwanda-Uganda relations have been in a row for almost two years now. And this is due to espionage accusations that are stalling the talks between two countries that angered Uganda but of course, Rwanda was trying to protect its interest after learning that

the most fearful RNC party could be operating in Uganda and recruiting members who will one day go and oust Rwanda's strongman.

Pastor Nyirigira of Agape Community in Uganda was among those who were followed up closely and disrupted in all actions he was planning against Rwanda as a member of the Rwanda National Congress. His daughter was recently held in Kigali by police on similar accusations, according to Rwanda Investigation Bureau.

Paul Rusesabagina from humanitarian to a government critic was on top list to be monitored for long time until he was tricked, and the flight flown him to the country he had spent about 26 years without stepping in. Apparently, he was tricked by Rwanda spy network and boarded into a private jet knowing that he was heading to neighbouring



*Paul Rusesabagina, a well known government critic is now standing trial in Rwanda.*

country, Burundi.

According to Rwandan authorities, he was arrested because he is believed to be the leader, founder and sponsor of a violent extremist group operating in Rwanda and more widely, known as MRCD/FLN. The international arrest warrant under which he has been detained include accusations of the attacks and killings by FLN in southern Rwanda in June and July 2018, and December 2018. Rusesabagina and dozens of his former MRCD comrades are detained in Rwanda awaiting trial on charges that include terrorism.

\*Mohammed M. Mupenda is a news correspondent and freelance reporter, who has written for publications in the United States and abroad. He is also a French and East African language interpreter.

## Kenyans stealing babies from each other

By Samuel Ouma

Cases of women losing their children in some Kenyan hospitals, streets, and residential places recently have hit a high record, raising queries on who might have been involved. Some pictures of women living in despair and pain after losing their young ones had been shared on social media platforms and mainstream media, confirming the famous African adage saying the parent knows a child's pain.

For instance, in February 2018, a couple lost a three-week-old twin baby at Kenyatta National Hospital to a woman posing as a patient at the facility. Reports showed that the infant's father, identified as Job Ouko, approached the woman to help him look after the boy as he wheeled his ailing wife to the hospital's first floor. Within a twinkle of an eye, one of the women carrying Ouko's other child rushed to him and reported that the other woman had taken off.

The police launched the investigations, and the suspect was later arrested in Nairobi's Kawangware slum while in



*we do not condone child trafficking, and we will do everything possible to get to the bottom of this issue,says Labour and Social Protection Minister Simon Chelugui*

possession of the child. Eyewitnesses had revealed that the woman said to have stolen the baby had monitored her victims for about 10 hours. Theft of babies has left untold wounds in many mothers as they keep their

slim hope of reuniting with their lost children alive in the future.

Where the stolen babies are being taken for long has been a mystery until the recent expose by the BBC Africa Eye. The BBC report revealed the

babies are being sold for a hundred dollars with the prime targets being those living in the streets, children's care centres, and hospitals. Many cases are from Nairobi with Kayole slum, which houses thousands of

people rumored to be a hotbed of the illegal business.

«Most of the clinics in Kayole do this business. They sell children. If you can't have a baby and visit such clinics, they will give you a child. It is a business that is booming, and they are making a lot of money,» said Judith Kanaitha, a news reporter with a local radio station.

The chain of those engaging in child trafficking business that rob women their children in the East African nation is long, including employees in public hospitals and government officials. Some staffers at Mama Lucy Kibaki Hospital in Nairobi were mentioned in the BBC expose. Fred Leparan, a clinical social worker at the facility, was filmed negotiating with an undercover journalist in a well-organized plot to sell the abandoned child in the hospital for \$400.

In a quick response, police arrested Fred alongside the hospital CEO and administrator Emma Mutio and Regina Musembi, respectively, and Selina Awuor, another social worker. Also nabbed was Nairobi

Metropolitan Services (NMS) Medical Services Deputy Director Musa Mohammed. The CEO and the administrator were released after a Nairobi court found no case to answer. Medical Services Deputy Director Musa Mohammed was also on November 25 released on Sh200,000 cash bail.

Some of the homeless mothers in the streets of Nairobi have also fallen victims to child smugglers. As Esther narrated, their children are being snatched without their knowledge by the child smugglers looking for easy-earned money. Esther's three-year-old son disappeared in 2018, as reported by BBC, and is yet to be found.

«I have never been at peace since I lost my child. I have searched for him all the way to Mombasa... I loved him so much, and I would forgive them if they would give me back my child,» said Esther.

It is alleged the stolen babies are sold to the highest bidders who cannot have children, and some are used for sacrifice by unknown individuals. Mary Anna Munyendo, the CEO and

founder of Missing Child Kenya, said African culture plays some roles in the thriving black market for babies in the country.

«Child trafficking is a big issue in Kenya. There are many under-reporting, cultural issues, and long-term established cartels that are even protecting each other. One of the biggest reasons is that we have a culture that states to keep a marriage, you must have a child, and on top of that, you must have a boy. You go back to the village, and people call you barren or a dry piece of wood. So what do you do to save your marriage? You steal a child!» reiterated Mary.

A multi-agency team has been formed to unearth all the networks behind the syndicate.

«Following this expose, a team of officers and experts from the relevant government agencies has been constituted to investigate and take the necessary action exhaustively. As the Government of Kenya, we do not condone child trafficking, and we will do everything possible to get to the bottom of this issue,» said Labour and Social Protection Minister Simon

Chelugui.

Kenyan police spokesman Charles Owino told journalists that security had been beefed at Children's homes and hospitals.

«And the inspector general has given clear instructions to county commanders in other parts of the country to ensure that they work together with the multi-agencies, other government organs, and monitor children's homes and government hospitals, and the operation of these children's homes, so that we can be able to put them to accountability and to ensure that we protect children from trafficking,» Owino said.

Kenyans have been urged to report any case involving child trafficking to the nearest police post or relevant government agencies or call Child Helpline number 116.

A person found guilty of child trafficking in Kenya is liable to imprisonment for a term of not less than 30 years or a fine of not less than Sh20 million.



# December: Of Bush Fallers, Broken Relationships, Fake Marriages & Other Scams

By Andrew Nsoseka

It is the month of December in Africa, the period of the year when most Africans residing in foreign countries (bush fallers) do return to feast with family, friends, and, as well, catch some fun before returning to their host countries, mostly western nations, to hustle.

This is the month, when love stories go sour for some unfortunate lovers. During this period, those who traffic in love make sudden changes, reshuffling their love cabinets, and prioritising seasonal lovers to their 'broke' partners, often for quick monetary gains, or over fake love promises made to them by holiday-making 'bush fallers'. This is the period when passion crimes often rear their ugly heads. This is the period when young beautiful women are shoved into fake marriages (usually traditional) by bush fallers, to enable them have the girls for about a month, for their sexual exploits, before disappearing into their 'bush'.

This is the month that some unfortunate guys abhor, because, it is during this month that the love of their lives was either snatched from them, or dumped them for 'appealing' and seemingly well-to-do bush fallers riding in posh cars and feasting at every given opportunity.

However, this is also the month when passionate and hardworking guys return to meet the love of their lives, to commune in ways they have always dreamt of. It is the month of the good, the sweet, the bad, and the ugly love stories.

In this month of December, some traffickers in love will surreptitiously slip off for days in apparent visits to some 'Aunt or Uncle'. Of course, they will end up in hotel rooms with some bush fallers, for quick gains or lofty promises. This



*Seme Beach on the Atlantic coast of Cameroon is a major attraction. Photo credit Nkem Tourism.*

is the time of the year, where easy girls make the most financial gains, accompanied by constant feasting.

It is not only so with male bush fallers. Their female counterparts also come back home to catch fun. Some of them come back home to have real banging by local gigolos or guys who are mostly not well to do.

This is also the month when some 'free girls' will sit down, and elaborately strategise on ways through which they will squeeze out as much money from lascivious bush fallers as possible. Time management plans will be developed, alongside

schedules for visits to different towns where bush fallers are located.

With the covid-19 pandemic preventing many of the bush fallers from returning home, love-hawkers will have to re-strategize to make quick money from a different group of people, or from a different activity.

Some 'area boys', who wouldn't want the spotlight to shift from them to bush fallers, are already piercing their ears, to put on earrings, alongside fake branded watches, and chains, which will make them look like bush fallers. As such, they too will draw a semblance of the attraction

accorded to bush fallers by ready girls and other admirers. Such fellows sometimes take girls to hotel rooms, and escape as early as possible, and are never heard from again.

In this month of December in Africa, some holiday making returnees engage in cruel acts like carrying out convenience marriages that are never meant to last.

Once, yours truly accompanied a bush faller in Buea, Cameroon, he was a friend of a friend. We went and carried out traditional marriage rites of a girl he would later jilt. I remember how the girl beamed with delight and joy. Her parents wore proud faces of fulfilled African parents, proud that their daughter was married to a young, promising bush faller. About a year later, the bush faller returned again, and I was told he had married another girl and ditched the one I accompanied him to marry.

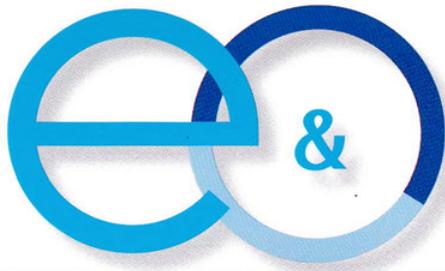
Such cases are many. While other carryout such reckless acts as payback to those girls who had ditched them at certain times, others do it for the fun of it; the most obnoxious of it being going to the extent of fake marriages, where families are involved.

It is disrespectful and callous to perform traditional rites, involving a woman's family and her close friends, just for payback, or just to satisfy a lascivious appetite.

Meantime, there are free or ready girls around, who at this time of the year, roam the streets aimlessly just praying and waiting for an idle fellow to whistle for them, chat them up and take them out to booze and knock the hell out of each other in a hotel or wherever they wish. Such willing ones can be contracted. It is less sacrilegious, than to jilt a woman willing to settle for a responsible life.

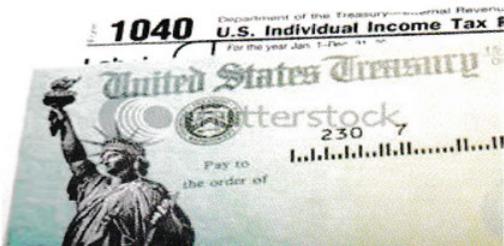
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# Africa's top 20 most influential plant breeders of 2020 announced

By Wallace Mawire



The Southern African Plant Breeders Association (SAPBA) has announced Africa's 20 most influential plant breeders of 2020.

The outstanding plant breeders are Louis Schoonraad of Corteva in the Republic of South Africa (RSA), Hussein Shinelis of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in RSA,

Cobus Swanepoel in RSA, Amsal Tesfaye of Zamseed in Zambia, Marevllous Zhou of SASRI in RSA, Abede menkir of IITA in Nigeria, Richard Lube in RSA, Sunette Laurie of ARC in RSA,

Cosmos Mogorokosho of CIMMYT in Zimbabwe, Driecus Ilesch of Syngenta in RSA, Francois Koekemoer of Syngenta in RSA, Antony Jarvie of

Corteva in RSA, Taaibos human of ARC in RSA, Ephrame Havazvidi of Seed-Co in Zimbabwe, John Derera of IITA and Seed-Co in RSA, Joseph Beyene of CIMMYT in Kenya, Alfred Dixon of IITA in Nigeria, Phyllis Burger of ARC in RSA, and Martin Alberts of Bayer in RSA.

The Southern African Plant Breeders' Association is dedicated

to the promotion of the science and art of plant breeding as a profession through pro-active communication among private and public sector institutions, emphasising the need for cooperation and maintenance of high ethical standards and norms, thereby contributing toward stable, sustainable agriculture.

## Q & A with Kingsley Pungong of Rainbow World Group

By Amos Fofung



Kingsley Pungong has turned Rainbow into the leading sports management firm in Africa

With stakes in energy, telecoms, sports and media, the Rainbow World Group is impacting lives in a positive way by creating jobs and driving prosperity across Africa. PAV caught up with its CEO Kingsley Pungong in a Q & A on the ever growing pool of talent under the management of Rainbow Sports global, and other developments in football across Africa.

*In terms of individual talents under the management of Rainbow, may we know how they fared, who were some of the standout stars in the Rainbow orbit?*

Christian Bassogog of Henan

Jianye who is moving to one of the biggest clubs in China. Pemi Faris from Rainbow FC who at 20 years of age is with Kristiansund in the Norwegian Premier league, Alioun Ndour who has signed a 5-year deal with Portuguese premier league club Belenenses SAD, Oyongo Bitolo ex Rainbow FC with Montpellier in France, Brian Anungs with Nashville in the MLS, Nohou Tolo with Seattle Saunders in the MLS, Olivier Mbaizo with Seattle Saunders in the MLS. These are alumni from our club Rainbow FC and MFK Vyskov. Please note Rainbow sports global isn't an agency, rather it is a football holding company which owns sports assets.

*With the chaos created by*

*the COVID 19 pandemic was Rainbow able to spot new talents or place some in key clubs?*

Yes. Our video department has been able to spot talent using digital platforms like Wyscout. Most scouting now happens digitally.

*The last time we interviewed you, you expressed the need to strengthen the domestic league in Africa, what do you make of the cacophony that reigns in the management of football in Cameroon?*

Cameroon is a country that has always overachieved despite substandard management. It is clear that the management is underwhelming, and the country is hugely disadvantaged by events. It is a massive drawback which certainly does not help the development of the game.

*What role do you think former African footballers should play in developing and managing the game in Africa?*

Former players need to become trainee administrators and later administrators. Playing alone isn't sufficient or adequate to become a competent administrator. CAF by now needs its own university or training program to train administrators to fill different roles within the African football space.

For all his contributions and achievements, the efforts of Didier Drogba to manage football in Cote d'Ivoire have been met with stiff opposition from his former national teammates, why do African footballers



*Christian Bassogog of Cameroon flies the Rainbow flag high in the Chinese league*

find it hard to work for a common purpose in moves or initiatives that could make a difference?

Drogba had great achievements on the field but politics is another kettle of fish. I think everyone expected his popularity to translate into votes, but these things are usually more complex. It is a failed attempt, but I personally think Didier has a good chance for the future and must continue to make a case for his candidacy.

*Cameroon will be hosting the nations in 2021, what do you make of the preparations that have been taking place?*

It has been tough with the COVID which has had cataclysmic ramifications on football. Playing in itself will be a step in the right direction towards recovery.

*In 2021 as well, we will elections for the CAF presidency, what is your take on the leadership of Ahmad Ahmad and is Rainbow endorsing any candidate?*

Rainbow stays out of politics for now. We try to make a modest contribution based on channels we control.

*To the many youngsters in Africa interested in playing*

*professional football abroad, what advice do you have for them, what are the recipes for success?*

Character, attitude, talent (CAT). They will have to work 3 times more than indigenous players. Tough tough business and only the strongest and mentally prepared will succeed.

*As we ride into 2021, any special wishes, and what should we expect or be on the lookout for from Rainbow?*

Wishing everyone good health and looking forward to a COVID free 2021.

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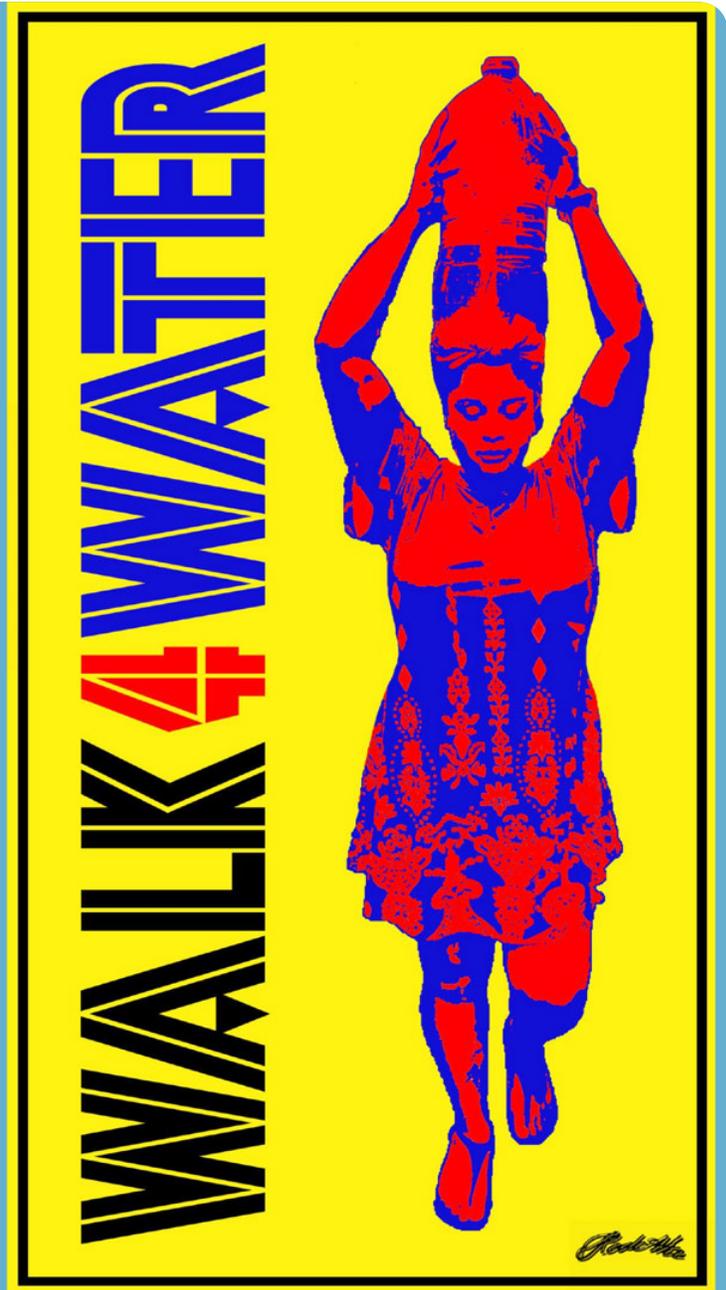
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# CAF: African football's 'new dawn' turns to dusk in Ahmad's hands

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

A celebratory picture on March 17, 2017, shows Ahmad Ahmad lifted by delegates as he won the election to become the new President of the Confederation of African Football, CAF. The picture of his victory of incumbent Cameroonian Issa Hayatou signalled the dawn of a new era in African football. How far-fetched those aspirations have become with Ahmad Ahmad banned from all sporting related activities by FIFA for corruption allegations and others.

Rewinding the clock, Ahmad won 34 of the 54 votes in the election, which was held in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa. The result meant a change in leadership for the first time since Cameroonian Hayatou took charge in 1988.

Speaking to the delegates then Ahmad Ahmad said "I thank all those who believed in the change. Thanks to you who were always backing me. We did it. This victory is ours."



Ahmad Ahmad is banned for five years by FIFA.

African football hopes a successful Nations Cup tournament will provide a strong distraction, as well as an affirmation of the continent's potentials. But the nagging feeling

remains that the expectations of some four years ago have evaporated quicker than you can shout «offside», and Ahmad might have dropped the ball not long after picking it up.

On the field, African soccer had a difficult time during Ahmad's presidency. None of Africa's five teams at the 2018 World Cup in Russia advanced to the knockout rounds, though Senegal was eliminated from the group stage only by a rare tiebreaker of disciplinary record.

A chaotic African Champions League final in 2019 was abandoned in the second leg when Wydad Casablanca refused to continue playing against Esperance in a dispute over a disallowed goal and the video review system not being installed at the stadium in Tunisia.

A CAF executive committee decision to order the game replayed was overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport, and the title was eventually awarded to Esperance.

Ahmad Ahmad banned for Five Years

«The investigation into Mr Ahmad's conduct in his position as CAF President during the period from 2017 to 2019 concerning various CAF-related governance issues, including the organization and financing of an Umrah pilgrimage to Mecca, his involvement in CAF's dealings with the sports equipment company



Ahmad Ahmad literally auctioned the respect and independence that CAF had under former President Issa Hayatou.



*There are plans in the works to make Issa Hayatou Honorary President of CAF for services rendered to African football.*

Tactical Steel and other activities,” FIFA said in a statement.

Even before being elected to lead the Confederation of African Football in 2017, the former minister in Madagascar’s government had been linked to seeking cash gifts in 2010 from a later-disgraced Qatari official. He was later accused of wrongdoing at the body’s Cairo headquarters by his top administrator, and detained and questioned in Paris as part of a French investigation into a suspect soccer equipment contract.

The ethics committee found “Ahmad had breached his duty of loyalty, offered gifts and other benefits, mismanaged funds and abused his position as the CAF President,” FIFA said.

Ahmad was also fined 200,000 Swiss francs (\$220,000), though it is unclear how FIFA can enforce payment. The sanctions can be challenged at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

“The circumstances that have befallen him are unfortunate and make me deeply sad,” said Phillip Chiyangwa, Ahmad’s campaign manager in 2017.

An audit of CAF finances pointed to irregularities and unreliable accounting under Ahmad’s

leadership, however. The report was ordered by FIFA last year while it effectively took over running the African organization for six months.

CAF appeared to pay about \$100,000 toward 18 people, including Ahmad and the heads of 16 of the continent’s 54 national member federations, to travel on the pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, OAN Online Reported.

It is unclear if officials who made the trip also face a FIFA investigation for unethical conduct.

CAF said in a statement it was “concerned about the reputational consequences of this long procedure” against its outgoing president.

Corruption Scandals clouding CAF Presidency

Before the ascension of Ahmad Ahmad as head of CAF, the former President Issa Hayatou has also been under the microscope with corruption allegations. “The fact that I am here for so many years does not mean anything,” Issa Hayatou said. “I have not been involved in any scandal as far as I know.”

In 2011 Hayatou was accused in a Parliamentary select committee of having accepted a \$1.5m bribe from Qatar during the bidding process for the 2022 World Cup. The 2022

bidding committee and Hayatou both denied the charge, and the whistleblower later retracted the claim.

“I would not be here if I was corrupt my dear friend,” he said in response to a question on the subject. “Can Parliament prove I have \$1.5m? I have not received one single euro or dollar to vote for anyone as host of the World Cup.”

“Everyone has seen that \$16,000 came into the coffers of CAF. The IOC blamed me for that but I didn’t take a cent,” Issa Hayatou added. “This was a support payment for the 40th anniversary of CAF. This is what I accepted. They saw that in the records this money had been properly registered and still they sanctioned me.”

#### Contenders for CAF Presidency

In March 2021, three contenders will contest for the position of President of CAF in the elective General Assembly. Two of Ahmad’s executive committee colleagues, Augustin Senghor of Senegal and Ahmed Yaya of Mauritania, are among three men who said they are standing in the presidential election. CAF has yet to confirm who was formally nominated and passed integrity checks.

Senghor and Yaya have been joined in the contest by former FIFA executive committee member Jacques Anouma of Ivory Coast and billionaire businessman and football club owner Patrice Motsepe of South Africa, who owns Mamelodi Sundowns.

Patrice Motsepe chairman of 2016 African club champions Mamelodi is being tipped as the favourite to become the new boss of CAF. “CAF must improve its global standing,” said South Africa FA president Danny Jordaan. “He is the most appropriate person we could offer for the leadership of Caf. We do not want any compromise on governance or ethics in football.”

“He has more superior qualities than me,” Pinnick told BBC Sport Africa. “It’s not about me, it’s about African football. If you have someone with superior qualities, you have to learn from him and queue behind him and wait for your time.”

“The key to successful governance starts from the point where the right person or persons are put in the right positions for the right reasons,” said Sierra Leone FA president Isha Johansen. “African football and the African continent needs to be on the global platform for the right reasons.”



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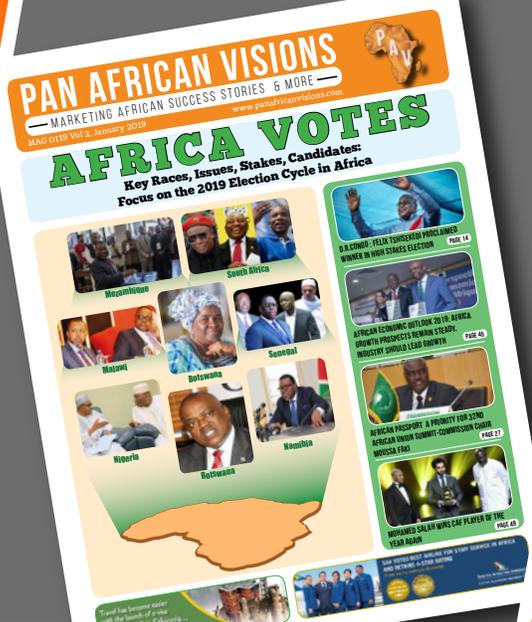
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