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ONE) - EU LAUNCHES FRESH BID TO RESCUE DOHA TRADE TALKS

The European Union launched a bid to rescue stalled global free trade talks on Thursday with a compromise proposal on the main sticking point -- industrial tariffs. The plan, a copy of which was obtained by Reuters on the eve of a key meeting of [WTO](#) members, aims to find some middle ground between the United States and major emerging economies, especially China. Using the technical language and complex formulae of global trade, the two-and-a-half page plan focuses on tariffs for chemicals, machinery and electronics and seeks an approach that is tailored for each sector. "Negotiations on sectoral tariff liberalisation are at this moment the biggest obstacle to an agreement in the Doha Round," the proposal said in a reference to the 10-year-old set of negotiations named after the Qatari capital where they began. The Doha talks are the disarmament negotiations of the commercial world -aiming to keep at bay the self-defeating spiral of tariffs, subsidies and quotas that can choke trade and, economists say, global prosperity. U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk, speaking in Washington, said countries should give another push to finish the negotiations despite wide differences that have raised fears that the round is dead. Traditionally, "sectoral" negotiations on industrial tariffs have aimed for a finishing point where no country charges any tariffs at all. Under existing Doha proposals, developed countries like the United States are expected to deliver zero tariffs, while developing countries reduce tariffs under an agreed formula. The United States argues that some developing countries, especially China, should do more, because in the decade since the talks began their exporting power has grown significantly. China says that Doha -officially called the Doha Development Round- was put together with just such growth in mind. **TAKING THE MIDDLE GROUND** The EU has tended to sit between the two, though its interests are closely aligned to those of the United States. The EU proposal would add a negotiated "X" factor to developing country tariffs cuts in some product areas in a bid to shift the balance some way towards the U.S. position, while keeping a certain level of protection for developing countries. In others - electronics and electrical machinery for example- where developing countries dominate the export market, some developing countries would be expected to eliminate tariffs completely. "Modalities and product baskets cannot be the same for all sectors as trading interests and conditions differ per sector, but arrangements should not be overcomplicated. The simpler the modality, the higher the chance of success," the EU proposal said. The EU's plan was circulated among trade missions on Thursday and presented to an informal meeting of representative nations called to prepare for Friday's Trade Negotiations Committee session which oversees Doha discussions. An EU official declined to comment. (Reuters)

TWO) – THE TEXT OF THE EU PROPOSAL FOR DOHA ROUND: NON-PAPER: A COMPROMISE ON SECTORALS?

Introduction Negotiations on sectoral tariff liberalisation are at this moment the biggest obstacle to an Agreement in the Doha Round. Negotiations on sectorals are a mandated part of the Doha undertaking. "Tariff elimination" was part of the initial Doha mandate. The Hong Kong declaration confirmed sectorals would be part of the package, but also specified they would be voluntary in nature, or "non-mandatory". At the same time, all proposals specify that sectorals will only come into force when countries representing a "critical mass" of trade are willing to participate. The reason for the critical mass provision is the legitimate wish to avoid "free riders", countries which do not participate in the sectoral arrangement, but benefit from the tariff reductions. The critical mass is usually defined as 90% of trade, although certain sectorals have come into force with a smaller share of trade covered, at least initially. However, the concept of voluntary participation combined with the critical mass concept has led to a situation of blockage in the Round. In practice, no sectoral can come into force without the participation of major world traders, such as EU, US, China and Japan, but also need the participation of a number of other Members, developed and developing, in order to reach the threshold. So far no sectoral proposal has gathered enough support to come into force, with even the more successful proposals stuck at around 60 percent of world trade. Considerations The product basket approach has been presented as an attempt to bring the parties together, but there have been no concrete proposals by Members as to how to fill the baskets. The sectoral negotiations have focussed so far mostly on tariff elimination, or 0/0, which has been the traditional approach in sectoral agreements, including those that came from the Uruguay Round. However, these sectorals were much smaller in scope. For instance the pharmaceutical arrangement covers only one chapter out of chemicals chapters 28-39. Sectorals in machinery were so far limited to construction and agricultural machinery only. Even the largest (and most successful) sectoral agreement, the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) is only a limited subsector of the electronics and electrical machinery sectoral which has been proposed in the Doha Round. Also, changes in world trade patterns have shifted

trade flows significantly in the favour of developing and emerging countries, which now cover the majority of world trade. Some of the major emerging countries whose participation is now required for sectorals have significantly higher bound and applied tariffs than the traditional trading powers, such as the EU, US and Japan. Therefore, participation of these countries in a purely 0/0 arrangement would require steeper tariff reductions, and thus be challenging. At the same time, in those sectors where developing countries now cover the large majority of world trade, developed countries can hardly be expected to lower tariffs to 0 without reciprocity from their main competitors. Another aspect of sectorals is preference erosion. Specific provisions in the agreement have been designed to soften the impact of erosion of preference margins for some of the poorest WTO members. Studies by the Secretariat show that most of the lines most sensitive to preference erosion are in fish and clothing. Tariff elimination in these sectors would undermine the benefits of the preference erosion provisions in the NAMA-text. General principles A compromise on sectorals would have to take all of these factors into account. Sectoral liberalisation has to be substantial, but realistic and negotiable. If a compromise is to stand a chance of success, participating countries should accept the following guiding principles: * Recognising the principle of Special & Differential Treatment, developing countries should be allowed to exercise their rights to take flexibilities, as provided for in the par. 7 of the NAMA-text, also in sectorals. * Modalities and product baskets cannot be the same for all sectors, as trading interests and conditions differ per sector, but arrangements should not be overcomplicated. The simpler the modality, the higher the chance of success. * All major traders should participate in a sectoral, but contributions can be different and depend on a Member's level of development, export performance and tariff levels in a sector. * Sectors where preference erosion is particularly strong for LDC's and other groups of countries benefitting from preferences should be avoided, as tariff elimination would worsen the erosion of preference margins. A possible compromise The core of a compromise on sectorals will have to consist of the three biggest, commercially most important sectors: chemicals, machinery and electronics. The following modalities are proposed for these sectors: Chemicals and Machinery (a combination of 0/0 and 0/X): developed countries move to 0 across the board. Developing countries are also expected to participate in a 0 basket for some products, in particular where sectoral arrangements are already in place (for machinery: construction and agricultural machinery). A 0/0 basket in chemicals could cover at least the existing 0/0 arrangement (pharmaceuticals). For other products, Developing countries would have access to additional Special & Differential Treatment by applying X, where X = the result following the application of the Swiss formula cut plus a further reduction of a fixed percentage point. This modality takes into account the fact that tariff levels are generally already lower in developed countries than in developing ones. It also recognises that to fully eliminate tariffs, Members with relatively high protection after the application of the Swiss formula would have to do a very large effort. X for developing members would be calibrated in a way that delivers significant liberalisation, proportionate tariff reductions and efforts commensurate with those of developed members. The contribution of developing countries will be equivalent, but not the same; end rates would be different, depending on the base level after formula. For chemicals tariff reductions should lead at least to the existing Chemicals Tariff Harmonisation Agreement (CTHA) levels for all developing country participants. Those developing Members already applying the levels of the CTHA should reduce their tariffs by the Swiss formula cut plus a fixed percentage point cut, with new end rates ending up between the CTHA levels and 0. Electronics & electrical machinery (0/0): in this sector the overwhelming majority of world exports come from developing countries. Therefore it seems reasonable to expect that those developing countries with a strong export performance in the sector join the effort of developed countries and eliminate tariffs in the sector. This also corresponds to current practice in the ITA, which covers a large number of products in this sector. However, recognising the sensitivities in the audiovisual sector in several Members, the audiovisual sector should be excluded from the sectoral. Other sectors could also be considered, but progress would first have to be made on the three biggest sectors. For all other sectors, more limited in scope and coverage, and more similar to the original sectorals from the Uruguay Round, the only meaningful modality would be 0/0.

THREE) – IMF TO SEND MORE OFFICIALS ABROAD

Le [Fonds monétaire international](#) a adopté jeudi un [budget de moyen terme](#) prévoyant une plus grande présence de ses fonctionnaires dans le monde, un net changement d'orientation par rapport à ses projets adoptés avant la crise économique mondiale. Le budget approuvé par le conseil d'administration pour la période de mai 2012 à avril 2014 confirme la pratique qui a été celle du FMI depuis 2009, à savoir augmenter le nombre de ses représentants dans les capitales du monde. En présentant le projet de budget le 30 mars à Washington, le directeur général de l'institution, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, avait plaidé pour "une expansion des postes à l'étranger, qui représente une inversion partielle de la réduction des effectifs à l'étranger

convenue dans le cadre de la restructuration de 2008". Il y a trois ans, face à la baisse de la demande de prêts qui rendait son budget déficitaire, le FMI avait lancé un plan de restructuration axé entre autres sur la réduction de sa masse salariale. Or, a constaté M. Strauss-Kahn, "le nombre de programmes et d'accords financiers en cours est actuellement de 60, soit environ un tiers des Etats membres du Fonds, et près du double du niveau de la fin 2007". Le FMI a souligné que ses fonctionnaires passaient de plus en plus de temps en déplacement, "ce qui traduit en partie une augmentation du nombre de programmes, mais aussi d'un travail supplémentaire dans des pays en surveillance accrue, en particulier européens". Le budget du FMI a été fixé à 985 millions de dollars pour l'exercice 2012 (mai 2011-avril 2012), 1,004 milliard pour l'exercice 2013, et 1,010 milliard pour l'exercice 2014. Il comprend une rénovation d'un des deux bâtiments du siège à Washington, vieux d'une quarantaine d'années, et d'un hôtel réservé aux invités du FMI et de la Banque mondiale, pour 162 millions de dollars. (AFP)

FOUR) - U.S. CAPITALISTS HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH CHINA

The American blogosphere lit up this week with discussion of a report from the International Monetary Fund that, by some measures, the Chinese economy will be bigger than the U.S. economy by 2016. It makes a great headline, but that story was, of course, old news: Given China's size, and the speed with which it is growing, simple arithmetic tells you that its economy will one day be bigger than that of the United States. The only question is precisely when. The bigger surprise is the huge affection U.S. capitalists have for Communist China. "I would say that today when I go to China, I find more people in government who are interested in learning about the things that private equity can do to help an economy and help companies than you often do in Washington," [David Rubenstein](#), co-founder and managing director of the [Carlyle Group](#), one of the world's largest private equity firms, said when I (Chrystia Freeland) interviewed him at a Thomson Reuters conference this week. "Washington, for a number of reasons, is not as focused on the joys of private equity," Mr. Rubenstein explained, with a wry smile. "So very often, you have to defend yourself when you're talking to a member of Congress." By contrast, Mr. Rubenstein said, he gets a warm reception in the People's Republic: "What they really think is that private equity firms have shown in the West that they know how to make companies more efficient, that they know how to make workers more efficient and managers more efficient and how to make companies more productive. And that's something they want." The ironic result, Mr. Rubenstein said, is this: "I've often thought that if Mao Zedong and Richard Nixon came back from the dead, they wouldn't recognize their respective capitals because one has become very capitalist and one is less capitalist." **BETTER PLACE TO DO BUSINESS** Mr. Rubenstein has a terrific turn of phrase, but the content of his remarks is conventional wisdom among U.S. businessmen today. In Mr. Rubenstein's world, it is a truth universally acknowledged that China, with its censorship, central plan and one-party state, is a better place to do business than the United States. In fact, this has become such a familiar refrain that it is easy to lose sight of what a radical assertion it is. We used to think that capitalism and democracy went together: That was the premise behind much of the U.S.-led global nation-building effort of the past two decades. But it has now become commonplace to hear the United States' most successful businessmen assert that the world's great power that most explicitly rejects democracy -China- is also the most business-friendly. This embrace of Chinese communism by U.S. capitalists is a very big deal. But it shouldn't be entirely surprising. The best businessmen -and Mr. Rubenstein is very, very good- are pragmatists. Deng Xiaoping famously said it didn't matter whether a cat was black or white so long as it caught mice. Smart businessmen are likewise pretty indifferent to a regime's ideology (and indeed its treatment of dissidents and journalists and other such niceties) as long as their deals can get done and their tax rates are lenient. Judged on those terms, so long as you have a skill or a technology that the comrades have decided China needs, their authoritarian system can be welcoming indeed and free of many of the delays and frustrations getting things done in a democracy can entail. It is easy to equate that effectiveness of execution with good government. But fans of authoritarian regimes, including well-run ones like China, should never forget the agency problem that is their big structural flaw: For their systems to work, dictators need not only be smart; they must also act in the interests of the state, not of themselves. But it doesn't always work out that way. Autocrats have long liked to assert that l'etat, c'est moi -but often, even when dictators are clever and benign, there is an insuperable divergence of interests. That is important to remember when it comes to China. **EXPLAINING THE LOW YUAN** Indeed, George Soros, the legendary fund manager, recently made the provocative argument that one of China's most contentious policies -its undervalued currency- is such a fraught issue because it is wrapped up in the self-interest of its mandarins. Speaking at a conference a few weeks ago, Mr. Soros argued that the undervalued currency was "a form of transferring purchasing power -wealth- from the citizens to the government without imposing taxation. It was an involuntary transfer without the negative effects of taxation, and this made the

central government very powerful, attracted the best talents and held the best talents in the government or associated with the government because it was also a way of becoming wealthy." The problem, Mr. Soros contended, was that today the national interest would be served by allowing the currency to appreciate -but the officials whose job it is to make that call are loath to give up the personal benefits of an undervalued exchange rate. "While the positive development would be for a gradual relaxation" of the exchange rate, he said, "there is great resistance somewhere in the government mechanism to relax this system, which serves the interest of those in power very well." As we prepare for a world in which China is the largest economy, we should be on the lookout for moments like this, when the interests of the state and of its mandarins don't coincide. And it might be worth remembering that democracy, for all its quarrelsome inefficiencies, has the great virtue of making the conflicts of interest between the state's servants and the state itself transparent, and making it easy to kick the bums out when those conflicts become acute. (Reuters)

FIVE) – MARRAKESH TERRORIST ATTACK SET TO HIT MOROCCO'S FRAGILE ECONOMY

A bomb attack on a busy tourist cafe in the Moroccan city of Marrakesh on Thursday killed 15 people, most of them foreigners, and struck right at the heart of the North African country's economy. The bombing bore the hallmarks of Islamist militants who have been trying unsuccessfully to stage a big attack in Morocco since 2003, when they killed more than 45 people in simultaneous suicide attacks in the commercial capital, Casablanca. Bombing a cafe in Marrakesh is easier than going after much better-protected government or police targets. Yet it will have a massive economic impact: the Jamaa el-Fnaa square where the blast happened is perhaps the best-known tourist spot in Morocco. "The bombing was intended to cause maximum casualties and was explicitly an attack on tourism," said Henry Wilkinson, senior analyst at Janusian security consultancy. Geoff Porter of North Africa Risk Consulting said the likely downturn in tourist numbers as a result of the attack would have dire consequences for the Moroccan economy. Tourism is Morocco's second biggest employer after agriculture. "Tourism ... is fickle and tourists flee at the slightest possibility of violence," he said. "The loss of tourist revenue will spell economic trouble for the monarchy, which is already experiencing widening budget deficits because of high oil and food prices **WHY NOW?** The attack happened at a time when Morocco's authorities are struggling to prevent the wave of uprisings elsewhere in the Arab world from reaching its towns and cities. There have been nationwide protests -some of which turned violent- and more big demonstrations are planned for Sunday. Morocco's ruler, King Mohammed, has promised constitutional reform but some Moroccans say that is not enough. Islamist militants have seen their message of global jihad eclipsed by the overwhelmingly secular Arab uprisings, and it is unlikely the Marrakesh attack has any ideological connection to the protest movements. It is however, possible that the Moroccan government's preoccupation with the protests created an opportunity for the extremists. "AQIM -- or a new or related group ... -- might find operating easier now that the government is distracted with protests about greater unrest," said Stratfor. There is a potential side-effect for the protest organisers. There were already signs on Thursday they feared their movement could be caught up in a security crackdown in the wake of the attack. A group of about 250 jobless graduates marched through the centre of the capital Rabat, soon after the blast was reported, chanting: "We will not be intimidated by terrorism!" and "We will not be intimidated by a police state!" **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?** Past experience suggests the Moroccan authorities will mount an intensive security crackdown which will disrupt attempts to carry out more bombings -- at least for a while. After the Casablanca attacks, hundreds of suspected Islamists were arrested, prompting allegations from some rights groups that the arrests were indiscriminate. "The Moroccan police are ubiquitous and their public profile will be more conspicuous. The police also operate without many of the constraints that structure counter-terrorism investigations in Europe and the US," said Porter. "Consequently, it is expected that the government will claim to have identified and captured individuals associated with the cell in the coming weeks if not days. In the long term, Morocco is not likely to become a hotbed of terrorist activity." (Reuters)

SIX) – CHINA PUTS ITS MARK ON MALAWI

Driving through Malawi's capital, Lilongwe, it is difficult to miss the imposing building under construction in the city centre. It's the country's first five-star hotel, 90 million dollars worth of well-appointed rooms, a state-of-the-art conference centre and 14 opulent presidential suites. The hotel is being built by the Shanghai Construction Company, a Chinese firm, and is one of numerous

projects funded in line with a pledge of 260 million dollars of concessionary loans, grant and aid from China to Malawi to support development, including infrastructure.

At a ceremony marking the completion of the main building and conference centre, China's ambassador to Malawi, Pan Hejun, said he expects the whole project will be completed by the end of the year. "This will attract more and more foreign tourists to Malawi and enable Malawi to host international conferences such as the AU Summit," said Hejun.

Chinese construction companies have been busy in Malawi. Parliament now operates from a grand new building which was opened in June 2010. That project cost around 41 million dollars.

And this month Ambassador Hejun announced China will assist the Malawi government to construct a university of science and technology in the southern district of Thyolo, which, he said, will be ready in just under two years.

"The university, which will accommodate more than 3,000 students with advanced facilities, will be one of the best universities in southeastern Africa, and will make great contributions to the national development of Malawi," said Hejun.

Relations growing steadily

Chinese construction companies are also building a secondary school in Thyolo, and a 100-kilometre road between the northern districts of Karonga and Chitipa. The Asian nation has also promised to build a China-Africa Friendship School in Lilongwe, establish solar and biogas pilot projects and set up an agricultural technology demonstration centre.

China's presence in Malawi has been growing steadily since the two countries established diplomatic ties in December 2007, Malawi abandoning its links to Taiwan after 41 years. A memorandum of understanding covering industry, trade and investment was signed between the two countries in May 2008, committing China to help in increasing the productive capacity of Malawi in tobacco, cotton, mining, forestry, fertiliser production and in processing hides and skins.

A 2010 report from Malawi's Ministry of Trade indicates that the value of trade between Malawi and China has doubled since 2007, reaching 100 million dollars in 2010, rapid growth, though still dwarfed by trade with South Africa, which accounts for just over 40 percent of Malawi's total trade volume of 3.2 billion dollars.

Malawi's president, Bingu wa Mutharika, has declared himself satisfied with his government's relations with China. In an April speech at the laying of foundations for the planned university of science and technology, Mutharika said the Chinese projects come with "no strings attached".

"The People's Republic of China has demonstrated that they are good friends of Malawi," said Mutharika.

Some problems

This year alone, Chinese nationals working in Malawi in construction or as traders have featured in a number of unwelcome headlines. In January, police at the international airport caught Zhang Xiang Quian trying to smuggle 3.5 kilogrammes of ivory bangles, curios and necklaces out of the country. The same day, Jennifer Li was arrested when she attempted to bribe police to release Zhang. The two - who both held senior positions with the Shanghai Construction Company - were fined and deported.

In February, the owner of the China Superscope Media Company, Ning Naixing, was apprehended at the airport with 1.5 kilogrammes of ivory. Police assert the ivory in both cases originates from elephants poached in Malawi. The Ministry of Tourism issued a statement on Feb. 11 warning against trafficking of ivory.

Chinese traders - who have established a firm foothold in the wholesale and retail sectors in Malawi - have also run afoul of the law. Businesswoman Yani Huang was arrested and fined for violating foreign exchange controls in November 2010, when she tried to leave the country with an undeclared \$18,350. A few months earlier, another Chinese national was arrested trying to take \$144,000 out of the country. Malawi is experiencing acute shortages of foreign exchange, leading to strict controls on the export of hard currency. This complicates life for Chinese traders who want to repatriate profits made in Malawi.

Local traders are also anxious over competition from the new arrivals. "Some are setting up small-scale businesses and competing with indigenous traders. They are making life difficult for us," Maddy Gawani, a trader who runs a clothes shop in Lilongwe, told IPS. She said there are big Chinese-owned wholesale shops in Lilongwe's Old Town, a cheap area of the capital city.

"Many items in the Chinese shops are cheap but not very durable. A lot of people now shop from the Chinese who bring in many things in bulk. We are not happy as local traders," said Gawani.

Relations between the new traders and their clients are sometimes tense as well. Last year, trader Chen Bo Wet was arrested in the lake district of Mangochi after he allegedly forced a woman he suspected of

stealing from his shop to undress in the presence of other customers. Nothing was found on the woman, and he was arrested following complaints.

Worst fears unrealised

When the memorandum of understanding on trade and investment was signed, local groups feared it would have a negative impact on the country.

At the time, Mavuto Bamusi, the network coordinator of the Human Rights Consultative Committee (HRCC), which promotes human rights, including economic rights, in Malawi, said the evidence was that Chinese investment had harmed the interest of poor nationals in some countries.

"We know that the Chinese usually bring in their own workers when they invest in poor countries and that they have been accused of dumping cheap goods on such countries' markets. Civil society will be quick to raise an alarm if such malpractices happen here," said Bamusi.

But the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions has been keeping a close eye on the situation. MCTU Secretary General Robert Mkwezalamba told that when they first arrived in the country, Chinese construction companies either paid their Malawian workers below the minimum wage or paid them in kind - in the form of clothing, bicycles, maize flour and sugar. In some cases, workers were not provided with protective gear. "They were paying the Malawi workers just about \$13 per month when the country's acceptable minimum wage is \$20. Some Chinese factories were locking up the workers [in their workplace] overnight," said Mkwezalamba.

But, he said, companies have responded to the MCTU's objections. "We have been asking them to change and they are accepting our demands," he said. "We are also happy that the construction companies are transferring advanced skills to local staff."

SEVEN) – DARFUR REBELS REJECT PEACE DEAL DRAFT

Le principal groupe rebelle du Darfour, région de l'ouest du Soudan, impliqué dans les pourparlers de paix de Doha, a indiqué jeudi qu'il rejetait "totalement" un projet d'accord de paix soumis par des médiateurs de l'ONU. "Nous avons reçu hier les documents des médiateurs (...) Mais nous sommes déçus dans la mesure où ils offrent moins que l'accord d'Abuja", a déclaré le porte-parole du Mouvement pour la justice et l'égalité (JEM), Gibril Adam, en référence à un accord de paix signé par le chef rebelle Minni Minnawi en 2006. Selon M. Adam, les solutions proposées dans ces documents sur le problème des réfugiés, la compensation aux habitants du Darfour affectés par huit ans de conflit, le partage du pouvoir et des richesses sont insuffisantes. "Pour toutes ces raisons, nous avons totalement rejeté ces documents", a déclaré par téléphone à l'AFP M. Adam, qui se trouvait à Doha. Le JEM, le plus militarisé des groupes rebelles du Darfour, participe aux côtés du Mouvement pour la libération et la justice (MJL), un groupe rebelle moins important, à des discussions de paix avec le gouvernement soudanais dans la capitale qatarie. Djibril Bassole, négociateur en chef sortant de l'ONU et de l'Union africaine pour le Darfour, était sous pression pour soumettre un projet d'accord acceptable par les trois parties, Khartoum faisant état de sa frustration croissante face au manque de progrès. Mais les pourparlers sont difficiles, notamment depuis que Khartoum a annoncé de façon unilatérale la tenue d'un référendum sur le statut administratif de cette région, dont la date a été fixée au 1er juillet. La consultation électorale visera à déterminer si les Etats du Darfour se maintiennent comme aujourd'hui ou s'ils s'unissent, comme le réclament les rebelles, pour obtenir le statut de région et une plus grande autonomie, comme c'était le cas jusqu'en 1994. Des groupes rebelles avaient prévenu que procéder à une telle démarche unilatérale avant un accord politique risquait de torpiller le processus de paix de Doha. (AFP)

EIGHT) – WEST AFRICA: BUILDING A REGIONAL RESPONSE TO LOCUSTS

The period between May and August is when farmers in the West African Sahel fear the arrival of swarms of locusts. This year, efforts to limit the devastation will be strengthened by coordination across the region thanks to the Africa Project to Combat Locust Invasions.

The project is known by its French acronym, PALUCP, and includes Mali, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad. According to the World Bank representative in Senegal, Denis Jordy, the aim of the project is to prevent current and future locust invasions in these seven countries. With the technical expertise of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) Commission for Controlling the Desert Locusts, the project has halted the threat and better prepared teams in various

countries to prevent future invasions.

"The six billion CFA francs (about 13 million dollars) released by the World Bank for a period of four years will go towards strengthening institutional and technical capacity of the countries involved and it will consolidate the cooperative efforts between the countries for combating the locust problem," said Jordy.

"It's also necessary to give financial and material assistance to the communities who have been invaded [by the locusts]," stressed Jordy, inviting the West African countries to coordinate their efforts with the Maghreb countries, which also have experience in the battle against locusts.

Locust invasions threaten harvests of staple foods like millet and sorghum and cause significant damage to both crops and grazing land - and that's apart from the consequences for the environment, and human and animal health in these countries, notes Jérôme Ilboudo, from the agricultural institute of Burkina Faso.

"It's about transferring knowledge and experience and ensuring that the gains made are sustained, as well as sharing lessons learned within the PALUCP implementation framework," he told IPS. "In Burkina Faso, we have a method that involves us creeping up on locusts in the dead of night and killing them immediately.

Other countries do not do this. So we have shared our respective experiences."

The regional project against locusts depends heavily on the sharing of information and experiences in the fight against the locust threat; identifying strategies for managing the fight and establishing the basis for better collaboration between the various role-players and small-holder farmers.

The information exchange will involve awareness of the locust situation in each area. Technicians from the different countries must work cooperatively, particularly when the locusts cross borders.

At the regional level, there are plans to improve the stocking and management of pesticides in each country, as well as put protocols in place to allow one country could supply pesticides to another country whose stocks are depleted.

The agricultural minister from Senegal, Khadim Guèye, assured farmers that effective measures to deal with the locust threat have been taken in his country. "It's about predicting, anticipating and knowing where they are to prevent them from multiplying exponentially and then decimating them where they reproduce," said the minister.

"We have strengthened the national system for combating the problem and have improved our stock levels of pesticide with the construction of a warehouse that can hold 9,000 tonnes and the handling of empty pesticide containers," he said.

"A national management plan for the locust problem and the strengthening of the productive capacity of 12,040 agricultural households that are beneficiaries of donations of agricultural inputs and supplies in the period between harvests and the financing of 305 micro projects are all on track," said Guèye.

Smallholder farmers are sceptical. Ibrahima Diaw, a member of the rural council of Kaffrine in the centre of Senegal, they says the situation in the farmlands is catastrophic after locusts pass through, and more resources are required to overcome these voracious insects. "Their arrival is imminent and that is haunting us," he says, worried.

Participants in a PALUCP workshop that brought representatives of agriculture ministries and agricultural research services together in Dakar at the end of March, just ahead of the locust season, seemed sensitive to Diaw's concerns. They recommended the strengthening of civil society organisations to support better management of locust invasions. The organisations would be called on to raise popular awareness of the importance of efforts to fight the invasions.

The workshop attendees also recommended that the governments both restore the productive capacity of affected households with donations of agricultural inputs and food during the period between harvests, and finance microprojects.

NINE) – TUNISIA PROTESTS OVER LIBYAN INCURSION DURING CLASH

Tunisia strongly condemned incursions by Libyan forces during clashes with anti-Gaddafi rebels on Thursday and demanded that the Libyans put a stop to them. Forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi briefly entered Tunisia in pursuit of the rebels during fighting at a border post. Libyan artillery shells also struck the Tunisian side of the crossing. "Given the gravity of what has happened... the Tunisian authorities have informed the Libyans of their extreme indignation and demand measures to put an immediate stop to these violations," a statement from the foreign ministry said. (Reuters)

TEN) – SENEGAL: DISPUTE OVER FISHING PERMITS FOR FOREIGN FLEETS HOTS UP

Senegal's small-scale fishers are challenging the government over licences granting foreign trawlers permission to fish in Senegalese waters. The artisanal fishers condemn the "selling off" of the country's fishery resources at a time when stocks off Senegal's coast are severely depleted.

The protests have been led by GAIPES, the Senegalese Association of Fishing Companies and Ship Owners, which is demanding the Minister of Maritime Economy withdraw 22 licences they association says were granted in the first quarter of 2010. According to GAIPES, the foreign beneficiaries are Russian, Belizean, Mauritian, Ukrainian and Comorian trawlers.

"These boats are fishing under illegal protocols that have been signed by the minister of maritime economy without being recorded by the relevant technical government agencies," said Dougoutigui Coulibaly, secretary-general of GAIPES.

But the authorities accuse the group of conflating separate issues. "In 2010, we signed fishing agreements with six foreign fishing boats that were to catch pelagic, or migratory, fish that swim along the coast of Senegal, originating from Morocco and Mauritania. Once the contracts had expired, the boats left," explains Captain Matar Sambou, head of monitoring and control of fishing.

Sambou says an advisory committee at the ministry suspended several licences in December 2010 following GAIPES's complaints. But, since the members of this committee showed that signing the agreements would earn money for the country, the ministry was authorised to go ahead. "At the beginning of March 2011, we signed fishing agreements with 11 or 12 fishing boats for a two-month period," he says.

Senegal's fisheries

Fishing is one of Senegal's main economic activities, and is the livelihood of some 600,000 people - eight times more than the 75,000 in the civil service.. In 2009, fishing constituted 13 percent of Senegalese exports and 1.7 percent of GDP, according to the ministry of maritime economy.

Small-scale fishing in Senegal has become a mere subsistence fishery because the stocks are so depleted. "There aren't any more of the larger fish species, like carp and hake. Now, Senegalese people eat only small fish: sardines, jack mackerel, mackerel..." says Raoul Monsembula, from the environmental organisation Greenpeace Africa.

"The licences granted to these industrial fishing boats are going to lead to the disappearance of the country's fishing resource and as a result, the loss of income of 600,000 people," warns Amadou Chérif Diagne, a sociologist living in Gueth-Ndar, a fishermen's quarter in Saint-Louis, in the north of the country. The Greenpeace regional office in Dakar has lodged an appeal with the Senegalese government to revoke its decision to grant industrial licences, in order to put an end to what it describes as "the pillage" of the country's fish stocks.

But the authorities defend the permits. "Senegal has taken the sovereign decision to make use of a portion of its fishing resources so that the Treasury can benefit from it in the same way that neighbouring countries have," says the minister of maritime economy Khouraïchi Thiam.

"The Treasury can tax 35 dollars on each tonne fished by these foreign trawlers," he says, pointing out that Senegalese fishery officials board the trawlers to monitor the amounts that are caught.

"1.45 million Tonnes of pelagic fish cross from Mauritania, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and Gambia towards Senegal. If this stock isn't fished, it dies and that will be an enormous loss to the country," the minister told a private radio station on Mar. 29.

Fishers not satisfied

Sada Fall, secretary-general of the 15,000-strong National Collective of Small-scale Fishers (CNPA) threatens direct action if government won't listen. "If the government doesn't suspend these licences, we will go and find the trawlers and fight it out with them. We are going to chase them out of our waters at whatever price," he warns. The CNPA is based in Saint-Louis, where a government census counted 2,800 fishing dugouts.

Coulibaly, from GAIPES, adds: "We have a whole range of actions to roll out so the government withdraws these fishing licences. We are not ruling out the removal of the industrial and small-scale fleet from the waters and thus closing down the factories."

According to the Senegalese maritime code, "the maritime resources are part of the national patrimony. The state can authorise physical and moral persons of Senegalese or foreign nationality to fish in waters under Senegalese jurisdiction," said professor of law at the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Alassane Ndiaye.

According to Ndiaye, the maritime code stipulates that those seeking fishing licences must contact the

minister of maritime economy, who must take the advice of the advisory committee that grants the fishing licences. If this procedure has been respected, the fishing licences in question are legal," he says.

ELEVEN) – PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN ORIENTATIONS OF FRENCH COOPERATION FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS

Henri de Raincourt, French Minister of Cooperation, has released the framework document "Development Cooperation: a French Vision".

Four core objectives

France's cooperation strategy aims to meet the challenge of how to control globalization and guarantee the environmental balance of the planet over the long term by focusing on four core objectives: to promote sustainable and equitable growth for the most disadvantaged populations; to combat poverty and inequalities; to preserve global public goods; to guarantee global stability and the Rule of Law.

Innovative financing

France is seeking global solutions to these challenges and is now one of the only countries in the world to use not only traditional official development assistance tools, but also long-term financial instruments, as well as an increasing range of innovative financing.

This document presents a medium-term vision of the challenges, priorities and intervention methods for France's development cooperation. It aims to make France's development cooperation more understandable for French citizens, who contribute to it through the budget voted by Parliament, as well as for France's international partners with whom this policy will be conducted.

Broad consultation for its definition

The preparation of the framework document was supervised by a steering committee gathering the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, which led the work, as well as the Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industry, the Ministry of the Interior, Overseas France, Overseas Territories and Immigration and Agence française de développement (AFD).

It largely benefited from contributions from a consultative group including representatives from civil society (the business world, NGOs, social partners), the main relevant French public operators, decentralized cooperation, as well as researchers and qualified personalities.

The Parliament was also involved in this research work, and the relevant commissions actively contributed to its preparation.

TWELVE) – SUNSHINE AND SHADOW IN RWANDA'S RURAL HOUSING PROGRAMME

The gleam of new corrugated iron sheets shimmers through the blue-green haze that veils Rwanda's rural valleys and hillsides. It is a visible sign of Rwanda's metamorphosis from a nation devastated by genocide seventeen years ago to the fastest modernising state on the continent.

But are the shiny roofs the jewels on Africa's emerging bride, or the bling worn by a bully?

Most of the new houses are the result of a hugely ambitious plan to bring rural families, at present scattered across the countryside, together into villages called imidugudu, enabling the government to more easily provide electricity, water, schooling and security. But it is a smaller programme, the replacement of grass-thatched houses with more modern structures, which caught the attention of aid agencies when complaints emerged last year that the homes of the minority Batwa, former pygmy forest dwellers, were being

destroyed by the government.

The issue is complex, encapsulating many of the tensions haunting Rwanda as well as the strides it is making towards prosperity.

Evident progress

Apart from ubiquitous building activity, the extent of Rwanda's housing progress is most evident in the north-western town of Rubavu, formerly Gisenyi, on the border between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On the Rwandan side solid concrete and stone houses - many newly built or under construction - contrast with the squalid shacks of Goma, the sprawling, chaotic town some 200 metres away on the Congo side of the border.

In the capital Kigali, the tin or plastic-covered shacks so prevalent in developing cities are non-existent, despite an urbanisation rate of more than 6 percent per year in the city of 1.2 million people. The houses in Kigali's poorest areas are small and densely-packed, but they are solid, permanent structures.

About 80 percent of Rwanda's population of 11 million live in the rural areas, the most densely populated in Africa, where the houses are solid structures, the more sophisticated ones made of brick and roofed with rounded clay tiles, and the simpler ones of mud bricks with iron-sheet roofs.

Up until 2010, the poorest of the poor lived in grass-thatched mud-brick or wattle-and-daub huts known as nyakatsi. The last of these are being eradicated by the government campaign called Bye-Bye Nyakatsi with an efficiency for which Rwanda is increasingly becoming known.

The statistics roll off the tongues of the proud technocrats driving Rwanda's grand development plan, Vision 2020. James Musoni, the minister of local government whose department is in charge of the anti-thatch programme, says when Bye-Bye Nyakatsi was launched in December 2009, Rwanda had 120 000 families living in grass-thatched houses.

"As of end last month, we are remaining with 18 000 families still in those houses... in the next three or four months we should be done with that exercise," he says.

Kigali had 1,559 grass-thatched houses before the Bye-Bye Nyakatsi campaign started, says mayor Fidele Ndayisaba. So far, 1,093 houses have been built to replace them. By the end of April, the remaining families living in nyakatsi will be able to move into new houses.

Vexed question of thatch

Officials and politicians are somewhat less clear about the reasons for the removal of thatched roofs and their replacement with metal sheets if a family cannot be moved immediately into a "modern" house. Some mention the fire hazard, especially with mass electrification taking place in Rwanda, others point to the dangers of snakes and insects living in the roof, and the fact that maintaining a grass-thatch roof in rainy Rwanda drains the little resources available to those who live under these leaky canopies.

Generally, Rwandan policy makers seem to conflate the idea of living under thatch and the poverty of those who do. Replacing the thatch with metal sheets is therefore seen as an important step in upgrading their living conditions. As for the disadvantage of corrugated iron roofs - its lack of insulation - officials point out that rain is much more of a problem than temperature, which rarely leaves the range of between 15 and 25 degrees Celsius.

There is an argument that some government decisions are taken more for the sake of boosting the image of Rwanda as a modern society than in the interest of its people. A retired politician who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of being branded unpatriotic, points to a recent decision to ban bicycle taxis from the streets of Kigali, leaving hundreds of young men out of work. This, he says, was done merely to improve the image of Kigali.

The permanent secretary of finance, Kampeta Sayinzoga, counters by arguing that the decision was taken to bring down an unacceptably high number of accidents involving the bicycles.

It is highly probable that the Bye-Bye Nyakatsi programme was conceived as a genuine and necessary step to raise the poorest Rwandans out of indigence. It forms part of a comprehensive approach which includes a one-cow-per-family programme, the subsidising of fertiliser and seeds, indigent grants and educational support.

But the issue of show over substance at the level of elected district leaders seems to have caused the problems of the Bye-Bye Nyakatsi programme.

Ildephonse Niyomugabo of Coporwa, a Kigali-based organisation advocating the rights of the Batwa, says the nyakatsi dwellers welcome the replacement of the thatch with metal sheets, and would gladly move from their imidugudu into modern houses.

The problem is that the authorities removed the grass roofs - and in some cases destroyed entire homes - of 720 Batwa families without first providing alternative accommodation or iron sheets to replace the thatch. "It was catastrophic," says Niyomugabo. To date, about 100 families have been able to move into new homes. The rest are housed in dreadful temporary conditions while their houses are being constructed - sometimes six families in one house without windows or doors. Such overcrowding worsens the already bad health conditions of the Batwa, who suffer from high HIV infection rates and cholera, he says.

What cannot be said

Coporwa's efforts to raise the alarm about the demolitions throw an interesting light on the state of Rwandan public discourse. The organisation approached the state-owned daily newspaper, Rwanda Radio and the government television channel for coverage, but was rebuffed. A private station in Kigali, City Radio, gave them an airing, and the organisation commissioned its own documentary video to help persuade government officials of the harm caused by the campaign.

Faith Mbabazi of Rwanda Radio explains that her radio station did cover the story, but not through the prism of Coporwa, focussing only on the Batwa. Because the demolitions affected other Rwandans as well, the station covered the story inclusively without mentioning ethnicity.

This is in line with the extreme sensitivity around ethnic identity in the media and in politics, stemming from the 1994 genocide in which Hutu extremists, feelings stoked by years of racist "Hutu Power" hate speech spewed by Rwandan radio stations and newspapers, tried to exterminate the minority Tutsi population in a 100-day orgy of violence. Today, mass graves and scattered bones are still being discovered as Rwandans undertake their unprecedented building spree of roads, homes and agricultural terraces.

Against this background, the idea that the demolition of Batwa houses in the Bye-Bye Nyakatsi campaign could have anything to do with discrimination against them - a form of ethnic cleansing - is unthinkable.

But how could some of the district leaders get it so wrong? The answer to this question provides fascinating insight into how the Rwandan development miracle is being driven.

One element is the enormous pressure under which the country's 30 district leaders work. They sign a personal performance contract with Rwandan president Paul Kagame, who has a fearsome reputation as a leader who insists targets are met. Come election time, it is not the voters who kick out the underperforming district leaders, but the ruling party that persuades them to withdraw their candidature, says a senior Rwandan journalist at a state-owned newspaper.

At the same time a carrot of extra allocations for well-performing districts is dangled in front of them, so that the districts compete with one another to score the highest in meeting their development targets.

Musoni explains the "decentralisation" system which allows the national government's centrally-planned policies to be implemented in the remotest corners of the country: "You take elected (local) leaders, you take them for a seminar, you teach them, we show them the benefits, give them tools, kits, and they go back: you know that this is going to be done. They really do a great job."

The result is that local leaders often err on the side of zeal rather than care. The Batwa made homeless have not been forgotten, say the authorities.

Local government minister Musoni says: "It was a mistake committed by some local leaders (in the east and south of Rwanda). They didn't get the proper message. But I went out [in a] statement over the radio and warned them, and it immediately stopped. But there had been some families that have been really hurt."

Niyomugabo confirms that, as far as Coporwa knows, the premature demolitions have stopped. Musoni says that the local leaders were ordered to rent houses on behalf of the affected families, or help them to stay with family members.

THIRTEEN) – AFRICA STILL DEBATING GMOS' PROS AND CONS

Most African governments are still sceptical about genetically modified organism (GMO) crops as a result of concerns about food safety, the environment and the general public mistrust of multinationals that are often seen as manipulative and unscrupulous, food and agricultural experts say. "Polarisation and lack of awareness are still the biggest challenge," said Abisai Mafa, the chief executive of the National Biotechnology Authority. "People are not informed. Polarisation is the biggest constraint. People are still taking very polarised positions and that it is very dangerous." Mafa and other pro-GMO agricultural proponents at a seminar on agricultural trade and rural financial solutions held recently charged that

bickering over GMO issues had prolonged delays in developing and implementing national bio safety regulations and guidelines in most African countries. African governments are still sceptical about genetically modified organism (GMO) crops as a result of concerns about food safety, the environment and the general public mistrust of multinationals that are often seen as manipulative and unscrupulous, food and agricultural experts say. "Polarisation and lack of awareness are still the biggest challenge," said Abisai Mafa, the chief executive of the National Biotechnology Authority. "People are not informed. Polarisation is the biggest constraint. People are still taking very polarised positions and that it is very dangerous." Mafa and other pro-GMO agricultural proponents at a seminar on agricultural trade and rural financial solutions held recently charged that bickering over GMO issues had prolonged delays in developing and implementing national bio safety regulations and guidelines in most African countries (AllAfrica/The Herald)

FOURTEEN) - EAST AFRICA: EU OFFICIAL URGES EUROPE TO BOOST TIES WITH THE REGION

The head of the European Union Delegation to Tanzania, Ambassador Tim Clarke, has called upon European business community to tap the increasing trade and investment opportunities resulting from the East African regional integration. Speaking at a Business Networking meeting in Dar es Salaam this week, Ambassador Clarke said that given its geographic location Tanzania has potential to serve as a gateway to the East African region. He therefore urged European businesses to see to it that they fully utilise the opportunity for their benefit and that of the country and the EA region as a whole. "Implementation of the EAC Common Market, as it evolves, will bring increasing trade and investment opportunities for EU businesses," he said. The EU, with its member states, is not only the largest development partner of Tanzania, but EU companies also bring significant investment to Tanzania, Ambassador Clarke said. The Business Networking meeting, which aimed to provide a platform for European business representatives to meet and exchange views on challenges and opportunities of doing business in Tanzania, was organised by the EU Delegation and EU member States present in Tanzania. (AllAfrica/The Citizen)

FIFTEEN) – NETHERLANDS CALLS FOR MORE EFFECTIVENESS IN EU AID PROJECTS

The Netherlands wants the European Commission to [explain](#) some of the "misguided" development projects the European Union is funding, following the release of a report claiming that less than half of EU foreign aid goes to the world's poorest countries. The [report](#) by the U.K.-based think tank Open Europe says EU aid spending lacks a focus on poverty and is subject to unnecessary transaction and administration costs. The think tank says it also found evidence of poor project selection, citing EU's support for a €500,000 (\$728,333) dance training initiative in Burkina Faso. "This strikes me as totally unnecessary. And that's a shame, because EU development aid is very important, including for the Netherlands. And in fact, in the past ten years quality has been improving," Dutch Minister for European Affairs and International Cooperation Ben Knapen said, while urging for more effectiveness in EU aid projects. Knapen said the EU should focus more on energy, agriculture and infrastructure and spend far less on budget support, unless for governments that can be trusted to respect and uphold human rights.

SIXTEEN) - SADC: EPA NEGOTIATIONS ON BACKBURNER

Negotiations for a new economic partnership agreement (EPA) between SADC members and the European Union appear to have been shelved with no fixed date for resumption of the protracted trade negotiations. The Southern Times understands that talks between SADC countries and the EU for a new trade deal are on the backburner, with both parties shifting focus to pressing domestic economic and trade issues. The SADC and EU negotiating teams last met in November 2010 in Mozambique. Instead, the Southern Africa bloc seems more concerned with talks on coalescing SADC, the East African Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa into what has become known as the trilateral free trade area (T-FTA). The T-FTA brings together 26 countries with a combined gross domestic product of US\$624 billion and a population of approximately 700 million. The T-FTA is in line with continental

ambitions to deepen and widen integration and trade opportunities from Cape to Cairo. The EU is grappling with its sovereign debt crisis, which analysts say could spiral out of control. The European bloc also has to contend with a market squeeze induced by the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). Namibia's Finance Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila last month hinted that negotiations for a new trade deal with the EU could be concluded in July, something trade analysts say looks increasingly unrealistic. (Trade Law Centre for South Africa)

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