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ONE) – EAS TOP CIVIL SERVANT ADMITS SERVICE 'STILL HAS MUCH TO DO'

The chief operating officer of the European external action service (EAS) admits the EU's new diplomatic corps "still has much to do." The EAS, headed by EU foreign affairs supremo Catherine Ashton, was set up under the Lisbon treaty with the aim of projecting the EU on the world stage.

The service, though, has been criticised in some quarters for not making the desired impact with suggestions that Ashton has struggled to combine her role as high representative with that of commission vice president.

But David O'Sullivan, EAS chief operating officer, defended the fledgling service, saying, "A lot has been achieved in setting up the EAS and staff work long hours.

"However, it is a long-term project and there is still much to do. The key thing is to keep our eye on the bigger picture.

"We will be judged by the ability of the new service to make a substantial contribution to foreign policy."

O'Sullivan, a former senior civil servant with the European commission, said the "main challenge" for the EAS will be "to demonstrate its added value."

It aims to do this, he added, "by bringing new ideas, creativity and a new approach to foreign policy."

The Briton went on, "We need our talented staff to be motivated, to produce new ideas and thinking, to help the service make a difference to the world's problems today and tomorrow.

"I have every confidence in our ability to do this," said O'Sullivan, who was writing in a recent issue of "Commission en direct," an internal European commission newsletter.

TWO) – THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION MONOPOLISES THE DISCUSSIONS AT THE EU'S MINISTERS COUNCIL

Le 31 janvier, les ministres des affaires étrangères de l'UE se sont réunis à Bruxelles, avec en toile de fond la révolution naissante en Egypte, des révoltes en Afrique du nord, des tensions dans le Sahel, au Soudan et en Côte d'Ivoire, ainsi qu'un blocage des discussions relatives aux droits de l'Homme avec le Belarus.

Background

Le Conseil des affaires étrangères de l'UE se réunit aujourd'hui, avec à l'[ordre du jour](#) la « [révolution du jasmin](#) » en Tunisie et la [répression de l'opposition au Belarus](#), qui fait suite aux récentes élections présidentielles du pays.

Cependant, [la révolution naissante en Egypte](#) éclipse la plupart des autres questions.

Des diplomates issus de différents pays de l'UE ont déclaré à la presse que la question principale à l'ordre du jour des ministres serait : « l'UE répond-elle à la situation de manière adéquate ? »

Des révoltes populaires naissent actuellement dans le monde arabe, rappelant la vague de révolutions qui a libéré l'Europe de l'est du régime communiste en 1989, ainsi que les déclarations d'indépendance de la période 1951-1962 en Afrique du nord.

Les ministres des affaires étrangères de l'UE devraient adopter une position commune sur la situation en Tunisie, qui se concentrera sur la façon dont l'UE contribuera au processus de démocratisation, après 23 ans sous la coupe de Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali.

Concernant le Belarus, une interdiction de voyager plus stricte que jamais devrait être adoptée contre un large groupe de fonctionnaires et de parents d'Alexander Lukashenko, le dernier dictateur européen. Les diplomates ont également déclaré ne pas exclure la participation de l'Albanie aux discussions.

Bien que le pays soit sur la voie de l'adhésion à l'UE, l'impasse politique et la violence dans les rues albanaises semble placer l'Etat dans le même contexte que les pays d'Afrique du nord qui voient aujourd'hui naître des révolutions.

L'Egypte et l'Algérie sont-elles différentes de la Tunisie ?

Les diplomates ont insisté sur les « différences » entre les situations d'un pays à l'autre, mentionnant en particulier la capacité de l'Algérie à répondre à des menaces de sécurité de grande envergure, telles que les insurrections islamiques qui ont eu lieu dans les années 1990.

La situation égyptienne est également « différente » de celle de la Tunisie, a déclaré un diplomate d'un grand pays de l'UE.

Cependant, les évolutions de la situation au Caire ce week-end suggèrent que les diplomates, qui se sont exprimés vendredi, aient peut-être sous-estimé la puissance de la révolution égyptienne naissante. Nombreux sont ceux qui affirment que la situation a atteint un point de non retour, et même les messages officiels des Etats-Unis, le plus grand allié du pays, semblent montrer que les jours du président Hosni Mubarak à la tête du pays sont comptés (voir « Positions » ci-dessous).

Mme Ashton sous le feu des critiques

Pendant ce temps, la chef de la diplomatie de l'UE, Catherine Ashton a été la cible de vives attaques quant au manque de perspective pour aboutir à un ordre du jour commun sur la politique étrangère de l'UE. Dans l'influent quotidien français, [Le Monde, on a pu lire que Mme Ashton](#) n'était pas à la hauteur et qu'elle ne possédait de manière générale pas les compétences pour ce poste.

Human Rights Watch, une ONG, a attaqué Mme Ashton pour son « approche mielleuse » qui consiste à permettre aux intérêts commerciaux et énergétiques d'éclipser les préoccupations relatives aux droits de l'Homme.

Son « dialogue et sa coopération sereins apparaissent souvent comme une connivence » avec les violations des droits de l'Homme, affirme [le groupe dans son rapport annuel](#).

Point de non retour ?

Les jours d'agitation ont causé la mort de 100 personnes en Egypte, mais la situation est arrivée dans l'impasse, selon Reuters. Les protestants refusent de partir et l'armée ne réagit pas.

Sur la place Tahrir, l'épicentre de la révolte, les protestants ont exclu les militaires désignés par M. Mubarak, ainsi que son vice-président et son premier ministre.

Ses promesses de réforme économique vouées à apaiser la colère du peuple envers la montée des prix, le chômage et les énormes inégalités entre riches et pauvres n'ont pas suffi à stopper l'appel à le pousser, avec ses associés, vers la porte de sortie.

Les protestants ont appelé à une grève générale lundi, et à ce qu'ils annoncent comme la marche « de protestation des millions » mardi, pour imposer la démocratie exigée par le peuple, qui pourrait signer la fin du régime militaire à la tête de l'Egypte postcoloniale depuis les années 1950.

Une coalition d'opposition égyptienne qui comprend le mouvement islamiste des Frères Musulmans s'est tourné vers Mohamed ElBaradei, ancien responsable de l'organisme de surveillance nucléaire de l'ONU, pour former un gouvernement d'unité et entrer en contact avec les militaires.

M. ElBaradei a exhorté le président des Etats-Unis, Barack Obama, à demander le départ de M. Mubarak.

« Il est mieux pour le président Obama de ne pas apparaître comme le dernier à dire au président Mubarak qu'il est temps de partir », a-t-il confié à CNN.

Dans le même temps, les gouvernements ont pris des mesures aujourd'hui (31 janvier) pour ramener leurs citoyens d'Égypte dans des avions prévus ou affrétés.

Certaines entreprises européennes ou asiatiques ont commencé à évacuer leur personnel.

Des témoins ont raconté des scènes de chaos à l'aéroport du Caire, avec de nombreuses personnes, dont des Égyptiens, qui tentaient d'obtenir une place sur des vols opérationnels de plus en plus rares

THREE) – OUATTARA CALLS FOR USE OF FORCE TO OUST GBAGBO

Tougher action, possibly including force, is the only way to make Ivory Coast incumbent Laurent Gbagbo step down after mediation failed, rival presidential claimant Alassane Ouattara said on Thursday. But Ouattara stressed in an interview that international economic sanctions should target only Gbagbo and his allies rather than the civilian population of the world's top cocoa grower, which is gripped by a violent power struggle between them. Separately, West African military chiefs said they were on standby if called -- although neighbouring countries appear a long way from agreement on using force to oust Gbagbo after a Nov. 28 election which U.N.-certified results show he lost. "Everyone realises that the only solution is to make Mr Laurent Gbagbo leave with other measures, including force," Ouattara said, a day after the latest African mediation efforts led by Kenyan premier Raila Odinga collapsed. Ouattara was speaking in the grounds of his base in the Golf Hotel, a sprawling lagoon-side resort whose palm trees, thatched bars and loud 1970s interiors are a relic of a more prosperous past. Now it is surrounded by razor wire and guarded by hundreds of U.N. troops with sandbagged machinegun positions. **WARNS COMPANIES NOT TO PAY TAXES TO GBAGBO** He warned firms paying taxes to the Gbagbo administration risked paying them again to his government if he came to power. But he added: "I know some are only doing it because they are afraid ... we will have to look at all these questions." Gbagbo faces an international bid to starve his government of funds and cocoa markets are watching whether an EU move this weekend to freeze funds to Ivorian ports will hit exports of cocoa, now trading at a five-and-a-half-month high. "All the measures we back should target those responsible for the situation: Mr Laurent Gbagbo, his government, his entourage ... But I want to spare the large majority of the population," he told Reuters. "So, yes to economic sanctions. But let's study over what time period and against whom, so as not to make the situation worse," he said from the UN-guarded hotel in Abidjan where he has been living under siege from pro-Gbagbo security forces. **GBAGBO NEEDS \$ 100 MILLION A MONTH** Gbagbo needs up to \$100 million a month to pay public sector and army wages, but he continues to benefit from cocoa revenues and has access to state accounts at West Africa's central bank. His government missed an end-December coupon on its \$2.3 billion Eurobond. Creditors say they have seen no evidence it will pay before a grace period ending this month. Ouattara declined to say whether his parallel government could make the payment if Gbagbo remained in power by the end of January, repeating that he expected Gbagbo to have gone by then. "We will respect our commitments ... Mr Laurent will no longer be there, I hope, and ... we will be able to renew our ties with the Bretton Woods institutions," the former IMF official said of the Washington-based Fund and World Bank. Ouattara, looking tired but in good health after being holed up in the hotel since early December, complained that Gbagbo had managed to tap some 100 billion CFA francs (\$200 million) from Ivorian state accounts held with the Senegal-based BCEAO regional bank despite regional recognition that Ouattara won the election. "There is a certain dysfunction," he said, adding that he was counting on a meeting of leaders of the West African franc zone in Mali this weekend to cut the flow of funds. An EU official told Reuters that the central bank governor Philippe-Henri Dacoury Tabley and director General Denis N'Gbe had been added to the sanctions list because of this. Ouattara's designated prime minister, Guillaume Soro, was in Togo and Burkina Faso on Thursday as part of a pre-meeting tour to lobby leaders to harden their line against Gbagbo. **WAR OF WORDS AGAINST UN CONTINUES** U.N. human rights representative Simon Munzu told reporters in Abidjan that 260 people had died in violence linked to the crisis, which has seen clashes between rival camps and allegations of "death squads" killing and kidnapping Ouattara supporters. In a sign of worsening relations between Gbagbo and the U.N. peacekeeping mission which has refused his order to leave, army spokesman Babri Gohourou told state TV that 2,000 U.N. troops had joined forces with the rebels controlling the north. "The New Forces (rebels) and their (U.N.) support are gathering in the economic capital (Abidjan) and other towns to attack, sabotage ... fire on innocent civilians," he said. Nick Birnback, a spokesman for the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York, dismissed the remarks as "propagandistic". He added that the U.N.

troops would continue to implement their mandate to protect civilians and the legitimately elected government. It is unclear which African states would offer troops for a strike on Gbagbo, and several worry it could spark civil war. "We are ready, although we continue to prepare," Nigerian official Oluseyi Petinrin told reporters after West African chiefs of defence staff held talks in the Malian capital Bamako. "If anyone thinks we are bluffing, so much the better -- it is better to be underestimated," he added.

FOUR) – AFRICAN UNION MEDIATION IN IVORY COAST FAILS

Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga said an African effort to mediate Ivory Coast's disputed poll had failed on Wednesday, blaming incumbent Laurent Gbagbo and warning of harsh sanctions or force if he did not step down. Alassane Ouattara was proclaimed winner of a Nov. 28 poll by the electoral commission and is internationally recognised as president-elect, but Gbagbo has refused to resign, alleging the vote was rigged. He maintains control of the army, much of the cocoa sector and state institutions. "Despite extensive discussions ... with Mr Laurent Gbagbo and President-elect Alassane Ouattara, that went very late into the night, I regret to announce that the breakthrough that was needed, did not materialise," Odinga told reporters at the airport as he was about to leave. "Time is running out," he added of efforts to peacefully resolve the stand-off between the two rival claimants that risks sending the world's top cocoa grower back into a civil war. "Unless they (Gbagbo's camp) heed the call and agree to create a conducive environment for peaceful dialogue, the friends of Ivory Coast might be forced to take other measures...which would require additional punishing economic and financial sanctions, and possibly the use of force." It was the strongest statement by a visiting mediator to Ivory Coast in its decade-long crisis. Odinga explicitly blamed Gbagbo for the breakdown in negotiations, saying he had not acted on a pledge to lift a military siege on the hotel where Ouattara's parallel administration remains under U.N. guard. "Mr Gbagbo gave me an assurance that this blockade would be lifted yesterday, but he broke that promise, for the second time in two weeks," he said, explaining why he cut his trip short. Ivory Coast missed a payment on its \$2.3 billion bond at the end of December, but has until Feb. 1 before it goes into default. **SANCTIONS UNLIKELY TO WORK FAST** If negotiations fail, it remains unclear whether tougher sanctions or a military intervention would be forthcoming anytime soon. The European Union and the United States have imposed sanctions on Gbagbo and his inner circle, while efforts continue to squeeze his access to funds, with little impact yet. The latest measure saw EU-registered vessels at the weekend barred from new financial dealings with Ivorian ports but cocoa exporters say they are continuing operations as normal and the flow of beans is running higher than last year. Gbagbo also apparently still has access to \$3 billion of reserves at the state accounts in francophone West Africa's central bank, despite a statement in late December that suggested the monetary union did not recognise him. U.N. mission chief Y.J. Choi told a news conference: "We know pressure from outside, especially the ... monetary union, is (being) felt by President Gbagbo's camp." Odinga said force was a "last resort", as West African regional bloc ECOWAS threatened; but doubts have grown over the feasibility and the region is seen as divided over it. Military chiefs of West African regional bloc ECOWAS met in Mali on Tuesday to discuss the planning of an ouster of Gbagbo. Russia on Tuesday delayed a Security Council vote on sending more U.N. troops to Ivory Coast, suggesting it may be difficult to get backing in the council for any ratcheting up of the peacekeeping force. The U.N. mission estimates at least 247 people have been killed since the dispute began, many in night-time raids by security forces or allied militias against residents of pro-Ouattara neighbourhoods. Gbagbo's camp denies this. Odinga also said had urged Ouattara during the talks to name Gbagbo allies in a cabinet and give him assurances of his security.

FIVE) – TUNISIA SEIZES BANK FROM EX-LEADER'S FAMILY

A bank owned by the son-in-law of deposed Tunisian leader Zine al-Abdine Ben Ali has been placed under the control of the central bank, Tunisian state TV said on Thursday. Ziytouna Bank, Tunisia's first Islamic bank, started operating last year. It is owned by Sakher Materi, Tunisia's most prominent businessman despite being only in his early 30s. Materi's Princesse Holding contributed 51 percent of the \$30 million starting capital. "Ziytouna Bank has been placed under the supervision and monitoring of the central bank," the television reported. The move comes a day after 33 of Ben Ali's clan were arrested for crimes against the nation. State television showed what it said was seized gold and jewellery. Switzerland has also frozen Ben Ali's family assets. Tunisia's new leadership has said it will investigate those people who accumulated vast wealth under Ben Ali. That opens the way for a possible redistribution of assets, and causes potential headaches for foreign

partners. Now in Dubai, Materi has said he is ready to submit to any investigation by the new government. His empire ranges from media to banking and telecoms. Princesse Holding owns a share in mobile telephone operator Tunisianna. In November last year, it joined Qatar Telecom's Kuwaiti unit Wataniya in a consortium to buy Orascom Telecom's 50 percent stake in the operator. Materi is also chairman of ENNAKL, a car retailer which sells the Volkswagen, Audi, Seat and Porsche brands. The firm listed 40 percent of its share capital on the Tunis and Casablanca stock exchanges last year. His media interests include Assabah newspaper, Tunisia's biggest-circulation daily, and Islamic radio station Ziytouna FM.

SIX) – EIB PRESS RELEASE ON TUNISIA

The EIB has been providing finance in Tunisia for over 30 years (its very first loan dates back to 1979) as part of the long-term partnership between the European Union and its Mediterranean neighbours. It has built up this activity over time and now operates within the framework of the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP), which has become the leading source of external financing for modernising Tunisia's economy, creating jobs and improving people's living conditions.

A few recent examples will serve to illustrate the wide range of this activity: the extension of road and motorway networks to facilitate regional trade and foster the development of landlocked regions while reducing the number of accidents; upgrading and expansion of power generation and distribution systems with a view to producing affordable green electricity accessible to all; drinking water supply and wastewater treatment programmes and the cleaning-up of industrial sites; refurbishment and equipping of public hospitals; development of technology parks working together with universities to facilitate the creation of innovative enterprises by young graduates; credit lines supporting small businesses; financing of microcredit via the ENDA inter arabe fund.

The EIB is paying close attention to the aspirations expressed by the people of Tunisia and is more than ever convinced of the importance of its mission: in order to put down sustainable roots in society, democracy must be based on economic growth and a development policy offering improved prospects for everybody. Alongside the European Commission and in concert with all other financing institutions, the EIB stands ready to help Tunisia achieve its economic and social priorities.

SEVEN) – CANADIAN AFRICAN QUEEN MINES FOUND COPPER, GOLD AND SILVER DEPOSITS IN MOZAMBIQUE

The Canadian company African Queen Mines announced Monday the positive results on tests on the Project Rei Salomão, Tete province.

Drilling will continue in other areas not yet prospected.

African Queen Mines is based in Vancouver, and has operations in Mozambique, Kenya and Ghana on gold and other minerals and in Botswana and Namibia on diamonds.

EIGHT) – REVISED DRAFT AFRICAN TRIPARTITE FREE TRADE AREA AGREEMENT PUBLISHED

The 26 member states of Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) agreed in October 2008 to negotiate a Tripartite Free Trade Area by 2012. A revised [Draft Agreement and Annexes](#) were finalised in December 2010. These are scheduled to be adopted by a Tripartite Summit in early 2011.

NINE) – INDIA LOOKING ON MOZAMBIQUE

India is strongly interested at the Mozambican coal reserves, and it is interested to negotiate further concessions.

India already holds two blocks in Tete the province with the highest coal potential of the country, and will start commercial operations in the next two years through Minas de Moatize.

India's interest is not surprising as it is the source of 51% of energy produced in the country.

Furthermore India announced it will provide 40 MUSD to support the construction of the Planning and Organisation Institute of Mozambique as well as the SADC's Regional Institute for Training and Organisation, both important for the local coal explorations

TEN) – FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION - IF YOU CAN AFFORD IT, IN SWAZILAND

The new school year opened with hope - and hunger - in Swaziland this week: an estimated 140,000 orphans and vulnerable children are among the small, eager faces in the mountain kingdom's classrooms. Poverty and the AIDS pandemic threaten to make an early mark on the next generation.

"Besides their not having the proper school uniform, the orphans don't have warm clothes," said Zwane Georgina Zwane, a teacher at Motshane Central Primary School. "It breaks my heart to see them shivering in class on a cold day .

Many of these children also come to school on an empty stomach and it is difficult for them to concentrate in class before they get their meal at school during break time.

This year she has even more to worry about with regards to orphans and vulnerable children because principals have refused to accept OVCs back into class.

School fees

This follows a standoff between the Swaziland Principals' Association (SWAPA) and the Deputy Prime Minister's (DPM) office, which is responsible for paying fees for the children.

"We're going to treat them like any of the students - if there is no receipt to prove that they have paid the deposit for the school fees, they won't be allowed into the classroom," said SWAPA President Charles Bennett.

SWAPA is demanding that the DPM's office pay the deposit this week or the students will be sent home. Some schools have already turned pupils away.

This is a setback for Swaziland's pursuit of Universal Primary Education - goal two of the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Free Primary Education was supposed to be launched in 2008, but a shortage of funding forced its delay. Finally introduced last year, there has been significant improvement in facilities and staffing for 2011. The government has provided mobile classrooms to many overcrowded schools and also hired more teachers. However, the OVC controversy threatens to overshadow this.

Vulnerable children

One in four Swazis in the age band from 15 to 49 is infected with HIV; the high death rate of people of reproductive age means a huge number of children are now growing up without parents. Aggravating this, about 70 percent of the one million-strong population lives below the poverty line of less than two dollars a day.

This makes the question of school fees a significant one. Of the 579 pupils at Ngwenya Central Primary in Mbabane, 239 are orphans or vulnerable children in need of government support to pay fees. At neighbouring Motshane Primary School there are 135 OVCs out of 441 students.

"I haven't sent them back home, but they will not receive any lessons until government pays the deposit," said Motshane Primary School principal Lucky Zwane. "They'll just hang around the school."

He said the school was left with more than \$21,000 in debt last year in connection with the OVC Fund. "Government pays much less than the budgeted fees and it releases the payments very late in the year and we get into trouble with suppliers," said Zwane.

While the school charges 1,000 emalengeni - equivalent to \$142 - for a Grade IV pupil, the government paid just \$78 per OVC in the same class last year. Zwane said the government did not involve principals when working out the amount to be paid for each vulnerable child, and despite protests from school heads refused to budge.

"We received payment from the DPM's office sometime in October last year and I struggled to run the school with the available funds," said Zwane. He said the shortfall was crippling schools.

The government's set rate for OVC students in Grades I-III is also around half what public schools charge other students. "What's worse, government is refusing that we ask parents to add onto what the state is

paying," said Zwane.

For this year, the government is promising to pay only a third of the amount as a first-term deposit. Deputy Prime Minister Themba Masuku has refused to commit on when the fees will be made available to the schools.

"I'd say sometime before the 1st of March," said Masuku. "For now, we'd like to urge head teachers to allow the pupils into class while we sort out the payments."

Financial pressure

Although the government of Swaziland is very near broke, running out of basic materials such as stationery, Masuku said his office was able to set aside \$5.5 million to pay school fees for destitute children.

"With this money we can pay deposits to all the schools," said Masuku. He said government had to re-examine the list of students who had applied for the OVC Fund because some of the children did not qualify.

The government finally released the list of students that it will pay for on Jan. 19, and it contained a surprise: almost all of those who made the list are orphans. The government now appears unwilling to sponsor children who are vulnerable because their parents are out of work.

"Some parents are unemployed, but they can find means of paying school fees for their children," said Masuku. "The DPM's office will not pay for such children."

He said government is working on the Children's Protection and Welfare Bill 2010 which will spell out precisely which children are supposed to benefit from the OVC Fund. But this will see significant numbers of children who previously had their fees paid by the government sent home.

"We're undergoing difficult economic crisis and we can't afford to have people who push their responsibilities to government," said Masuku.

Critics note that the decision to restrict the scope of the OVC Fund follows a firm recommendation from the International Monetary Fund in November to the government to protect expenditure in education and health despite the financial crisis.

ELEVEN) – EU DEPLOYS ELECTION OBSERVERS IN CHAD

Des agents de la Mission d'observation électorale de l'Union européenne (MOE-UE) au Tchad ont pour la plupart quitté jeudi N'Djamena pour être déployés hors de la capitale en vue des législatives du 13 février, a constaté un journaliste de l'AFP. Il s'agit de 24 "observateurs à long terme", qui devront être rejoints à quelques jours des élections par 24 "observateurs à court terme" et par une délégation du parlement européen, portant à environ 70 le nombre d'observateurs européens, a expliqué José Antonio De Gabriel, chef adjoint de la mission d'observation à l'occasion de leur déploiement. "Douze équipes, de deux observateurs par zone de responsabilité couvrant l'ensemble du Tchad, sont déployés ce 20 janvier. Chaque équipe regagne sa base dès aujourd'hui", a-t-il déclaré. Vingt observateurs doivent gagner les bases d'Abéché (est), Am-timan (sud-est), Ati (centre), Bongor (sud-ouest), Doba (sud), Faya-Largeau (nord), Mao (ouest), Mongo (centre), Moundou (sud) et Sarh (sud), alors que deux équipes restent dans la capitale tchadienne et ses environs. Les Tchadiens sont également appelés à voter pour le premier tour de l'élection présidentielle le 3 avril et le 26 juin pour des élections locales.

TWELVE) – EU OBSERVER DECLARES FIRST PHASE OF SOUTH SUDAN VOTE CREDIBLE

La première phase du référendum de sécession du Sud-Soudan a été "pacifique et crédible", a indiqué le chef de la mission d'observation électorale de l'UE, la Belge Véronique De Keyser, lors d'un point presse intermédiaire à Bruxelles. La mission rendra un verdict définitif après la proclamation des résultats, attendue début février. En dépit de violences et d'intimidations "isolées", le vote s'est déroulé "sans entrave", grâce à "la coopération internationale massive", mais aussi grâce à la bonne volonté des autorités soudanaises, a dit Mme De Keyser. La bonne tenue du scrutin est, en soi, un événement significatif, selon elle. "Le fait qu'il n'y ait rien qui se passe, ce n'était pas du tout une non-information". Le résultat du référendum ne fait aucun doute, a ajouté Mme De Keyser, évoquant "un mouvement irrésistible" du Sud vers l'indépendance. La poursuite pacifique du processus dépendra des négociations délicates sur le partage des revenus pétroliers et

de la dette, menées actuellement avec le concours de la diplomatie américaine, dont le déploiement au Soudan est "impressionnant", selon l'eurodéputée. Pour amadouer Khartoum, les Etats-Unis évoquent la normalisation des relations avec le gouvernement du président Omar el-Béchar, le retrait du Soudan de la liste des pays terroristes et l'annulation d'une partie de la dette. Dans ce contexte, l'inculpation de M. Béchar par la Cour pénale internationale serait un enjeu de négociation. Sans vouloir se prononcer directement sur le sujet, Mme De Keyser souligne toutefois que "l'Europe n'acceptera jamais de renoncer à la CPI".

THIRTEEN) – COTTON AND FOOD SECURITY CLOSELY LINKED

Many Malian farmers are boycotting cotton this year, instead planting cereals. Cotton isn't edible, but observers say that the shift could weaken food security. Discouraged by falling prices for cotton, and poor administration at the state-owned Malian Textile Company (known by its French acronym, CDMT), many Malian farmers are reducing the area planted with cotton on their farms - or abandoning growing it altogether. In the village of Sanakoroba, 30 kilometres outside the capital, Bamako, Abdoulaye Sériba Traoré, president of the local farmers' association, is one of the few who is still growing cotton. "People are boycotting cotton because they don't receive their money on time. I only received payment for my 2009 harvest late in 2010. I was very disappointed, to the point that I didn't want to plant my field," he told IPS, putting his receipts for 2009 at \$1,400.

The CDMT purchases the bulk of raw cotton from farmers but the company routinely makes farmers wait many months between collecting their harvest and paying them for it.

Traoré, who was one of the first to introduce cotton farming in his area is not discouraged. "Of course, because of the difficulties linked to the sale of cotton, I reduced the amount of space I devoted to it."

Cotton is an important agricultural product for Malian farmers in the 130,000 square kilometer zone that extends from just south of the Niger River across the south and west of the country. Roughly one quarter of the country's population lives in this region, and the farmers plant cotton alongside maize, millet, sorghum and rice, as well as groundnuts and black-eyed peas - known locally as niébé.

Farmers here say that growing cotton helps them to increase their production of other crops.

"Growing cotton enriches the soil, because when you grow cotton, you get fertiliser and other agricultural inputs on credit. Thanks to crop rotation, the cereals also benefit from rich soils," said Sail Samaké, a farmer in the southern village of Djitoumou Tamala.

Banks are not willing to lend farmers money for fertiliser and other agricultural inputs for cereals, thus binding food security closely to production of an inedible cash crop, cotton.

Strong prices for cotton between 2003 and 2006 were kind to the region's farmers, and food production boomed as well. Some 1.4 million tonnes of cereal crops are harvested in the cotton-producing region. The profits from cotton have also permitted the gradual accumulation of large numbers of cattle - farmers in this region have a herd of around 2.2 million head.

But as cotton prices on the world market have tumbled - thanks to subsidies for U.S. cotton farmers, according to analyst Mohamed Tabouré - Mali has witnessed a decline in its domestic production.

National production of cotton has fallen dramatically from around 620,000 tonnes in 2003-2004, to 200,000 tonnes in the growing season that ended in 2009.

"We should note that [declining production] is linked to both the fall in the value of the dollar against the euro as well as the CFA franc, and the increasing phenomenon of degradation of soil and loss of fertility is leading to reduced yields in the fields," told Tabouré.

With farmers reluctant to plant cotton, their source of credit for fertiliser is limited, putting food security at risk. To avoid this, the Malian government has introduced subsidies for agricultural inputs.

The price paid per kilo of cotton has rallied in the past year; if this continues, this may also encourage more farmers to return to growing cotton. Improved management of the Mali Textile Company will be vital if the country is to regain the level of cotton production it enjoyed in the early part of the last decade - and the bolstered food security that came with it.

FOURTEEN) GUINEA BISSAU PROMISES TO CONTROL LANDINGS OF DRUG PLANES

La Guinée-Bissau a annoncé mardi une plus grande surveillance des pistes d'atterrissage "utilisées" par des narcotrafiquants et menacé de détruire tout avion survolant illégalement ce pays présenté comme un point important du trafic de cocaïne d'Amérique latine vers l'Europe. Le gouvernement va rendre "non

opérationnelle" la piste d'atterrissage de Cufar, à environ 300 km au Sud de Bissau, "utilisée pour des activités douteuses", indique un communiqué du Conseil des ministres transmis à l'AFP. Le Premier ministre, Carlos Gomes Junior, a donné des "orientations" aux ministres de la Défense et de l'Intérieur pour "renforcer la vigilance" sur toutes les pistes dans le pays, selon la même source. La Guinée-Bissau compte au total 24 pistes d'atterrissage construites pendant la période coloniale portugaise et dont certaines, en terre battue, sont utilisées par des narcotrafiquants sud-américains. Le chef de l'armée, le général Antonio Indjai, en tournée mardi dans le sud du pays, a menacé de donner l'ordre d'abattre tout avion qui survolerait le pays sans autorisation. "Abattez-les, je vais en assumer la responsabilité après", a-t-il déclaré aux officiers de la garnison de Buba (250 km au sud de Bissau). "Que viennent chercher ces gens sur notre territoire ? Comme tout le monde sait que la Guinée-Bissau n'a pas de moyen, alors on nous donne tous les noms d'oiseaux. Ainsi, nous sommes qualifiés d'Etat trafiquant de drogue, d'enfants etc. C'est fini maintenant ! Tirez sur tout appareil qui violerait notre espace aérien", a-t-il martelé. Certaines informations font état d'atterrissages à certains endroits du pays d'appareils avec la complicité d'officiers de l'armée. La Guinée-Bissau, pays lusophone d'Afrique occidentale situé à 6 heures de vol d'Amérique du Sud, est présentée comme une plaque tournante du trafic de drogue d'Amérique latine vers l'Europe. Entre 2007 et 2009, plus de 40 tonnes de cocaïne ont transité par ce pays de 36.000 km², selon un rapport du bureau des Nations-unies pour la lutte contre le trafic de drogue (ONUDD).

FIFTEEN) – COTE D'IVOIRE: NEW TECHNIQUES, NEW PROFITS FOR TOMATO FARMERS

Even while the country has faced civil war and political crisis, innovative research organisations have worked to meet the challenges of food security and rural poverty.

Côte d'Ivoire's domestic production of vegetables meets less than 60 percent of consumers' needs.

Growers could make up the deficit - and increase their year-round incomes - by adopting new techniques that produce several harvests each year.

On his low-lying half-hectare of land, not far from Abidjan, François Adou usually grows cabbage, aubergine, potatoes, tomatoes and groundnuts on mounds. A year ago, the 43-year-old dug trenches in an 800 square metre section to devote it exclusively to a new technique for growing tomatoes.

The non-soil, or hydroponic, technique is being promoted by an independent organisation working on alleviating poverty in rural areas, the Agribusiness and Contract Farming House (known in French as GenieAgro). Farmers plant tomatoes or other crops in a substrate made up of cocoa hull fibres, sawdust and industrial waste of plant origin.

This mixture can be used to fill plastic-lined trenches, wooden boxes, or sacks supported above the ground on wooden trestles. The plants grow directly in this material.

Farmers smiling

"It's a soil-less cultivation technique," told Adou, adding that the results have been great. In the first three-month planting cycle - March to May - he harvested between four and five tonnes of tomatoes. In August, he was already preparing for another harvest - this time anticipating six tonnes.

A kilo of tomatoes fetches between \$1 and \$1.25 in Côte d'Ivoire. On an initial investment of a million CFA francs (roughly \$2000 dollars) to buy the substrate in which to grow the plants, he saw a return of \$5,500 from the sale of his first harvest alone.

After Adou's second harvest last August, his neighbour Amidou Traoré had seen enough. He followed Adou's lead and set up with the hydroponic technique on 600 square metres of his own. "I pulled in 962,500 FCFA [almost \$2,000 with my first harvest]. Half went to pay back part of the investment of 850,000 FCFA (\$1,700)."

Converting discarded material from cocoa and coffee processing, as well as wood chips and sawdust means manufacture of the substrate that the plants grow in dovetails neatly with a problem of disposal of industrial waste.

Simplice Kouassi, a researcher and geneticist who before he joined GenieAgro worked at the country's National Centre for Agronomic Research, explains that farmers working with hydroponic techniques can reap four or five times as many tomatoes than they would planting directly in the soil.

"For an area of 1,000 square metres, you need to invest three million FCFA (around \$6,100 dollars). It's possible to recover the investment in your first three months," he told IPS. "Each growing cycle runs three months, and each time, a farmer can put 1.19 million FCFA (\$2,500) in her pocket." Farmers have no need for chemical fertilisers, if they use the substrate produced by the facility GenieAgro set up for the purpose. The Bureau de Formulation de Substrats produces a mixture that contains all the nutrients growing plants

need. A batch of substrate can be re-used two or three times before it has to be replaced. Presently, the factory, based at Songon, southeast of Abidjan, produces only 200 bags of substrate a day. Some of the raw materials needed are often in short supply.

Reviving production

In recent years, the production of tomatoes in Côte d'Ivoire has fallen by more than 50 percent, from 320,000 tonnes to 150,000 tonnes, according to producers groups. This decline is primarily all due to bacterial ring rot (a plant disease). Additional factors include the late arrival of the rainy season and strong competition from tomatoes imported from Burkina Faso, Mali and Europe.

"There was a real threat to the local production of tomatoes which demanded that we find a response quickly... [useful] in the south. Because the north [of the country] remains attached to the traditional cultivation on the earth or still relies on irrigated farming that is very productive," Antoine N'Guetta, an agricultural engineer explained.

Non-soil cultivation of tomatoes has been adopted by nearly 200 of the country's 3,000-odd producers since 2009. The country's tomato production has rebounded sharply to 225,000 tonnes in 2010. Since 2009, with the adoption of cultivation soil-less by nearly 200 producers, the production has seen growth of around 50 percent, coming up to 225,000 tonnes in 2010. The country has some 3,000 producers of tomatoes.

This highly-productive, labour-intensive farming technique holds great promise for farmers in Côte d'Ivoire and beyond.

SIXTEEN) - RENEWABLE ENERGY GETS A BOOST IN MAURITIUS

A new initiative to support production of renewable energy in Mauritius may provide a model for other countries to follow suit.

"We have got so much sunshine here," says Andrea Gungadin, rector of the Hindu Girls College, a private educational institution in Curepipe, southern Mauritius. "Why allow it to go waste when we can use it to produce electricity at a time when fossil fuel is becoming scarcer and more expensive?"

The college, which has 1,400 students, is producing 14 KWh of clean electricity daily from a three kilowatt solar system mounted on its roof. This represents about a fifth of the school's energy needs.

In December 2010, Mauritius launched an initiative asking the population to produce electricity from renewable sources. Energy and Public Utilities Minister Dr Rashid Beebeejaun says the aim is to reduce the island's greenhouse gas emissions and enhance energy resilience.

"We are transforming Mauritius into a sustainable island and making it into a model of ecological sustainability," he says. The Hindu Girls College solar array of 17 panels cost around \$4,600 but engineer Pavitra Maulloo explains that the cost will vary depending on factors like the location of the site, the number of panels desired, the structure itself and access to the site.

"Investments in such a project can be covered within a five year period for an office or institution and in seven to eight years for a home. Afterwards, you just produce, use and sell your electricity for 20 years," he says.

Public schools are following in the footsteps of the Hindu Girls College. The Education Ministry has opened bidding for the installation of solar panels on ten of the island's primary and secondary institutions.

A total generating capacity of 55,000 KW will be produced under this project for use by the schools. During vacations, the electricity produced will be sold to the CEB.

The code permitting clients to feed power into the national grid is also attracting sugar farmers who are dealing with a decline in prices for sugar. Thousands of hectares of sugar plantation land has been abandoned, but farmers are now inviting small wind energy producers to set up windmills here.

"They would like to derive some revenue compensating for the loss in sugar prices, as well as continue producing in some vegetables and fruits for the local market on the land around the wind farms", Nundlall Basant Roi, chairperson of the Mauritius Cooperative Agricultural Federation told IPS.

The idea is at a preliminary stage, with uncertainty over how much additional income such wind farms could produce.

Mauritius consumes around 350 MWh of electricity daily. The island presently depends mainly on imported oil and coal to meet its energy requirements, with only about 18 percent produced from renewable energy sources, including bagasse (sugar cane residue), hydro, solar and wind energy. The Central Electricity

Board projects the island will need about 400 MWh each day by 2025, and it aims to produce 60 percent of its needs from renewable sources.

The government's vision of a sustainable island has found a ready audience. At Vacoas, in the centre of the island, Deven Maulloo has installed four photovoltaic panels that provide electricity to his home; he does not sell anything to the CEB, but has shaved about \$75 off his monthly bill, but he admits his solar system is not ideal.

"We have to change our way of living and adjust it to the solar regime. We thus do all our household tasks that need electricity during the day," he says.

The Grid Code is an important step to promote the adoption of small-scale renewable generation by individual consumers. The cost of investment in renewable energy is high, and the possibility of selling a surplus helps attract more participants.

Gungadin says her school would not have considered this project if there was no option to sell the surplus to the CEB, but she sees it as having numerous benefits.

"It's not just like producing electricity and earning some money. It is also a way to teach our students about climate change, electricity production from fossil fuel and why we need to produce it from renewable sources," says Gungadin.

Both Gungadin and Deven Maulloo insist that solar energy is cost-effective in the long run.

Fernando Matos Rosa

Brussels

