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ONE) – EU URGES TARIFF STANDSTILL AS DOHA DOWN PAYMENT

World Trade Organization members should agree to a standstill on tariffs in December as a down payment toward a larger deal in long-running world trade talks, Karel De Gucht said on Tuesday. De Gucht told reporters he believed a standstill was necessary to prevent countries from giving in to protectionist pressures to raise tariffs. Countries have given up any hope of reaching a comprehensive deal in the nearly decade-old Doha round of world trade talks this year. But in a bid to prevent an all-out collapse, they have set their sights on a mini-package of agreements aimed at helping the WTO's poorest members by the time the Geneva-based world trade body holds its next major meeting in December. De Gucht spoke to reporters before a speech at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in which he argued it would be a mistake to completely give up on the Doha round. "Without Doha we would considerably increase the risks of protectionism. The WTO has already warned that protectionism is on the rise, despite the recovery," he said. A study by the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute has estimated that without a Doha deal countries would be free to raise tariffs well above current levels, inflicting losses "of up to 353 billion US dollars in terms of world income and 1.9 trillion in terms of world exports," De Gucht said. A tariff standstill would keep current duties in place until conditions are right for a broader deal, most likely after the U.S. presidential election in 2012, he said. **CUT IN FARM SUBSIDIES UNLIKELY** He downplayed chances the EU would agree to eliminate agricultural export subsidies as part of a proposed partial deal this December in longrunning world trade talks. "We are ready to discuss about it, but the situation has dramatically changed," De Gucht said. The EU agreed earlier in the long-running Doha round to eliminate agricultural export subsidies by 2013. But that assumed a much larger deal than is now expected this year. "This happened in a larger framework, within a larger agreement. If you extract part of it, you can not come to the conclusion that 'well, you agreed to that in a larger context (so) you should also agree in a more limited context'." (Reuters)

TWO) - ITALY: 'THEY SAW NUMBERS, WE SAW PEOPLE

It's only a few hundred metres from the rocky hillside overlooking Lampedusa's commercial port to the other side of the protected bay. For more than a decade this narrow strip of ocean has been a migratory gateway into Europe for tens of thousands of mostly African migrants. The numbers have risen and fallen in response to shifting government policies and geopolitical developments.

In terms of Lampedusa's wider political impact on Europe however, no previous influx has had the same potentially momentous consequences as the 26,000 Tunisians who converged on the island earlier this year. The spectacularly inept response of government to these arrivals transformed Lampedusa into the symbol of a nightmare scenario that has obsessed Europe for more than two decades – of an uncontrollable surge of impoverished Third World migrants pouring across the continent.

Italian politicians and the media did much to fan these anxieties with melodramatic descriptions of an 'invasion' and 'assault' on the island by undocumented migrants, and these siege narratives were echoed in the European media. Even the more reserved BBC entitled a recent documentary 'The Invasion of Lampedusa'.

The European far-right depicted the island in very similar terms for its own purposes. On Mar. 15, Marine Le Pen visited the island on the eve of French local elections with the anti-immigrant Northern League member of the European Parliament (MEP) Mario Borghezio. Last month Roberto Fiore, head of the neo-fascist Forza Nuova party accompanied Nick Griffin of the British National Party to the island in another demonstration of far-right 'solidarity'.

This assistance was not necessarily welcomed or desired by the islanders themselves. From a distance Lampedusa is often presented as a vulnerable bastion against Europe's unwanted migrants, but many of its inhabitants are surprisingly relaxed about their situation.

Outside the Café Mediterraneo on Lampedusa's main drag, a flag of the European Union with a question mark still remains from its transformation into what the café's owner Silvana calls a 'Tunisian city' earlier this year. Silvana has good memories of the Tunisians who more than doubled the local population for two weeks. "They were good to us, and Lampedusan people were good to them," she says. Like many Lampedusans, she is more critical of the paralysis of her own government and the EU during the crisis than she is of the migrants who came to the island.

For many Lampedusans, this influx came as a shock, after years in which migrants were swiftly moved to the holding centres and transported off the island without many locals even being aware of their presence. Berlusconi's initial refusal to open the two holding centres brought many Lampedusans face to face with migrants for the first time, and their instinctive response was often more generous than that of their own government.

With the migrants receiving little assistance except from the Red Cross, and the survival kits provided by Médecins sans Frontières, the church and other local institutions gave them food, clothing and blankets. Some restaurants gave them free food, and electricity to charge their phones.

One schoolteacher took his pupils to meet the migrants for cultural exchanges. The Associazione Askavusa (Barefoot Association), a local cultural organisation, cooked 100 meals a day with money from its members' own pockets, or local donations.

The association celebrates Lampedusa's role as a migratory destination and organises an annual film and video festival dedicated to migration. It is also trying to create Europe's first museum of migration, using lifejackets, found objects, letters and clothes retrieved from the beaches where migrants have landed.

"They saw numbers, and we saw people," says Giacomo Sferlazzo, one of its members, asked why the islanders' perception is so different from that of the government.

Not everybody sees things this way. Lampedusa is a contradictory place. Its longstanding mayor Bernardino de Rubeis belongs to a local centre-right party and his deputy mayor is a senator with the Northern League. At one demonstration in March a group of local people shouted at the Coastguard not to bring migrants to the island. But this was clearly not the dominant response.

Today photographs of the Tunisians greet visitors to the tiny airport, and the local tourist magazine celebrates 'solidarietà lampedusana' – Lampedusan solidarity. Many Lampedusans are more concerned with the fall in hotel reservations than they are with the migrants who still come to the island.

"Many tourists are scared of this problem," says Giacomo, a worker at the Baia Turchese hotel overlooking the port. Was he scared? "No. Lampedusans and Africans get on fine together. Many of the people who come here are young like us."

The presence of soldiers, police and carabinieri has compensated some hotels for the loss in trade. Vanloads of police with riot shields are a constant presence on the island, but most of them are there on temporary contracts that can be cancelled at short notice, and pay less than tourist rates. No one blamed migrants for this situation, and many attributed the fall in bookings to inaccurate and exaggerated media reporting.

To some extent both Lampedusans and migrants have become counters in the political posturing between Italy and France that followed the arrival of the Tunisians. For the scandal-prone Berlusconi, Lampedusa has been a distraction from mounting political pressure. For French President Nicolas Sarkozy, the decision to stop Tunisians entering France was intended to take the wind out of the resurgent Marine Le Pen's sails.

Both governments eventually resolved this conflict by calling on the EU to revisit one of the cornerstones of European integration – free movement of people within the Schengen Area. To its great discredit, the European Commission capitulated to this cynical politicking and agreed to reintroduce border controls in certain emergency situations.

As a result this tiny island of 20 square kilometres has cast another question mark over the European project, but these developments say more about the governments who agreed to them, than they do about an 'immigration tsunami' that remains conspicuously absent on Lampedusa itself.

THREE) - EUROPE'S HIDDEN MISERY: IMMIGRANTS

Like tens of thousands of migrants who have crossed the Mediterranean in the six months since the beginning of the Arab Spring, Yohanes came looking for a safer, more prosperous life. The 25-year-old Eritrean had been living in Libya for four years and planned to stay; violence forced him into a smuggler's boat and a perilous sea voyage to Europe. Now, squatting with 100 other exiles in a derelict, rubbish-strewn factory in the French port town of Calais as he waits for word on his asylum application, he ponders a world as hellish as the one he left behind. "I am living a cat-and-rat life in Calais with the police -- I don't know which one is rat," Yohanes, who refused to give his surname, told Reuters. "I sleep like this" -he shut one eye and kept the other wide open- "I never close all my eyes and I never take off my shoes. I have a ladder to escape." He shakes his head at the treatment he has received in France. "When I was in Africa, I saw white people just like angels," he said.

"Maybe one day they will change their mind. Maybe they will understand." The [International Organisation for Migration](#) (IMO) estimates a million people have flooded out of Libya alone since the uprisings began. The vast majority -about 98 %- have ended up in neighbouring states like Egypt, Tunisia or Algeria. But along with the thousands of Tunisians who have taken advantage of looser security following the fall of president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, enough have headed north to Europe to trigger a crisis there. Illegal immigration to Europe is now on track to surpass the peak hit in 2008. The IMO says about 42,000 migrants have already crossed into Italy and Malta alone, surpassing the 40,000 total for the two countries in all of 2008. The numbers piling into places such as Italy and France have taxed the resources of border police, fanned anti-immigrant sentiment from Finland to Greece and even spurred leaders to challenge one of the bloc's fundamental principles: the free

movement of people inside the EU. Arguments over how best to handle the influx are straining ties already stretched by the sovereign debt crisis. A dispute blew up in April when Italy handed out permits to asylum-seekers and economic migrants, allowing them free travel through the EU. France, in retaliation, shut its borders. Paris and other EU capitals want countries to adhere to the principle that the country of arrival should be responsible for a migrant until his or her status is determined. But Italy argues it needs help to cope with the masses that have landed on Lampedusa, Sicily and other Italian islands in the past few months. Italy has surpassed Greece -which accounted for nine out of 10 such crossings last year- as the main point of entry for illegal migrants, EU border agency Frontex said. **NO ACTION EXPECTED FROM EU SUMMIT TOMORROW**

Italy and France have put immigration reform on the agenda for this week's regular EU summit. Don't expect radical changes, though. Some of the issues -such as reform of asylum policies- arouse deep-seated fears of surrendering power to Brussels, or facing an additional financial burden. They've been debated for years without result. And while members may allow governments to impose temporary border controls, the basic form of the agreement that permits passport-free travel -- a treaty known as the Schengen agreement -- is likely to stand. Even the most immigrant-resistant states are reluctant to give up that convenience. "I would never want that back in Europe -- good heavens!" said Soren Pind, Denmark's Minister for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, who nevertheless favours keeping migrants in their country of arrival. But that doesn't mean Europe is not changing. Under pressure from the anti-immigrant Danish People's Party, Denmark opted in May to increase the number of customs officials stationed at its borders and step up spot checks. Pind called this an effort to deter crime, not people, and said it did not breach Schengen. Critics, though, worry that the checks will disrupt travel enough to amount to a de facto violation. Britain, which is not part of the Schengen zone, is cutting the number of legal immigrants it lets in every year and says it is tightening up controls on illegal ones. Such moves threaten to pit member states against each other. EU Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship Antonio Tajani believes Europe needs to deal with migration as it is with Greece's debt crisis -in a unified way. "It's easy to understand the increasing appeal of protectionist or nationalist sentiment when there is an emergency situation, like the economic crisis or the immigration crisis. Such an approach could be effective but only in the short term," he said. "Member states must understand that we all need a stronger Europe. Immigration is the same as the euro crisis. Today we are all helping Ireland, Greece and Portugal with aid we decided on together. Immigration is the same." Or maybe not. **EUROPEANS TURNING AGAINST IMMIGRATION**

Immigration is an emotive subject even in good times. In an age of austerity, high unemployment and bailouts, it's making some people in Europe furious. Nationalist and anti-immigrant parties are becoming more vocal and gaining popularity among voters in a number of EU nations as well as in Switzerland, a non-EU Schengen member. Three in 10 Britons in a June Economist/Ipsos MORI poll said race relations/immigration is a key issue facing the country - second only to the economy. Where only a decade ago, some politicians were selling the need for migrant labour to keep growth going and prices low, EU leaders and ordinary Europeans alike now worry about economic migrants -- those who move to another country for a better job or social benefits, rather than to escape persecution or violence. In Rome, one such migrant -Tunisian Oussama Moustapha- has direct experience of the consequences. By day, the 19-year-old wanders around Rome's Termini railway station. At night, he crowds into a holding centre 30 km outside the capital or beds down on the couch of anyone who will take him. His small store of cash is rapidly running out. What he does have is a laminated residency permit issued by Italy and a fierce desire to get to France and find work. Moustapha paid 600 euros for his March trip to Lampedusa. After nearly 20 hours at sea, the helmsman of the rickety boat he and 64 other Tunisians were crammed into lost his way and the engine broke down. "By then, we had run out of water and food," he said. "I thought: this is it, we are all going to die." The boat was rescued by a fisherman after port authorities refused to come to their aid. Then Italy's Civil Protection Authority handed him and hundreds of others stranded at the station a free ticket to the town of Ventimiglia, right on the border with France. The French police were waiting. "They were dragging people out of the train and putting them into vans before sending them back to Italy," Moustapha said in fluent French. "I've seen people come back with handcuff marks on their wrists and bruises all over their body. I was scared, so I ran away back to the border. "I was lucky. I have heard that others had their permits taken away or ripped apart by the police. Sarkozy doesn't want us." This chill may make it hard to address a key foreign policy challenge: If it is to influence North Africa as it searches for a new identity, the EU needs to do more than just shut its doors. "We think that Europe should look at this as a big opportunity," said William Spindler, senior public information officer for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Countries in northern Africa are going through profound transformations and they need help to consolidate these changes. If these countries can become more free, more democratic, more prosperous, it is to the advantage of everybody." **IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM**

Spindler adds that while economic migration may not be a universal human right, asylum is. Europe must take care not to deny protection to those who need it while trying to shut out those who don't. In a field office in Calais, UNHCR protection officer Mathilde Tiberghien advises migrants how to seek refugee status in France. She said

refugees fleeing trouble at home are bewildered by police suspicion and the reluctance of European nations to offer them safe harbour. "These people survive persecution in their own country and then, in Libya, they survive persecution again. So we see that these people, when they come, they arrive extremely tired." Calais has always been a magnet for migrants, many of whom eye the UK across the Channel and are prepared to risk their lives attempting to cross it. While there has been no marked increase since the Arab Spring, Tiberghien says French police have grown more aggressive. Yohanes, the Eritrean who sleeps with one eye open, fled Libya when he found himself targeted by both police and locals after the rebels started their campaign against Gaddafi. Many Libyans worried that he and other Africans from south of the Sahara were mercenaries, he said. "In Libya as well, I was sleeping just like this situation. I was sleeping rough and we have to be careful with the police. If the police come, we run. We worked and we put money inside here" -he gestured to his crotch- "to pay the agent to go to Italy." He said he was robbed at knifepoint before he managed to buy illegal passage to Lampedusa. Italian authorities took him to Sicily, where he slipped away and hid in a truck bound for Calais.

HOLES IN THE ROOF His story echoes that of many other migrants at African House, the latest abandoned building to bear the name. The factory's brick and cinderblock units -each occupied by a different national group- are chilly despite the warm sunshine outside; migrants have lit scrap-wood fires for warmth. The holes in the roof of Eritrean Corner, where Yohanes and his compatriots sleep, force them to cower in corners when it rains or snows. There is no running water. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are provided by local NGOs at a makeshift food distribution centre a half-hour walk away, at the port. There are two sets of showers for hundreds of migrants. The arrival of a minivan to ferry African House occupants to one prompts shouts and a race down the cobbled courtyard to get on board. Police stage surprise raids at unpredictable times of the day and night, sending African House's occupants scuttling up their ladders into lofts beneath the factory roof.

Celine Dallery, a nurse at the free clinic for Calais' homeless, says some break limbs as they attempt to escape. UNHCR's Spindler, on his first visit to African House in weeks, is shocked at what he finds. "It seems as though the policy now of some European countries is to make conditions so bad that people will go somewhere else to claim asylum, and for us this is wrong." **HEAVEN?** But in France, where unemployment hovers around 9 percent of the total population and 23 percent of non-EU foreigners, residents question how many more immigrants the country can absorb without damaging the country's social safety net or budget position.

Although he arrived as an immigrant himself in 1991, 31-year-old Bouba Bonnier, an Algerian-born Frenchman who works as a decorator in Paris, supports the calls to temporarily tighten internal borders against the Tunisians. "When France says we can't welcome all the misery in the world, I understand. Tunisians think that here, it's heaven. But here, we have unemployment," Bonnier said. Just blocks away, on the fringes of the working-class 19th arrondissement, about 100 young North Africans -- mainly Tunisians -- have set up camp in the playground equipment of a public park. Some have tents, others have blankets spread on the grass.

Nervous mothers have stopped taking their children there to play; local business managers say they have been approached by desperate Tunisians asking for under-the-table jobs. **EUROPE'S CONUNDRUM** But blocking migrants may turn out to be short-sighted for a continent faced with an ageing population and a dwindling pool of tax-paying workers. According to a European Commission report issued earlier this year, the EU's working-age population will start to shrink in 2014, a worrying trend for Baby Boomers facing retirement. Many European governments, trying to tame huge deficits and confronted with the prospect of a surge in retirees, are raising retirement ages and preparing pension reforms.

Fifty-year-old Parisian Jean-Marc, who refused to give his last name, said immigrants should be allowed in. "There has always been immigration," he said. "We need it. If all the immigrants in France stopped working for a week, then the whole country would be paralysed." If nothing changes, the Commission report argues, there will be just two workers for every retired person by 2060 -- half the current level. Crucially, according to Commission estimates, EU states will be short up to 2 million workers in health care in the next decade -- just as the needs of an ageing population are mounting. "Migration, especially from non-EU countries, could provide a (temporary) respite from population ageing, since most people migrate primarily as young adults," the Commission said. It argues that the EU should offer trade and visa benefits to North African countries as an incentive to stop residents coming to Europe illegally. The IMO also says a proper legal mechanism for immigration from developing nations would help. But such steps are unlikely to appeal to European nations fearful of appearing too welcoming. Some, like Denmark's Pind, agree that Europe needs migrants, but say they should be skilled. He cited a study that showed immigrants from developed countries contributed to the Danish economy, while those from the developing world cost it. "Does this mean that we don't want migrants from non-western countries? No, it does not," he said. "It means that it should at least in many ways be easier for people from the West to come to Europe and to come to Denmark. And we should at least be open to immigration from less-developed countries -- but it should be skills-based."

SMUGGLERS UNDETERRED This much is certain: Europe's current policies appear to be doing little to deter the illegal people-smuggling networks. In Zarzis, a town on Tunisia's Mediterranean coast and a favoured launch point for boatloads of illegal migrants to Italy, a people-smuggler who gave his name as Ahmed

explained that France's tougher attitude has made some potential customers hesitant. But it hasn't hurt long-term demand. "We have not stopped our voyages to Lampedusa," he told Reuters in May. "I have now lowered the prices from 3,000 Tunisian dinars to 1,800. and I have 500 people signed up for this week." Until this year, the numbers setting off from Tunisia were relatively small because security forces patrolled the shores and punished anyone trying to cross, in accordance with a bilateral deal with Italy. But Tunisia's revolution has changed all that. A Reuters journalist watched two boats - each crammed with more than 50 illegal migrants - put out to sea from the beach in Zarzis in the dark. There was no sign of police or coast guards. Migrants interviewed by Reuters told of simply walking away from Italy's reception centres, or evading detection entirely and hopping onto trucks or trains for other EU countries in search of family members, a ready-made community or better reception conditions. This week's EU summit may not agree to sweeping policy changes but it could yield more power and cash for Frontex, the EU agency responsible for external borders. That can't come too soon for its Deputy Director Gil Arias Fernandez. While Frontex has no policing authority, it advises and supports border nations on everything from early detection of boats in trouble to processing migrants. The five operations it is currently running are depleting its funds rapidly. "As long as the current situation could remain for a long period, we are exhausted in terms of resources," Fernandez said. "We would need the European institutions to allocate some additional budget for our operational activities. Otherwise, we cannot cope until the end of the year." But in Tunisia, smuggler Kamel Btiri says beefed up policing won't work. "I have a message for France," he said, "every time you adopt inhumane measures, we will bring you more young people." (Reuters)

FOUR) - SOUTH SUDAN MUST HALVE 200,000-STRONG ARMY AFTER SECESSION, WARNS UN

The United Nations on Tuesday called for southern Sudan to halve the size of its army after independence in July, saying its mix of conflicting loyalties and former rebels could lead to insecurity. Since the peace deal, the former rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has prepared to become a national army, absorbing various militia groups and fighters while disarming and demobilising others. David Gressly, the United Nations regional coordinator for Southern Sudan, told Reuters in an interview that the SPLA had between 150,000 and 200,000 soldiers, and that "probably more" than half should be demobilised after secession. "This is an army that has absorbed a large number of groups since 2005, I would say over 20 to 25 groups have come on board, so (there are) varying degrees of loyalty as well as discipline," Gressly said. "There's no need for it. You can have a more effective army that's smaller than a larger army that is not as professional as it could be. They'd be better off with a better trained and a smaller army." After a lull in violence around the historic vote, the region erupted in south-on-south fighting. The United Nations says more than 1,500 people have been killed this year, many as rogue SPLA soldiers turned on the army. Gressly said once the south declares independence in less than three weeks, the SPLA can receive more external help and training for its forces. "The key now is to look at how to demobilise the large numbers ... so you retain a core group where focus can be placed to professionalise them as an army." The call to halve the south's armed forces may unsettle some southerners as ongoing north-south tensions continue along the border, with some analysts warning of a return to open conflict over the contested Abyei region. Gressly said demobilising half of the army in stages would improve its quality over time. A deal to demilitarise Abyei was struck between northern and southern leaders on Monday, despite reports of shelling and fighting between both sides at the southern reaches of the Abyei area as late as Friday. "The important thing is the (Abyei) agreement itself," Gressly said. "I'm not surprised to hear there may be some skirmishes, but the fact that the agreement has been signed, that there will be a withdrawal of forces and a new security force under U.N. command will move into Abyei is a significant step forward." (Reuters)

FIVE) – KHARTOUM TO SHUT OIL PIPELINE IF SOUTH DOESN'T PAY

Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir threatened on Tuesday to shut down oil pipelines if the south refuses to pay transit fees or continue sharing oil revenues after it secedes next month. South Sudan will become a separate country on July 9, but the two sides have yet to come to a final arrangement on how to manage the oil industry after the split. Nearly three-quarters of the oil output comes from the south, but most of the refineries, pipelines and ports are in the north, meaning the two will need to cooperate to some degree to keep crude flowing. Under a 2005 peace deal that ended decades of civil war between the two sides, Khartoum gets about 50 percent of the revenues from oil found in the south. "Either the split continues, or we will take our due from any barrel that passes through our land," Bashir told an audience in Port Sudan, referring to transit fees. "If they don't want that, we will shut the line." Sudan's oil minister said on Thursday that north Sudan had agreed to

accept transit fees from the south, but the two sides had yet to set a price. They were also discussing a "transitional arrangement" which would ease the financial impact on the north of losing revenues from the south's oil, the minister said. Southerners voted to secede in a January referendum. North and south Sudan have warred for all but a few years since 1955 over religion, ideology, ethnicity and oil. (Reuters)

SIX) – U.S. TIGHTENS LIBYA SANCTIONS

The United States on Tuesday tightened financial sanctions on the Libyan government and two influential senators pushed back against calls to halt funding for American involvement in NATO operations there. Senators John Kerry and John McCain introduced a measure to formally authorize the U.S. military intervention in Libya for up to one year, and warned against critics who want Congress to act to stop U.S. involvement. A Senate vote would send a message that Washington was committed to the conflict and would not abandon allies who are leading it, Kerry said. Pulling the plug would "doom the Libyan operation" and "undermine the very core of NATO," he warned. The U.S. Treasury said it was blacklisting nine companies owned or controlled by Muammar Gaddafi's government. The sanctions will prohibit U.S. transactions with the nine companies, including the Arab Turkish Bank, Tunisia-based North Africa International Bank and Lebanon-based North Africa Commercial Bank, the department said. The Treasury also removed sanctions against former oil minister Shukri Mohammed Ghanem because he defected from Gaddafi's government in May. (Reuters)

SEVEN) – ITALY URGES NATO TO STOP LIBYA BOMBARDMENTS

L'Italie a réclamé mercredi une cessation des hostilités en Libye pour l'instauration de couloirs humanitaires alors que l'Otan poursuit ses frappes contre les forces du régime de Mouammar Kadhafi malgré les critiques après des raids ayant fait des pertes civiles. L'Italie a ouvert la voie à une sérieuse division au sein des Européens en demandant un cessez-le feu en Libye. "La priorité" est un cessez-le-feu en Libye, mais en attendant, "la suspension des actions armées est fondamentale pour permettre une aide immédiate", avait déclaré le ministre italien des Affaires étrangères, Franco Frattini, à la veille d'un Conseil européen à Bruxelles. Selon M. Frattini qui s'exprimait devant la commission des Affaires étrangères et celle des politiques européennes, un arrêt immédiat des hostilités "permettrait d'éviter ce que le CNT (Conseil national de transition, instance dirigeante de la rébellion, ndlr) craint, à savoir une consolidation de la partition en deux de la Libye", a-t-il poursuivi. Se référant aux opérations de l'Otan, M. Frattini a également réclamé "des informations détaillées" et préconisé des "consignes claires et précises", après les erreurs "dramatiques" qui ont conduit à toucher des civils. "Ce n'est clairement pas la mission de l'Otan", a ajouté le chef de la diplomatie italienne. De son côté, le secrétaire général sortant de la Ligue arabe, Amr Moussa, qui a soutenu le lancement des frappes aériennes en Libye, a fait part de ses "scrupules" après les pertes civiles. "Quand je vois des enfants se faire tuer, mon devoir est d'avoir des scrupules. C'est pourquoi j'ai mis en garde contre le risque de pertes civiles", a déclaré M. Moussa, dans une interview au quotidien britannique The Guardian de mercredi. **NO WAY, SAYS FRANCE** (AFP) - Paris est opposé à "toute pause dans les opérations" de la coalition en Libye, comme l'a réclamée l'Italie, estimant que cela "risquerait de permettre à Mouammar Kadhafi de gagner du temps et de se réorganiser", a indiqué mercredi le ministère des Affaires étrangères. "La coalition et les pays réunis au groupe de contact d'Abou Dhabi, il y a deux semaines, ont été unanimes sur la stratégie: il faut intensifier la pression sur Kadhafi", a déclaré Bernard Valero, porte-parole du ministère des Affaires étrangères, réagissant lors d'un point-presse à la demande italienne. "Toute pause dans les opérations risquerait de lui (Kadhafi) permettre de gagner du temps et de se réorganiser", a poursuivi M. Valero. (AFP)

EIGHT) – MOROCCO REGIME SURE OF WINNING REFERENDUM ON REFORM

Le pouvoir marocain s'est dit sûr de faire approuver le référendum sur une constitution plus démocratique le 1er juillet, mardi au début d'une brève campagne électorale. "Nous sommes tellement confiants dans l'appui de la majorité de la population au projet de constitution, (que) ce ne sont pas quelques voix dissonantes qui nous déstabiliseront", a déclaré à l'AFP Khaled Naciri, porte-parole du gouvernement. Le roi Mohammed VI a proposé vendredi soir une réforme de la constitution qui conserve au souverain de larges prérogatives politiques et religieuses. Toutes les formations politiques du Maroc pourront s'exprimer librement dans les médias publics, a souligné M. Naciri, ministre de la Communication, au premier jour de la campagne. Mais les

contestataires du Mouvement du 20 février, qui ont mobilisé plusieurs milliers de manifestants ce week-end dans les grandes villes du Maroc, dénoncent le projet de réforme comme insuffisant en matière de démocratie, de limitation des pouvoirs du monarque et de lutte contre la corruption. Ahmed Réda Chami, ministre de l'Industrie, du Commerce et des Nouvelles technologies a estimé que les manifestations allaient se réduire au Maroc parce que la future constitution est "très positive" et que "ces dernières semaines la majorité de la population s'est vraiment fatiguée des protestations". La plupart des partis politiques marocains ont déjà appelé à approuver le projet de réforme. D'autres formations ont toutefois appelé à "boycotter" la consultation pour protester contre le contenu du projet de réforme qui ne remet pas en cause "la prééminence de la monarchie". C'est le cas du Parti socialiste unifié (PSU, opposition parlementaire représentée par trois députés au parlement marocain), du Parti de l'avant-garde démocratique et socialiste (PADS) et la Voie démocratique, tous deux non représentés au parlement). Le Mouvement de jeunes du 20 février devait encore faire savoir sa position formelle. Dans ce projet, le souverain conserve toutes ses prérogatives de chef de l'Etat et de Commandeur des croyants, l'autorité ultime en matière religieuse. Il préside le conseil des ministres et le Conseil supérieur du pouvoir judiciaire. Il reste le chef de l'armée et préside un "Conseil supérieur de sécurité", nouvellement créé. (AFP)

NINE) – MOROCCO DEMOCRACY DEMONSTRATORS CALL FOR BOYCOTT OF KING'S REFERENDUM

Le mouvement de jeunes du 20 février qui revendique des changements politiques au Maroc a appelé mercredi à boycotter le référendum sur le projet de constitution présenté par le roi Mohammed VI, et appelé à manifester pacifiquement dans les grandes villes du Maroc dimanche. "Nous appelons au boycott de ce projet de constitution que nous rejetons sur le fond et sur la forme", indique un communiqué publié mercredi sur la page Facebook du mouvement, qui compte plus de 60.000 membres. "Nous sommes attachés à nos revendications justes pour la dignité, la démocratie et la justice sociale, par des moyens pacifiques", poursuit le texte. Il appelle à des manifestations pacifiques dans plusieurs villes du Maroc dimanche. "Nous appelons les citoyennes et les citoyens à manifester pacifiquement dans tout le Maroc pour protester contre ce projet qui ne remplit pas les conditions d'une constitution démocratique", selon le mouvement. Mohammed VI a proposé vendredi soir une réforme de la constitution qui renforce notamment les pouvoirs du Premier ministre issu du parti vainqueur des élections, mais qui conserve au souverain de larges prérogatives politiques et religieuses. La plupart des partis politiques ont appelé à voter oui. Mais trois partis de gauche, le Parti socialiste unifié, le Parti d'avant-garde démocratique et socialiste et la Voie démocratique ont pour leur part appelé à boycotter le scrutin. (AFP)

TEN) – ENVIRONMENT: CONGO BASIN SLOW TO ADOPT REDD

Only two of the eleven countries that share the Congo Basin have validated their plans to participate in the forest conservation process known as REDD+.

Preparatory plans for REDD (the Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation of Forests, the plus refers to the extension of the programme to encompass certain tree plantations) have been completed by only the Republic of Congo and its neighbour, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The Central African Republic, which has forest cover of 3.8 million hectares, has been waiting since January for the valuation of its plan. "CAR has already begun its REDD process and we believe we could benefit quickly from the benefits of carbon credit," said the country's president, François Bozizé, at a Brazzaville summit earlier this month. The summit involved international donors and representatives drawn from the world's three largest tropical forest basins, the Congo, the Amazon and the Mekong- Borneo basins.

Echoing concerns raised elsewhere, civil society in CAR has called for the land rights of forest communities like the Mbororos and the Anka to be taken into account, to ensure that they too can benefit from carbon finance. François Naoueyama, the CAR's minister for the environment and ecology is bullish on the prospects of the process. "The REDD+ process for us is an opportunity to receive necessary funding for the reduction of emissions from deforestation,"

The Republic of Congo, after having a plan rejected by civil society in July 2010, has now completed its Readiness Preparation Plan. "After this validation, we are waiting for funding for our national strategy," Georges Claver Boudzanga, the country's point person for REDD told IPS.

"After all the efforts we've put in, we don't want REDD+ to be a white elephant here. We are waiting funding so we can implement alternative activities and prevent the destruction and degradation of forests," he said.

Loïc Braume, a forest expert from the World Bank, said Congo can expect 3.4 million dollars to support its

REDD strategy as well as developing alternate livelihoods for forest communities battling poverty. This is also the amount he says was made available to the DRC's REDD preparations.

"This money also allowed the setting up of some project pilots, such as the tree plantations in Batéké," said Braume.

The DRC, with 25 square kilometres of protected land, includes the largest share of the basin. DRC's Readiness Preparation Plan has been approved at the level of the REDD+ Partnership, composed of wealthy countries and forested countries. Central Africa's largest country is already the beneficiary of two REDD+ project pilots, including a plantation on the Batéké Plateau, not far from the capital, Kinshasa.

The DRC's environment minister, José Endundu, said his country is expecting much more support. "It's a drop in the ocean in light of the size of the country and the size of the population relying on the impact of REDD+ on the ground," he told IPS.

Outside of Cameroon, which is presently preparing tools for REDD+, the other countries of the Congo Basin - Burundi, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Chad, Rwanda and Sao Tomé - are not even in an embryonic phase.

"It's a real gap for us in Burundi. The authorities need to wake up so that we can benefit from funding like the other countries," said Albert Mbonerane, president of the Green Belt Action association, based in the Burundian capital, Bujumbura.

Donors attending the Brazzaville summit confirm that resources exist to support countries starting the process. In the framework of the Congo Basin Forest Fund, managed by the African Development Bank, countries who want to begin the process will receive between 200,000 and 400,000 euros. "In three months, these funds will be available in the Congo Basin," says Braume.

There are also funds which come from individual wealthy countries. Norway and the United Kingdom have already financed conservation and biodiversity projects, according to Guillaume Chomert, an expert from the REDD+ Partnership. "There are several countries which already benefit from this financing, including the DRC in the Congo Basin."

But the countries which have already made progress did not attempt to conceal the difficulties they've faced in understanding the international carbon market. "There are subtleties, there's no single method for the calculation of carbon, all of which makes it important that the Congo Basin countries unite and strengthen their cooperation," said Minister Endundu from the DRC.

Launched in 2008 by the United Nations, the REDD+ process is considered an alternative response to deforestation and to the degradation of forests by forest communities who survive thanks to the forest. According to Juvenal Tais, coordinator of REDD+ at the United Nations, 71 countries - including 54 low-income countries - are involved in the process.

ELEVEN) – UGANDA: DISTRIBUTION POLICY MEANS NOT ENOUGH DRUGS FOR CLINICS

The nurse at Najembe Health Centre in Buikwe district says the centre's supply of malaria drugs will be finished in two days. A malaria epidemic has hit the area and the demand for the drugs is high. But the centre, which serves the entire sub-county, will have to wait up to six weeks before their supply will be replenished.

The health centre gets supplies from the Kawolo district referral hospital every two months and last received supplies at the end of May. The next supply will only be delivered at the end of July. Meanwhile, staff from the centre cannot make a special request to either the district hospital or the National Medical Stores for drugs that are in short supply. So those patients in need of anti-malarial drugs will have to go without or will have to privately purchase the drugs.

"They give us the same quantities of drugs irrespective of the needs and this means we are always running out of some drugs, while other drugs expire because nobody is using them," says the nurse who prefers not to be named.

The Ugandan government changed the policy of distributing drugs to parish and sub-county health centres in 2009 by implementing a policy where the National Medical Stores decides what drugs to supply and in what quantities. (A parish health centre is a clinic that provides medical treatment for up to 12 villages.) Previously heads of these health centres requisitioned the drugs, depending on their needs. The National Medical Stores supply 70 percent of the drugs in public health centres and district health officials locally procure the remaining 30 percent.

Hamis Kaheru, spokesperson of the National Medical Stores, says the policy change was necessary because there was a lack of competent personnel at lower levels to handle the old system.

"Personnel at the health centres (at parish and sub-county level) had no capacity to ascertain their needs and

were not sending their requests on time. In the end the National Medical Stores was not sending drugs on time and some items would be missing because they were omitted from the list," Kaheru says. He adds that they have been reviewing the policy every six months and is convinced it is working.

But the system is not working according to Denis Kibira medicines advisor at the Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Development (HEPS) a civil society organisation campaigning to stop the shortage of drugs. Kibira says the policy is wrong and should be reviewed.

"Drugs are out of stock most of the time and the moment people learn that some have been brought at their health centre they rush to get as much as possible to keep some for use during a shortage. This means the drugs will be always out of stock," Kibira says. He says this is possible because most nurses at the parish and sub-county health centres do not test patients to identify their illnesses but instead treat them based on symptoms. He says most people fake symptoms to get the drugs that are in short supply.

Kibira says the HEPS have conducted research in at least 20 districts since government first revised the drug distribution system and found the system is not working, despite government's assurances. At one health centre in Kayunga district villagers said they did not have medicine for over two months and there was no nurse on duty.

Government implemented the current system in an attempt to reduce chronic shortages of essential medicines that were experienced by the parish and sub-country health centres from 2008 to 2009. Kibira, however, says those shortages were largely due to mismanagement of supplies, deficiencies in the procurement process and inadequate funding.

"We were under the impression that the original shortages were because of no money. Our expectation was that when the budget allocation to the National Medical Stores went up, the services would (improve). But what we are seeing is the reoccurrence of the disease we hoped to heal," says Kibira.

In the 2009/2010 national budget the National Medical Stores received an allocation of almost 90 million dollars compared to a previous allocation of only 20 million dollars.

Kibira says with this kind of money the National Medical Stores should be in a position to supply vital drugs to health centres across the country without resorting to a policy change. Previously the National Medical Stores was not allocated funding through the national budget and would supply drugs on credit and then invoice the ministry of health and other health facilities for payment. This caused terrible delays.

But Kaheru says the policy has already been reviewed twice after consultations with the district medical officers, who should know the needs of their areas of jurisdiction.

"This policy solves more problems than it creates, the reason why drugs run out is because health officials at the lower levels are just giving people drugs under the clinical treatment based on symptoms and without testing. This (leads) to shortages and not because the policy is bad," says Kaheru.

But HEPS have asked government to review the policy and increase funding. Currently government supplies about 400 dollars worth of drugs to each parish health centre monthly. Sub-county health centres receive about 800 dollars worth of drugs each.

Kibira says HEPS have met with ministry of health officials who have assured them that they will revert to the old system. The National Medical Stores, however, denies this will happen.

Meanwhile, the nurse at Najembe Health Centre has no option when the drugs run out. She will have to give her patients prescriptions for the anti-malarial drugs and hope that they will have the money to buy them.

TWELVE) – EGYPT: SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS PICKING UP AGAIN AFTER UPRISING

On a blazingly hot summer's day in Cairo, it's 36 degrees Celsius in the shade. Air-conditioners and fans whirr across the city, burdening the national electricity grid. Last summer, the populous city experienced frequent water and power cuts, causing a furore. Consumption had grown by 2,600 megawatts, an increase of 13,5 percent from 2009.

Over 1,000 years ago ancient Egyptians worshipped the sun god Ra. Centuries later, modern Egypt is only just beginning to realise the importance of utilising the sun as an energy source. One of the most sunlight-rich countries in the world, this North African country is making slow strides with solar energy.

About 100 km south of Cairo lies Kuraymat, Egypt's first solar plant, which is expected to produce 120 MW. A hybrid power plant, 20 MW will be from solar energy and 100 MW from natural gas. Initially expected to start up in Dec. 2010, its activation has been postponed several times. The Jan. 25 uprising further stalled the launch.

"Foreign partners on the project left and we couldn't continue", says Khaled Fekry, director of research and development at the New and Renewable Energy Authority (NREA), a government body. German companies Ferrostaal and Flagsol, a subsidiary of Solar Millenium, provided the technology.

Currently, Kuraymat is in the final stage of commissioning, with tests being carried out. Fekry hopes it will be

ready at the end of June.

A second 100 MW plant in Kom Ombo was announced last July and should be completed in 2017. Fekry lists other projects: "We aim to develop a 200 MW plant for cement factories and a 1,000 MW plant for the private sector. "

This is all very ambitious but ties in with Egypt's plan of producing 20 percent of energy output from renewable sources by 2020. Solar energy will provide a third, or 7,200 MW, of that percentage. Fekry is confident it can be achieved.

While large-scale projects won't have a direct effect on Egyptians just yet, a joint undertaking by NREA and the Italian ministry of environment has changed the lives of villagers living deep in the Western Desert. The villages of Ain Zahra and Umm al Saghir, not connected to the national energy grid, have had their homes, schools, mosques and hospitals electrified with photovoltaic (PV) solar energy since Dec. 2010.

NREA engineers have remained on site, providing training to the villagers. Six months in, Fekry reports, there have been no complaints.

But Mohab Hallouda, senior energy specialist at the World Bank's Egypt office, explains that, although PV energy is suitable for outlying areas, "the price must decline to be a viable alternative to electricity from the grid".

Away from the bureaucracy of government-led proposals, a simple concept, Solar CITIES, is empowering residents of local communities. Darb el Ahmar and Manshiet Nasser are two of Cairo's poorest areas. Crumbling buildings are built close together, lining narrow streets and jostling with animal, vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Many residents cannot afford heating appliances and boil water on kerosene stoves. Winter is a hazardous time with frequent burn injuries being reported.

Mustafa Hussein, a Darb el Ahmar resident, is a founding participant of Solar CITIES. He became convinced of the usefulness of the technology after meeting Thomas Culhane, Solar CITIES founder, who sketched him a prototype of a solar panel and heater. The system was built; 25,000 dollars in funding was obtained from the U.S. Agency for International Development; and 35 units installed.

Amm Hassain, 70 years old, was one of the first residents to agree to the installation of the unit on his building's rooftop. No longer does his family have to laboriously boil water for a bath, risking potential injury.

The unit provides 200 lt of hot water per day, which can serve up to 10 family members comfortably, and 200 lt of rooftop coldwater storage to help them get through the many days when water is cut in the community.

Mustafa Hussein feels projects like these have more value: "The government plans are removed from us. Here we involve the community directly. I live here, I know this place, I know how to connect with people."

But, unless more funding is received, Solar CITIES may not grow. With the average annual income in these areas being 610 dollars, the 678 dollar unit is unaffordable for most.

Hussein feels people will realise the importance of turning to solar energy within a few years. "We'll experience more power cuts. Last summer there was a scarcity of gas tanks and people died fighting for them."

Fekry wants Egypt to follow the Tunisian model: "The government subsidised solar water heaters, and provided them on credit with low interest rates," he explains.

But, with an unequal playing field, a paradigm shift toward renewable energy seems unlikely. Even with gas subsidies in Egypt being phased out, fossil energy remains cheap, while a lack of competition won't reduce the cost of solar energy.

Kuraymat cost 360 million dollars and the Kom Ombo plant's cost is estimated at 270 million dollars. The Egyptian government plans to spend 100-120 billion dollars to triple capacity by 2027.

Fekry points to taxes on imported solar components as the culprit contributing to the high cost of solar energy. He also believes that, "we can only expand if we have finance. Foreign investors should direct funds to Egypt now, and not wait until the country is stable. "

THIRTEEN) – BURKINA FASO LOSING THOUSANDS OF HECTARES OF FORESTS EACH YEAR

The Burkina Faso authorities have sounded the alarm over the increased rate of degradation of forests in this Sahelian country.

According to a study by the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, some 110,550 hectares of forest are destroyed each year, just over four percent of the country's total wooded area – around three-quarters of this annual loss linked to farming. The data covers forest loss between 1992 and 2002, but the trend continues, according to the ministry.

The environment ministry's study shows that in the eastern region of Kompienga, the destruction of wooded areas averaged 1,600 square kilometres over each of the past 15 years. In Poni and Nounbiel, in the south-west, savannah forests have lost 60 percent of their area, giving way to scrublands.

"The contributing factors are decreased rainfall, bush fires, the demand for wood and non-wood products, and clearing of forest in order to have larger harvests," said Soumaila Bancé, the country coordinator for the Convention on Biodiversity at the National Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development.

"We have an increase in demand which exceeds supply. The population is growing and the resources are no longer sufficient to feed it. The area that we have restored is not enough to cover the demand," said Bancé. The growth rate of the Burkinabé population is 3.1 percent, according to the most recent census, in 2006.

But poverty is also a factor, pushing unemployed youth to go after resources which do not belong to anyone/public-common resources. They cut green wood without waiting for it to reach maturity, said Bancé. "They're gathering immature fruit; only when the fruit is allowed to ripen, is there the chance of regeneration because the seeds of ripe fruit can germinate and grow up to replace the big trees," said Bancé.

The International Union of Concerned Scientists is extremely concerned by the accelerated degradation of forests in Burkina Faso, which also affects the soil. The IUCN says that between 1992 and 2009, the centre-west of the country saw an extremely elevated rate of deforestation for agriculture, which estimates the area lost to cultivation at 40 percent.

Overall, there was an acceleration of degradation beginning in the 1990s, according to an IUCN study published in May 2011. Between 1982 and 1990, the union put losses at around 11 percent per year, but in the past decade, the area degraded reached 43 percent.

"There are a number of threats which threaten the biological diversity of our country due to the accelerated degradation of forests," said Mouni Sawadogo, head of the IUCN programme in Burkina Faso.

The degradation of forests threatens the existence of more than sixty plant species. The red list of the IUCN shows that there are also animal species threatened with extinction, and in some lakes, stocks of some fish species are only a twentieth what they were 30 years ago.

According to Bancé, the baobab, kapok and wild plum trees are among the plant species threatened with disappearance.

"There is a awareness, but the lack of financing means there's no follow-up, and the forest code is not applied/enforced," says Sawadogo.

"If we want to restore biodiversity and slow the destructive action in the forests, we must continue with reforestation," says Sina Sere, the director general of the National Centre for Forest Seeds. Each year, ten million seedlings are planted in the framework of reforestation campaigns, but very few survive for lack of care. A strategic plan for 2010-2020, adopted in Nagoya, Japan, calls on each country to restore at least 15 percent of its degraded zones each year between now and 2015.

According to the IUCN, forests currently produce a sixth of world emission of carbon when they are logged, overexploited or degraded.

In contrast, stresses the IUCN report, forests react sensitively to climate change when they are managed sustainably. They produce wood for fuel, which can favourably replace fossil fuels. And they also have the potential to absorb a tenth of the expected world carbon emissions for the first half of this century in their biomass and store it permanently.

"We must involve people in the management of forests because they have a real capacity to respond. It is here that innovative smallholders or conservation actions can succeed; we have to learn from their experience, and combine this with research findings and make this available so we can reproduce what has already worked," insists Sawadogo. "This will allow [us] to maintain biodiversity on the ground, and also allow people to live in this way."

"For the preservation/conservation of natural resources - the sustainable use of natural resources – social and economic components must be integrated in the process of conservation," adds Sawadogo. Principles of good governance must be respected at all levels of natural resources, he says.

FOURTEEN) – DR CONGO: PUBLISH ALL MINING, OIL AND FOREST CONTRACTS

Civil society and the government are agreed: the Democratic Republic of Congo must make public the details of all mining, forestry and oil contracts.

Martin Kabwelulu, the DRC's minister for mines and petroleum, said that the country's prime minister, Adolphe Muzito, imposed this requirement in a May 20 decree that sets out an obligation to publish all contracts dealing with concessions to exploit Congo's natural resources.

"This obligation is also found in the international agreements reached by the Congolese government with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank with the aim of cleaning up management of natural resources and the revenue they produce", according to the strategic policy document of the Ministry of

Mines and Petroleum.

"The publication of contracts and of resources comes from the obligation for transparency and sound management of resources in a general context of improving the macroeconomic framework of the country, supported by various development partners," says Michel Nieuikuma, a lawyer and expert in the mining sector at the think tank "DRC Green", based in the capital, Kinshasa.

The decision to make contracts public was welcomed by Congolese civil society which has however criticised the reluctance of the government to publish details of all agreements as well as the revenue they generate.

"In terms of publication, more than 50 mining contracts remain in the shadows. Among these is the Sicomines agreement and the amendments signed in 2009, as well as many other oil contracts on Lake Graben," said Elisabeth Caesens, head of the Mining Governance Project of the Jimmy Carter Centre, which specialises in mining issues in DRC and is based in the copper-producing area of Lubumbashi, in the southeastern province of Katanga.

"There is also the Sino-Congolese agreement exchanging infrastructure for minerals, which was signed in 2008 with a value of nine billion dollars, then renegotiated to six billion in 2009 under pressure from the IMF," she said.

In a press release published on Jun. 1, the non-governmental organisation Action Against Impunity on Human Rights (known by its French acronym, ACiDH), said that "even the reports on revenue from these contracts published so far are incomplete and hide certain payments made by investors, including the deposits ["pas de portes"] and royalties coming from the renegotiation of certain mining contracts."

Kabwelulu told that in line with the agreement with the World Bank, the prime minister's decree requires contracts be made public within 60 days of their approval.

But Gaulois Maheshe, a geologist and mining agent, said the government must do better than restate its obligations. "It must carry them out. At this point, notwithstanding the publication of some mining contracts, the government has still not carried out its commitment to publish the rest of the contracts nor the details of concessions being exploited, much less, the revenue that they are generating."

Opposition member of parliament Jean Claude Mvuemba is also critical. "Elsewhere, the government has agreed with the World Bank pass legislation to make such publication a permanent feature, but nothing has yet been put before parliament other than various decrees of which only the one signed in May 2011 was issued by the prime minister."

ACiDH recommends that the government go beyond the prime minister's directive and enshrine, in law, the obligation to publish the receipts from natural resources on a quarterly basis.

The Jimmy Carter Center says that there has been some positive progress on transparency in the resource extraction sector, demonstrating a will to improve, but it hopes that the government will engage more strongly.

"In particular, it remains to encourage the retroactive application of the decree, meaning to to publish contracts that are already in force, signed before the adoption of the prime ministers decree, the bulk of which have not been published," said Caesens.

FIFTEEN) – KENYA: EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH MICRO-FINANCE CREDIT

Without a college education and against the backdrop of limited job opportunities, it was not easy for Salome Wairimu to find employment.

Each day ushered in more worries and uncertainties, sometimes she would have work but often days would go by before she had an opportunity to make money.

The single mother of two from Kiambu County, in Central Kenya, led a financially uncertain life before the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) provided her with an opportunity that transformed her financial situation. Official government statistics show an estimated 40 percent of Kenyans are unemployed. Millions survive by doing occasional work – non-permanent manual work.

The situation is worse for women in rural areas. High numbers of rural women are illiterate and at least 70 percent work as small-scale farmers, providing the bulk of Kenya's food supply. Their wages are dismally low and often uncertain.

Wairimu, who also lives in a rural area, also faced an uncertain future. She completed high school with a grade that allowed her entrance to college but her peasant parents could not afford the fees. So she began

plaiting women's hair to earn money.

"While in high school I would plait my schoolmates' hair for a few coins. On completing school and with no employment and even worse, no capital, I couldn't set up a salon," Wairimu explains.

For six years she worked from her home. But it was not a regular business and she had difficulty attracting new customers.

"It was very frustrating because why would they come to my house instead of going to the salon where there are facilities to wash and dry their hair before braiding? I needed a work station and equipment to diversify my services."

In 2007 Wairimu attended a women's group meeting and learnt about government's drive to empower women economically through the WEF.

Women could apply for loans that would be repaid in instalments over a predetermined period. And after they successfully completed paying the first loan, women would be eligible for a second and even a third loan of greater amounts.

"I was not very excited then because there were all these rumours about this initiative being a government ploy to woo women voters. But I continued attending the meetings and I was convinced that it was a good idea. They required no collateral, so it was very enticing."

Together with nine other women, Wairimu formed a group to access the money, one of the Fund's requirements. Each woman had their own business venture but received about 600 dollars each. They paid the loan back within the first year and qualified for a second loan of the same amount.

"Being from the rural area, it meant that I could afford to rent a commercial room in town and pay rent for the first three months, including the deposit," Wairimu says.

She adds that it was something she could not have done without the loan. "With a strategic place to attract customers, I began expanding my client base. With the profit I made, including what little was left from the loan, I bought equipment to diversify my services."

Wairimu's group is only one of the 3, 913 groups that received loans since the inception WEF. She has now managed to change her family's circumstances from being poor, to comfortably middle-class.

Fernando Matos Rosa

Brussels

