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ONE) - OPERATIONS OF PREFERENTIAL TRADE TO BECOME EASIER BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE PARTNERS OF THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

The Council of the EU has decided to launch the process of signing the regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin. This Convention is intended to overcome the difficulties in the management of the current network of some 60 bilateral protocols on rules of origin among the countries or territories of the pan-Euro-Mediterranean zone.

Friday 15 April 2011, the Council of the European Union adopted a decision authorising the signature of the regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin by the Commission on behalf of the European Union. The Convention will replace the current [pan-Euro-Mediterranean system of rules of origin](#) based on individual protocols applicable between two partner countries, with a single legal instrument in the form of a regional convention on preferential rules of origin.

The contracting parties to the Convention are the European Union, the Faroe Islands, the EFTA States, Turkey, the southern Mediterranean partners participating in the "Barcelona Process", and the Western Balkans.

On 24/25 March 2011 and in line with the 8th March Communication entitled a Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean, the European Council called for work to be rapidly taken forward to develop a new partnership with the region, founded on deeper economic integration, broader market access and closer political cooperation. It called, in particular, for rapid progress to be made on the proposals on pan-Euro-Mediterranean rules of origin.

The adoption of this decision last Friday by the Council of the EU follows up on the 8th March Communication entitled a Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean and the request from the Heads of Government and States at the recent 24-25 March European Council.

At the moment the EU has preferential trade agreements with several partners from the Southern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans. In order for a product to benefit from preferential duty rates, it must originate from one of the partners, meaning that in the course of production sufficient working or processing must be achieved in the originating country.

Cumulation of origin is a rule that allows using materials from other partners as if they were domestically produced. It facilitates economic activities and trade among partners of the zone. Rules of origin need to be regularly adapted to technological evolution, a process which will be greatly facilitated, or even made possible, in the framework of the Convention. Indeed, the Convention will help to overcome the current difficulties stemming from the fact that any change to the rules within the cumulation zone requires amendment of approximately 60 other bilateral agreements.

TWO) – EU-FUNDED BREAKTHROUGH IN MALARIA TREATMENT IN THE RUN UP TO WORLD MALARIA DAY

Ahead of World Malaria Day (25 April), EU-funded researchers have discovered that drugs originally designed to inhibit the growth of cancer cells can also kill the parasite that causes malaria. They believe this discovery could open up a new strategy for combating this deadly disease, which, according to [World Health Organisation statistics](#), infected around 225 million and killed nearly 800 000 people worldwide in 2009. Efforts to find a treatment have so far been hampered by the parasite's ability to quickly develop drug resistance. The research involved four projects funded by the EU (ANTIMAL, BIOMALPAR, MALSIG and EVIMALAR) and was led by laboratories in the UK, France and Switzerland with partners from Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden, along with many developing nations severely affected by malaria.

Cancer drugs to kill malaria parasite

Malaria is caused by a parasite called Plasmodium, which is transmitted via the bites of infected mosquitoes. In the human body, the parasites reproduce in the liver, and then infect and multiply in red blood cells. Joint research led by EU-funded laboratories at the Inserm-EPFL Joint Laboratory, Lausanne, (Switzerland/France), Wellcome Trust Centre for Molecular parasitology, University of Glasgow (Scotland), and Bern University (Switzerland) showed that, in order to proliferate, the malaria parasite depends upon a

signalling pathway present in the host's liver cells and in red blood cells. They demonstrated that the parasite hijacks the kinases (enzymes) that are active in human cells, to serve its own purposes. When the research team used cancer chemotherapy drugs called kinase inhibitors to treat red blood cells infected with malaria, the parasite was stopped in its tracks.

A new strategy opens up

Until now the malaria parasite has managed to avoid control by rapidly developing drug resistance through mutations and hiding from the immune system inside liver and red blood cells in the body of the host, where it proliferates. The discovery that the parasite needs to hijack some enzymes from the cell it lives in opens up a whole new strategy for fighting the disease. Instead of targeting the parasite itself, the idea is to make the host cell environment useless to it, by blocking the kinases in the cell. This strategy deprives the parasite of a major modus operandi for development of drug resistance.

Several kinase-inhibiting chemotherapy drugs are already used clinically in cancer therapy, and many more have already passed phase-I and phase II clinical trials. Even though these drugs have toxic side-effects, they are still being used over extended periods for cancer treatment. In the case of malaria, which would require a shorter treatment period, the problem of toxicity would be less acute. Researchers are proposing therefore that these drugs should be evaluated immediately for anti-malarial properties, drastically reducing the time and cost required to put this new malaria-fighting strategy into practice.

The next steps will include mobilising public and industrial partners to verify the efficacy of kinase inhibitors in malaria patients and to adjust the dose through clinical trials, before the new treatments can be authorised and made available to malaria patients worldwide.

Since 2002, the EU has invested nearly EUR 180 million in malaria research through the EU's Framework Programmes for Research (FP6, 2002-2006, and FP7, 2007-2013).

The EU also contributes to the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) which aims to accelerate the development of new or improved drugs, vaccines and microbicides against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Established in 2003, this successful ongoing European and African collaboration focuses on clinical trials as well as capacity building in sub-Saharan Africa. To date, 10 clinical trials on malaria costing EUR 69 million have been financed under EDCTP with EUR 35 million support from the EU.

THREE) –THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION BOOSTS ITS RESPONSE TO TACKLE MALNUTRITION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Child mortality is very high in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where more than one child out of ten dies before turning five. In order to reduce this severe acute malnutrition and implement humanitarian projects benefiting primarily malnourished children under five, the European Commission has allocated new funding worth €9.975 million. In concrete terms, this funding will allow acutely malnourished children to be provided with the right treatment they need to survive, such as therapeutic food and medical care.

With its humanitarian funding in response to the nutritional emergency in the DRC, the Commission also intends to strengthen the coordination role of UNICEF and the capacity of the national nutrition programme (PRONANUT) as well as to improve planning of aid activities.

Child mortality is very high in the DRC: out of 1,000 babies born an estimated 158 die before they turn five. Whereas some progress has been made in the country in recent years regarding malnutrition in the East, acute malnutrition remains critical with a rate of above 2% in almost all Western provinces.

In the DRC, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection department (ECHO) has offices in Kinshasa, in Bunia, Bukavu and Goma. ECHO experts closely follow developments in the humanitarian situation and monitor the use of the Commission's relief funds.

Since 2009, the European Commission has allocated a total of more than €141 million in aid for the victims of humanitarian crises in the DRC, including today's allocation. In addition, EU Member States provided an additional €91.57 million in the last twelve months.

FOUR) -THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION DOUBLES ITS HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE CRISIS IN COTE D'IVOIRE

The European Commission increased its humanitarian assistance for the victims of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire by an additional €30 million, bringing its total allocation to € 60 million. The decision was taken on the basis of an extended need assessment carried out in the recent days by a team of European Commission experts on the ground.

A team from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) is currently in Côte d'Ivoire working with the European Commission humanitarian partners to assess the needs. The team consists of experts in the areas of health, protection, water, sanitation and food. They primarily analysed the situation in the West of the country and in Abidjan which are the areas most affected by the fighting. The priority is to rapidly identify the immediate humanitarian needs while at the same time working with the authorities and development aid partners to reinforce the local institutional capacity to take over the management of the provision of essential basic services in the medium term.

The preliminary findings from our experts on the ground confirm that while the security is slowly improving the humanitarian situation is still a cause for major concern. Thousands of people still don't have access to the very basic supplies notably food, water and health. Their recommendations have led to this new funding which will be channelled through ECHO's partners in the field – UN agencies, the Red Cross family and non-governmental organisations. To monitor the implementation of EU funded projects, coordinate the EU response and assist the partners the Commission will open a full time ECHO office in Abidjan shortly.

The EU (Commission and Member States) is the largest donor of humanitarian aid to the victims of the Côte d'Ivoire crisis, responding with €85 million so far. Of this total, the Commission provided with today's allocation €60 million so far to support the efforts of the Red Cross, NGOs and the UN to assist the victims of the crisis. This funding will help improve conditions by providing shelter, food assistance, healthcare, water and sanitation, and protection activities, to both people in need inside the country and the refugees in neighbouring countries. There are estimated to be over one million internally displaced and over 130,000 refugees in neighbouring countries, in particular in Liberia.

FIVE) – G20 TO NAME COUNTRIES WITH PROBLEM IMBALANCES SOON, SAYS U.S.

The G20 hopes to make progress on developing guidelines to identify economic imbalances this week and will soon be able to list countries with the biggest problems, a senior U.S. Treasury official on Tuesday. "I do expect a short list of countries to emerge from this process and those countries will be the focus of a second stage of analysis," the official told reporters at a briefing ahead of a meeting of the Group of 20 rich and emerging-market nations on Thursday and Friday. The G20 is aiming to develop "indicative guidelines" to detect imbalances such as excessive trade deficits or surpluses and then develop policy recommendations to address them. The official said this week's meeting will focus on the first stage of the process -the language for identifying imbalances. The next stage, expected later this year, will involve further analysis of countries identified as having systemically important imbalances to develop potential remedies. The G20, which includes both rich and developing nations such as China, India and Brazil, is meeting on the sidelines of semi-annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. The Group of Seven club of developed countries also meets separately on Thursday night, and the U.S. official said they were likely to hold to their long-standing position that "excessive volatility" in currency exchange markets was unacceptable. The G7 conducted a rare coordinated intervention in currency markets last month after the Japanese yen accelerated sharply in value following the country's earthquake. CONTENTIOUS PROCESS The G20's aim is to push forward a complex plan to better balance the global economy by finding means to alter policies in response to excessive trade surpluses or deficits. These imbalances also would fall if all G20 countries allowed their currencies to respond more freely to market forces, the U.S. official said, calling it a key challenge for a diverse group born during the financial crisis of 2008. Progress toward defining the imbalances has been slow. China at a Paris G20 meeting in February refused to accept the consideration of excessive accumulation of foreign currency reserves as an indicator of possible imbalances. The U.S. official acknowledged the process will continue to be contentious, saying this is a sign of progress that views are converging on the G20. "I think it is contentious because it is

plowing new ground." China is the country most regularly associated with excessive trade surpluses and is regularly criticized by both advanced and developing economies for its rigid control over the value of its yuan currency, which holds down the cost of its exports. But the Treasury official cited a heightened awareness among Chinese officials about the need to rebalance its economy to rely less on exports and more on domestic consumption. Beijing has made progress in foreign exchange flexibility, with a 4.3 percent nominal increase in the yuan versus the dollar since last June. The official reiterated Treasury's view that this is a 10 percent increase in the "real bilateral exchange rate" when China's higher inflation rate is factored in. "We're seeing some movement there and we expect to see continued movement on that front," the official said of the yuan/dollar exchange rate. China is now the world's No. 2 economy, behind the United States, and many economists say its yuan currency would likely rise 25 percent or more in value if it was not so tightly controlled by the Chinese government. That would make Chinese imports more expensive for American consumers and presumably help shrink the U.S. trade deficit with China. (Reuters)

SIX) – EU SEES NO REASON TO BE OPTIMISTIC ON DOHA TRADE DEAL

Deadlocked talks for a global trade accord to free up trade flows and lift millions out of poverty have reached a stalemate and there is little reason to hope for a breakthrough, Europe's trade chief said on Tuesday. Unwillingness by some of the world's leading traders to open their markets to foreign manufactured goods has frustrated hopes that the so-called Doha round could be revived after a three-year lull and completed at the World Trade Organisation this year, European Union Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht told EU lawmakers. "There is no reason to be optimistic at this moment in time," he said. "Negotiations are now in an extremely difficult situation," De Gucht said while progress has been "very disappointing" particularly because of the reluctance of some countries to cut import barriers on industrial products. In some of his most pessimistic public comments yet about the Doha round of negotiations, De Gucht, who has been one of the most active advocates of completing an accord, said it was time to think of an alternative to a WTO accord. "If not Doha, we will have to look if there is a Plan B. We are already planning now to look at what should come next. ... But we are now in the twilight zone. We don't know what will happen," he said. Since global trade talks slowed in 2006 over disagreements on market openings, the EU has pursued bilateral and regional free trade agreements with the booming economies of South Korea, India, South East Asia, Latin America and with Canada, as well as freer trade with the United States. On Monday, the head of the 153-member WTO, Pascal Lamy, triggered a race to rescue stalled global trade talks, setting April 21 as a deadline for delivery of crucial "texts" that could make or break the process by the end of April. The talks are almost a decade old. Failure to secure an agreement this year could leave them in limbo as a number of key WTO members enter election years in 2012. (Reuters)

SEVEN) – BRIC TRADE MINISTERS WARN DOHA TRADE TALKS COULD COLLAPSE

Trade ministers of the five BRIC nations warned on Wednesday that global trade talks were at risk of collapsing but that they were willing to resume negotiations based on 2008 agreements. "The delicate balance of trade-offs achieved over 10 years of negotiations and contained in the draft July 2008 texts risks being upset," the ministers said in a draft press statement obtained by Reuters. The BRIC group is made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and new member South Africa. Economic and trade ministers are meeting in Sanya, China before a summit of BRICS leaders on Thursday. The group favours a continuation of the Doha round on the basis of a preliminary agreement that brought the talks nearly to a final deal in mid-2008 but rejected demands that developing countries now need to make more concessions. "Ministers remain willing to conclude the round on the basis of those draft modalities," they said in the draft statement. The United States last month said major emerging economies like Brazil needed to muster the political courage to open their markets. But Brazil has been objecting to U.S. demands for more market access to services and nonfarm goods and says Washington was also asking China, India and Brazil to make higher, obligatory tariff cuts on industrial goods. (Reuters)

EIGHT) – GERMAN CONSERVATIVES APPLAUD TOUGH LINE ON LAMPEDUSA REFUGEES

German conservatives applauded Tuesday Berlin's tough line against accepting North African migrants into the European Union, saying they must stay in Italy. Unable to share out the refugee burden, Rome has said it may just let the migrants travel at will to the rest of the European Union. A local official from Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) threatened to penalize Italy financially if it did. "Then we'd have to cut off their financial aid," Lower Saxony Interior Minister Uwe Schuenemann told the daily newspaper Bild. He was referring to EU funds for border security and refugee accommodation. Brussels says Italy has obtained 81.5 million euros (117 million dollars) for 2010 and 2011 under that burden-sharing scheme. Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich said Germany would step up spot checks of travellers in case any of them were North Africans coming from their initial EU port of call in the Italian island of Lampedusa. The CDU's federal parliamentary whip, Peter Altmaier, called the Friedrich line "justified and correct." Schuenemann added that the North Africans were not entitled to resettlement because they were not politically persecuted. "More than 90 per cent of those arriving on Lampedusa are purely labour migrants," he said. (Dpa)

NINE) – UN REBUFFS EU PROPOSAL FOR 'MILITARY- HUMANITARIAN' MISSION TO LIBYA

The United Nations has rebuffed a European Union offer to deploy a military mission to assist humanitarian aid efforts in Libya, European officials in Luxembourg said Tuesday. Speaking at a meeting of EU foreign ministers, the bloc's foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, said the UN believed there was no need for such a mission just yet. The EU has begun planning a mission involving air and naval logistical support - EUFOR Libya - but is waiting for the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to authorize its deployment. "If the United Nations asks us to help them with our military support, to get aid into the country, we are ready to do so," Ashton said. "So far, they said there is not a need." Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger said UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had told him that OCHA would call on the EU only "when it's absolutely necessary, as a last resort." Ashton wrote to Ban on Friday to let him know that the EU was ready to act, and is due to meet him on Thursday in Cairo. She said she fully understood OCHA's prudence. "I don't describe their approach as sceptical, I describe their approach as right, they have to think very carefully before using those assets," she said. In an example of the issues at stake, the Moamer Gaddafi camp said on Monday it had warned "the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union that any approach to the Libyan territory with the pretext of providing humanitarian aid will face violent and unexpected resistance from the armed people." **EU CACOPHONY** But Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb suggested that OCHA's reluctance was also ideological. "OCHA very often sees humanitarian aid as black and white, (it doesn't) want any military involvement, where sometimes as we know there is need for military assistance to get aid in," he said. An EU diplomat also told the German Press Agency dpa that "it is an ideological opposition, which clashes with the reality on the ground." The diplomat said other international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration saw the need for EU help. British Foreign Secretary William Hague seemed to agree with the UN assessment, pointing out that so far "humanitarian assistance is getting through to Libya, including to Misurata," without any EU naval escort. He was referring to the coastal town that has been besieged by forces loyal to the Libyan leader for seven weeks. With residents there complaining about a lack of food, water and medicine, Turkey and Italy have sent their own ships there to bring in aid and evacuate seriously injured people. EUFOR Libya would coordinate and strengthen those efforts, but "we are not describing something where we are putting troops on the ground," Ashton stressed. Illustrating the extent of the humanitarian crisis in Misurata, UNICEF on Monday said that at least 20 children died there, while tens of thousands more children were threatened by hunger, thirst, illness and death. Spain's minister for EU affairs, Diego Lopez Garrido, said EU foreign ministers would continue planning for mission deployment despite OCHA's reluctance. "What we will do today is to approve the military operation concept to protect the humanitarian work that the UN is carrying out in Libya. So today the EU will put itself at the disposal of the UN," he said. However, the deal on the "concept of operations" was delayed by a few days by Sweden, an EU diplomat later said. EU countries had already decided on April 1 that the 7.9-million- euro (11.5-million-dollar) EUFOR Libya would be based in Rome and led by Italian Rear Admiral Claudio Gaudiosi. (Dpa)

TEN) – U.S. SUPPORTS QATAR MARKETING LIBYAN OIL

The United States supports the marketing of Libyan crude oil by Qatar on behalf of rebels fighting against Muammar Gaddafi, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said on Tuesday. Toner, speaking after Qatar reported it marketed 1 million barrels of crude oil on behalf of Libya's rebels, said he could not speak for the Libya contact group on whether it authorized the sales but that the Libyan opposition needed funds to operate. "We do certainly support (those) efforts," Toner told reporters at his daily briefing. (Reuters)

ELEVEN) – EU EXTENDS OIL SANCTIONS AGAINST LIBYA

L'Union européenne a sanctionné mardi 26 sociétés supplémentaires profitant au régime du dirigeant libyen Mouammar Kadhafi, notamment dans le secteur de l'énergie, imposant de fait un embargo sur le gaz et le pétrole libyen. "Nous avons pris de nouvelles sanctions contre le secteur pétrolier et gazier libyen", a déclaré la chef de la diplomatie européenne, Catherine Ashton, à l'issue d'une réunion des ministres des Affaires étrangères de l'UE à Luxembourg. Avec ces sanctions, "nous avons décrété de fait un embargo sur le gaz et le pétrole" libyens, a commenté le chef de la diplomatie allemande Guido Westerwelle. "C'est une étape supplémentaire en vue de fermer le robinet financier du système Kadhafi", a-t-il souligné. Sur les 26 sociétés visées par un gel d'avoirs, onze font partie du secteur du gaz et du pétrole. Deux personnes considérées comme proches du régime sont également frappées du gel de leurs avoirs dans l'UE et d'interdiction de visa. Les insurgés basés à Benghazi (est) peuvent en revanche continuer à vendre du pétrole exploité dans les zones qu'ils contrôlent. En mars, l'UE avait déjà sanctionné le principal groupe pétrolier libyen, la compagnie nationale NOC et quatre de ses filiales, dans l'espoir de priver de ressources le régime du colonel Kadhafi dans ce secteur stratégique. Au total, depuis le début de la crise libyenne, l'UE a décrété un embargo sur les armes et sur les matériels pouvant servir à la répression, ainsi que le gel d'avoirs et des interdictions de visa à l'encontre de Mouammar Kadhafi et de 37 de ses proches et responsables libyens. **ASSETS FROZEN** Elle a également gelé les avoirs et transactions financières de nombreuses entités financières, comme la Banque centrale libyenne ou des fonds souverains gérant notamment les revenus pétroliers du pays. Les sanctions adoptées mardi portent à 39 le nombre de personnes et à 46 le nombre d'entités libyennes frappées par le gel de leurs avoirs, en application de mesures de l'ONU ou de mesures autonomes de l'UE. Sur ces 39 personnes, 38 sont interdites de visa dans l'UE. En application de ces sanctions, des milliards d'euros d'avoirs libyens ont été gelés par les différents pays européens. La Libye est l'un des principaux producteurs de pétrole d'Afrique. Les ressources en hydrocarbures servent au colonel Kadhafi à recruter des mercenaires pour s'en prendre aux insurgés dans son pays. Selon l'Agence internationale de l'énergie (AIE), la Libye produit en temps normal 1,69 million de barils par jour et en exporte 1,49 million, en immense majorité (85%) vers l'Europe. Toutefois, la décision n'aura aucune conséquence à l'heure actuelle sur les importations d'hydrocarbures par l'UE. En effet, les pays concernés, l'Espagne et l'Italie en particulier, sont déjà passés à d'autres fournisseurs, selon Bruxelles. (AFP)

TWELVE) – EXPERTS SAY LIBYAN ASSETS WILL BE HARD TO UNFREEZE

Any attempt to unfreeze Libyan assets and hand them to the opposition, even for humanitarian purposes, faces legal obstacles that could take years to clear, U.S. and European officials and experts say. A Washington representative of the Libyan rebels asked the U.S. Treasury Department at the weekend for access to the "Gaddafi regime's" assets frozen by U.S. authorities, according to a letter made public by the opposition. The United States is holding more than \$34 billion as part of sanctions against Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and his entourage. Billions more have been frozen by the European Union and several European countries. The Obama administration theoretically could free up those assets but not as rapidly as the rebels would hope for. "I don't expect it could be done cleanly and expeditiously. It would be impossible to do quickly," said Victor Comras, a former economic sanctions expert for the U.S. State Department and the United Nations. Even if President Barack Obama were to issue an order allowing Libyan rebels access to the assets, his decision could face legal challenges, said former Treasury official Hal Eren, a lawyer who specializes in economic sanctions. "Gaddafi could win in court," he said. In his April 7 letter to the Treasury, Ali Aujali, who was Tripoli's ambassador to Washington until he defected to the opposition in February, said Libya's transitional national council, which he now represents, "needs immediate access to the Gaddafi regime's frozen assets." The council is anxious for funds to "meet the basic needs of the Libyan people," Aujali

said. In the past three weeks, he said, "humanitarian conditions in opposition-held areas have deteriorated," leading to food and medicine shortages and an acute crisis for newborn babies due to a lack of infant formula supplies in several cities. Aujali proposed that the United States appoint a trustee committee to manage unfrozen Libyan assets in consultation with representatives of the rebel council. The trustees, his letter said, would then hire "globally recognized audit and asset management firms to account for the assets" and would also make available funds for "urgent humanitarian needs" that "should be routed via respected, internationally recognized organizations." A Treasury official, asked about the frozen assets, said efforts to help the rebels are being discussed. "We are considering a range of options to help the opposition meet some of the costs they're facing and to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Libya but nothing has been decided yet," the official said. **COMPETING CLAIMS** Unfreezing assets is cumbersome and time-consuming, said James Kreindler, a New York lawyer who represented families of victims of the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 in cases that saw Gaddafi's government pay out more than \$1 billion. "I don't see how they're going to get this done until there's a new (Libyan) government," he said. Nikos Passas, a criminal law expert at Northeastern University, agreed. "If these are state assets then the question becomes 'Who is the representative of the state of Libya?' There would be competing claims," he said. Eren, the former Treasury official, described Aujali's proposal for a trustee committee as "clever thinking." Obama does have the power to unfreeze Libyan assets and issue an order making them immune to lawsuits, at least under U.S. law, he said, but any such move still could be subject to challenges under international law. Eren and other experts said any move toward unfreezing Libyan assets for the benefit of the rebels probably would have to be preceded by official U.S. recognition of the opposition as the new Libyan government. Although France and a handful of other governments have announced recognition of the national transitional council, the Obama administration has not made such a declaration. The Harbour Group, a politically connected Washington public relations firm, last week registered with the Justice Department to represent the transitional council, on an unpaid basis, in its efforts to "gain official U.S. recognition" and persuade the administration to unfreeze Libyan assets. (Reuters)

THIRTEEN) – **DESPITE NATO RIFT, U.S. STICKS TO LIMITED LIBYA ROLE**

Despite rebel setbacks and an increasingly public rift with NATO allies, the U.S. will stick to its plan to remain in the back seat of the Libya air campaign, the Obama administration insisted Tuesday after three weeks of air missions that have failed to turn the tide against Moammar Gadhafi. France's defense minister declared that without full American participation, the West probably would not be able to stop attacks by Gadhafi loyalists on besieged rebel cities. U.S. officials said they were comfortable with their role and had no plans to step up involvement, even as British and French officials said Washington's military might was needed to ensure the mission's success. The Americans said NATO could carry out the operation without a resumption of the heavy U.S. efforts that kicked it off last month. "The president and this administration believes that NATO, and the coalition of which we remain a partner, is capable of fulfilling that mission of enforcing the no-fly zone, enforcing the arms embargo and providing civilian protection," White House spokesman Jay Carney told reporters. "The U.S. has not abandoned this operation by any means," State Department spokesman Mark Toner said. "We still are offering support where we can. I don't think it's correct to say that there's somehow discord in the alliance." The public complaints of Britain and France, however, contradicted that position, and U.S. officials contended privately that some in Europe appeared to be backing down on pledges to take the lead in the operation once the opening phase was over. The administration had not wanted to keep a primary role after that point and had made its participation in the NATO mission contingent on having only a supporting function afterward. With the disagreement out in the open, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is expected to hear loud calls for the U.S. to resume heavier fighting when she travels to Germany for meetings of NATO foreign ministers on Thursday and Friday (AP)

FOURTEEN) - **EU URGES NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT IN IVORY COAST**

The European Union urged Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara on Tuesday to form a national unity government to help put the war-shattered country back on track and pledged its support for the new government. Ouattara, who toppled Laurent Gbagbo after a four-month power struggle, has an historic opportunity to heal the country's divisions, EU foreign ministers said at the end of a meeting in Luxembourg. "The EU welcomes President Ouattara's commitment to achieving national reconciliation," they said in a

statement. "It stands ready to support the work of the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and encourages President Ouattara to form an inclusive, broad-based government representative of all the regions and all strands of political opinion in the country." The EU, which has lifted some sanctions on some entities, said it would consider easing more restrictions and resuming development programmes for Ivory Coast as soon as possible. On allegations of rights violations, it urged the International Commission of Inquiry into human rights violations, set up by the UN Human Rights Council last month, to investigate the charges as swiftly as possible. (Reuters)

FIFTEEN) – FRANCE, EU OFFER € 580 MILLION TO OUATTARA'S IVORY COAST

La France et l'Union européenne ont débloqué mardi quelque 580 millions d'euros d'aide d'urgence en faveur de la Côte d'Ivoire afin de permettre au régime fragile du président ivoirien Alassane Ouattara de se stabiliser après l'affrontement avec Laurent Gbagbo. La France va apporter dans les prochains jours "un soutien financier exceptionnel de 400 millions d'euros" pour aider notamment à satisfaire les besoins urgents des populations et de la ville d'Abidjan, a annoncé sa ministre des Finances Christine Lagarde. De son côté, la Commission européenne a débloqué 180 millions d'euros, disponibles immédiatement pour aider à la reconstruction économique du pays, la réconciliation, la démocratie, lors d'une réunion à Luxembourg des ministres européens des Affaires étrangères. "Nous avons insisté sur la nécessité de participer à la reconstruction de ce pays si gravement éprouvé", a déclaré le chef de la diplomatie française Alain Juppé. Il s'agissait pour l'UE de faire le point sur les moyens de stabiliser le nouveau régime en place, après plus de quatre mois d'une crise politique née du différend sur le résultat de l'élection présidentielle entre les deux candidats rivaux. Elle s'est soldée lundi par l'arrestation du président sortant Laurent Gbagbo. Dans un geste en faveur d'Alassane Ouattara, les Européens ont d'ores et déjà levé vendredi des sanctions clés qu'ils avaient imposées pour contraindre Laurent Gbagbo à quitter le pouvoir en l'asphyxiant financièrement. Elles visaient les deux grands ports du pays, Abidjan et San Pedro, ainsi que deux entreprises stratégiques dans les secteurs du pétrole, du cacao et du café, essentiels pour l'économie ivoirienne. D'autres mesures similaires devraient suivre. Les autres sanctions seront supprimées "aussi rapidement que possible", a déclaré le responsable des questions africaines au sein du service diplomatique européen, Nicholas Westcott. Au-delà de l'aide d'urgence, la chef de la diplomatie européenne, Catherine Ashton, a assuré quant à elle que l'UE allait fournir "un soutien à long terme à la Côte d'Ivoire afin de promouvoir la prospérité en vue de garantir la stabilité et d'aider à la reconstruction du pays". Reste à l'UE à trouver où dégager l'argent frais. Car en parallèle, elle entend aussi mobiliser des fonds pour soutenir l'émergence des régimes démocratiques en Afrique du Nord, au moment où l'Europe traverse une crise budgétaire. Locomotive de l'Afrique de l'Ouest francophone et leader de l'Union économique et monétaire régionale (Uemoa, dont elle représente 40% du PIB), la Côte d'Ivoire traverse la plus grave crise économique et sociale de son histoire. Son économie, qui repose en grande partie sur les exportations de cacao, traverse une crise sans précédent. Problèmes d'approvisionnement, inflation, chômage, système bancaire grippé: tout le quotidien des familles comme des entreprises, est bouleversé. Toutefois, l'aide européenne ne s'annonce pas comme un chèque en blanc. L'image de M. Ouattara, président reconnu par la communauté internationale, apprécié de l'Occident et ex-responsable du Fonds monétaire international, a été gravement ternie par les accusations visant les Forces républicaines, qui lui sont loyales, après le massacre de centaines de personnes à Duékoué (ouest), pendant la prise de la ville le 29 mars. "Tous les auteurs de violations des droits de l'Homme doivent répondre de leurs agissements", a prévenu Mme Ashton. (AFP)

SIXTEEN) - MANUFACTURING CÔTE D'IVOIRE'S 'GOOD GUY'

As Côte d'Ivoire's bloody leadership contest draws to a close and the surrender of Laurent Gbagbo, the incumbent president, seems imminent, a long list of atrocities and electoral irregularities mark the records of both him and his opponent, Alassane Ouattara. But with 1,500 people reported dead and more than 200,000 displaced, can one stubborn man be held solely responsible for the human cost of this four-month long dispute?

Ethan Zuckerman, the founder and editor of Global Voices, believes the situation is more complex than a one-man blame game.

"The challenge with the situation in Ivory Coast is that neither side has clean hands. Forces working for both have committed atrocities and, unfortunately, it's very hard to see how any resolution to the conflict will

avoid further bloodshed, as both sides seek to settle scores."

Good guy, bad guy

While Gbagbo's behaviour deserves no defence, the role of the media and key figures in shaping the discourse of international diplomacy by casting Ouattara as the good guy and Gbagbo as the bad guy does raise uncomfortable questions about how support (and disdain) for political figures is manufactured on the world stage.

Offering some insight into the dilemmas of casting political figures in the mould of the good/bad oppositional binary, Zuckerman says: "The narrative of Gbagbo as the bad guy who won't give up and Ouattara as the good guy with international backing and an electoral victory isn't terribly far off base. It does, however, oversimplify and makes it harder to see crimes committed by Ouattara's forces with the same clarity as we see those committed by Gbagbo's."

Although the few media organisations that have not ignored the crisis have consistently reported the violence from day one, there has been little interrogation of Ouattara and his rebel forces in the same forensic manner as critiques on Gbagbo and his Young Patriots. Both sides have burnt and butchered hundreds of non-combatants. And both sides have, at different times, rejected African Union (AU) efforts at mediation.

Before the massacres in Duékoué, which shifted international opinion on Ouattara's forces, the greater violence was rightly attributed to Gbagbo. But the atrocities committed by pro-Ouattara forces have not received the same attention as those committed by pro-Gbagbo troops.

Compare the wide coverage of the fatal shooting of six women protesters in Abidjan on Mar. 6, with the minimal reports of violence in Attecoube, a suburb of Abidjan, or the displacement of 700 people in the village of Anokua-Koute by pro-Ouattara forces, a few days later.

Zuckerman cites the lack of attention to the Ivorian crisis as one of the main reasons for the absence of critical perspective.

"It's unfortunate for the Ivory Coast that there's been so many other high profile international stories demanding attention, from the Arab Spring revolutions and protests to the tragedies in Japan. It's possible that, if Ivory Coast were the major international story unfolding, we might have gotten more subtlety in reporting," he says.

As more details emerge about the massacres in Duékoué and elsewhere, about the atrocities committed in the struggle for Côte d'Ivoire, the international community finds itself in a difficult position. As Salon asked of U.S. Republican Senator James Inhofe's "backing [of] a brutal despot," it must be asked: Will the international community, led by the U.N. and France, continue to support a man implicated in such gross violations?

Daniel Balint-Kurti, a researcher and campaigner at Global Witness, suggests that global endorsement hinges on what happens in the future. "A lot will depend on Ouattara's reaction to investigation. If he takes responsibility for atrocities committed, it will be much easier for him to benefit from the huge international support he's gotten, but if he doesn't it will be problematic."

For now, the tone of diplomacy seems to be one of lamentation and regret, rather than condemnation. Ban Ki-moon, the U.N. secretary-general, responded with "concern and surprise" to the news of mass killings in western Côte d'Ivoire, while Hillary Clinton, the U.S. secretary of state, was "deeply concerned" and Jean Ping, the chairman of the AU, has urged both sides to "show restraint and protect civilians".

By contrast, after the shooting of six women protesters by pro-Gbagbo forces, the world upped the ante in a united call for the incumbent to "step down immediately". Even after allegations of pro-Ouattara fighters massacring 800 civilians were made, on Monday, Apr. 4, Yousouffou Bamba, Côte d'Ivoire's ambassador to the U.N., said: "Mr. Gbagbo is a shame on Africa. He is a dictator, he is killing his own people." Nothing on our guy, the good guy, Ouattara.

That his name as *genocidaire* does not appear on a Google search while 'Gbagbo genocide' is a pre-figured search phrase, may seem superficial, but it is nonetheless an indicator that, thankfully, the world will not play the same trial by media game with Ouattara. That will be a post-conflict task for the International Criminal Court (ICC).

At that point journalists may have to work backwards filling in the blanks that were missed when the world's cameras were focused on revolutions in the Arab world and events elsewhere.

Not that Sanaa, Benghazi or Fukushima did not deserve attention, they most certainly did. But Côte d'Ivoire also needed the likes of Anderson Cooper to fulfill his Twitter promise on Feb. 26, that on "Monday [he'd] try to do something".

A pound of flesh

For now, a defence of Ouattara may be that the massacres in Duékoué were largely carried out by traditional hunters known as dozos, an independent militia acting in Ouattara's name. Therefore, neither he nor Guillaume Soro can be held responsible.

But the fact that Ouattara and Soro, as minister of defence and prime minister in-waiting, are leading this offensive means they are accountable and have a duty to reprimand the perpetrators. When Ouattara's hour of triumph finally comes to pass, what will the dozos and little militias within the FRCI (Republican Force of Ivory Coast), demand in return for their support? Immunity? Money? Power? Cocoa beans? Aware of the tough road that lies ahead for Ouattara, TIME magazine's Monica Mark, based in Abidjan thinks, "it's going to be unstable for quite a while".

"He [Ouattara] needs to address the issue of national reconciliation. That will be difficult because he relied on rebel forces so now he owes them. And these people, they don't do things the proper way ... he's going to have a low-level insurgency on his hands as the leader," Mark says.

Echoing similar sentiments, Balint-Kurti explains: "He's going to have a hell of a job. The country is very divided and he [Ouattara] is hated in parts [of the country] and he's not just going to take the presidency and everything is going to be okay."

In Ouattara's final transition from his luxury suite at the Hotel du Golf to the presidential palace, it is sincerely hoped that he can unite the country and restore peace. However, hard questions will need to be asked of him by seekers of truth and justice.

Despite the efforts by the media and international community to produce a clear-cut good guy, bad guy narrative for easy mass consumption, countless disturbing images and stories of violence perpetrated by rebel and patriot forces, show there are no clear lines distinguishing the righteous from the heathens. In war, all are sinners, even the guys with major international support.

SEVENTEEN) - ZAMBIA: HIGH-TECH BORDER POST TRANSFORMING TRADE

A few weeks ago, a truck driver got the shock of his life when his employer called from South Africa asking why he had siphoned fuel from his vehicle while awaiting clearance at the Kasumbalesa Border Post between Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The driver's attempts to deny the incident were futile as video footage taken at the border post showed him draining the fuel and handing it to people.

The installation of high tech monitoring equipment means it is no longer business as usual at Kasumbalesa, a border post along one of the busiest trade routes in Africa.

As a truck enters the yard, powerful cameras capture all its details and relay these to different offices, including immigration and customs. Among others, the cameras capture the truck's company name, the number of axles it has and type of cargo it carries.

When the drivers finally enter the offices, they are expected and the money to be paid for various immigration and customs procedures is already calculated. This means the driver now spends less time on border processes compared to previously, when all processes were manual.

Engineer Avishay Dvir, chief executive of Baran Trade and Investment, a Swiss-based Israeli-owned company contracted to build the new border post, said the new structure "would help improve the speed and volume of trade between countries" in the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA). Negotiations are already underway to install more such technology at other border posts in COMESA. Poor border infrastructure is among the factors that make regional trade more difficult and costly, especially as most goods have to be moved by road.

A 2009 World Bank report on Africa's infrastructure says long delays at border posts cost hauliers more than 300 dollars per day.

For example, a journey of 2,500 km from Lusaka, Zambia, to the port city of Durban in South Africa takes an average of eight days – four days of travel time and four days spent at border crossings, costing about 2,400 dollars.

Some truck drivers have reported spending a month travelling from Durban to the DRC, with the longest delays being at Kasumbalesa. Reduced trucking turnaround time means more cargo is transported as a driver can now make several trips in a month, instead of spending the whole month on one.

"If such facilities are put across the region, trade will flow at an increased speed as goods cross borders at an increased rate," said Dvir.

The company has an ambitious dream for an in-transit cargo (ITC) stamp given at one border post and then electronically communicated to the next border post and all others to speed up the clearance processes.

This could mean a truck would only need one ITC stamp identifying its cargo and its final destination, which will reduce the time spent at the border to as little as 10 minutes. Currently, cargo examinations are done manually at Kasumbalesa, but an X-ray machine for trucks is being installed for cargo to be checked as the truck passes.

Explained Dvir: "Our idea is to construct modern border facilities equipped with information and communication technologies across the region. The Zambian government has given us a contract to facelift all the border posts in the country.

"We are also in discussions with governments from other countries, including the DRC, Tanzania and Angola. We are interested in improving conditions at borders in Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe, especially the Beitbridge Border post which is infamous due to its poor conditions and delays."

"Work here has become so much easier," Mushota Bukankala, a shift manager, enthused. "I just stand in the control room where I have a good view of everything happening around."

Winfred Shawa, a Zambian truck driver, considered retirement due to strenuous working conditions but changed his mind following the installation of the new system.

"I would spend 30 days on the road between South Africa and the DRC, with delays especially at this border, but I no longer spend even a single day here.

"I cannot wait for this system to be adopted at other borders, which will mean that I can make the trip in less than five days, allowing for one or two roadside rests," said Shawa.

The new look border post has increased employment opportunities for the nearby community. Since January 2011, 250 employees have been recruited. All of them had to first undergo training in IT systems, as most did not have such skills.

The border post company has also committed to provide cash worth 120,000 dollars annually for the neighbouring community's development. A school is under construction and the plan also includes a clinic and a market.

Various forms of trade at the port have also been affected. In the past, truck drivers would use the long waiting times to sell some of their fuel to locals and fuel dealers. The time to do that is no longer there and, besides, the cameras are always watching from every angle in the yard.

Truck drivers also do not have much time to engage in commercial sex.

The new border post was built over 10 months at a total cost of 25 million dollars through a "build, operate and transfer" agreement between the Zambian government and the company, which got a 20-year concession to manage the border to recover its investments.

The government did not commit any money towards the construction. A crossing fee of 19 dollars per axle of any vehicle which passes through the border post has been introduced and negotiations to charge the travelling public are underway. Government retains the duty and immigration fees.

EIGHTEEN) - PRIVATISATION AIDED EGYPT REVOLT, ARMY SAYS

Anger at Egypt's privatisation programme, involving the transfer of billions of dollars worth of public assets to private hands, aided the Egyptian revolution that elbowed the Western-backed Hosni Mubarak out of office in February, a top army general said.

Major General Mohammed al-Assar, a leading member of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, a group of top military generals who are running the country until a civilian leadership is elected, said the military brass were deeply opposed to the privatisation programme. That in turn eased their decision to side with the Egyptian public against the 30-year autocratic rule of Mubarak.

Al-Assar told state television on Wednesday that the army has been against the "plans to sell Egypt" and viewed them as a threat to social peace.

He said that Field Marshal Mohammed Tantawi, the council's president and minister of defence, had repeatedly raised objections to the privatisation programme, as shown in the minutes of several cabinet meetings he attended.

His opinion was often over-ruled by Mubarak and other top officials who had favoured following economic prescriptions from Western countries. Many of those officials stood to gain from the sale of public enterprises.

Prodded by the Washington-based trio - the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) - Egypt under Mubarak adopted an aggressive programme to sell public companies to both local and foreign investors since the early 1990s.

The programme peaked between 1996 and 1999 with the sale of at least some 30 profitable public companies a year.

Mubarak and his backers in Washington marketed the programme as necessary to free the government of the burden of supporting these companies, bolster competitiveness, enhance private investment and create jobs.

But the public had grown suspicious as it witnessed the sale of companies cheaply, without sufficient oversight, to foreign investors and firms.

Egyptians were further irked as they saw how a large number of workers were made redundant in the process and accusations flew of corruption and kickbacks.

The programme ran into its strongest resistance when Mubarak started to eye the country's four public banks for privatisation despite widespread public opposition. Mubarak went ahead and sold the Bank of Alexandria, the smallest of the four.

Tantawi, even though he was appointed by Mubarak to lead the ministry of defence, was particularly opposed to the sale of Bank Misr, the country's second largest bank, according to al-Assar, amid public questions over the nationality of foreigners bidding to buy national banks.

The sensitive financial sector was being restructured in a programme funded by the World Bank, USAID and the African Development Bank (AfDB) at a cost of some 8.7 billion U.S. dollars.

In the wake of the 18-day revolution that toppled Mubarak after 30 years in power, officials who promoted the sale of such public assets under his regime have come under both media and legal scrutiny.

On Wednesday, the country's general prosecutor Abdel Megeed Mahmoud froze all assets of three champions of the privatisation programme under Mubarak. All three had cooperated closely with the USAID, the World Bank and the IMF.

The general prosecutor said former Prime Minister Atef Ebeid, former Public Sector Minister Mokhtar Khattab, whose job was to supervise the sale programme, and Mohammed el-Danaf, board chairman of the holding company for Metallurgical Industries, stand accused of "wasting public money" and gaining personal profits during the sale of the Assiut Cement Company.

The company, the largest cement producer in Egypt, was sold to Mexico's Cemex in 1999 for only 373 million dollars. Former board members provided documents that show the real value was at least four times that figure. Now, the contract is being investigated.

This week, Egypt's general prosecutor said his office is examining several other privatisation contracts and was seeking technical opinions on the sale, valuation, legality and procedure of such transactions.

These investigations could open a Pandora's box for the programme and its supporters in the Western-dominated financial institutions.

For example, several criminal investigations have now been opened against former Finance Minister Youssef Boutros-Ghali, who oversaw the design and implementation of Egypt's economic reform programmes. Ghali was the head of the International Monetary and Financial Committee of the IMF whose role was to advise the Fund's governors on international monetary policy.

Investigations have also been opened involving former Investment Minister Mahmoud Mohieldin's role in the sale of a hotel and a retail chain. Mohieldin is now the World Bank Managing Director. Both are out of the country.

Next week, a Cairo court will look into a case brought by independent whistle blowers to cancel the sale of Egypt's famous retailer, Omar Effendi, to the Saudi company Anwal on the grounds that corruption was involved and the valuation was inaccurate.

According to the court documents, the 82 stores of the Omar Effendi chain, that include historical buildings dating back to the 19th century, were sold for only 590 million Egyptian pounds (99 million dollars), when in fact the land value alone of the stores is as much as four billion pounds (670 million dollars).

NINETEEN) - PIRACY IS BIGGEST THREAT TO SOUTHERN AFRICA SECURITY

South Africa believes Somali pirates, and not political instability in Zimbabwe, pose the biggest threat to security in southern Africa, its defence minister said on Tuesday. The pirates, spurred on by multi-million-dollar ransoms paid to release hijacked vessels along a key oil shipping route, have struck further south, threatening regional commerce and trade from Africa's largest economy, Lindiwe Sisulu told Reuters. "At the moment, we think that the issue of piracy is beginning to be a serious problem to us ... We have defined maritime security as a threat to the region," Sisulu said in an interview. South Africa, which operates the continent's most sophisticated navy, has already deployed the German-built frigate SAS Mendi to patrol the Mozambique channel in the Indian Ocean as a deterrent following a pirate incursion close to South African territorial waters late last year. "A great deal of our trade takes place on the sea and we've got to make sure we protect that," Sisulu said. Analysts say more than 40 percent of the world's seaborne oil supply passes through the Gulf of

Aden and the Arabian Sea and is at risk from pirate gangs. **SOUTH AFRICA TO UNVEIL MILITARY STRATEGY AGAINST PIRATES** Southern Africa is a major supplier of raw materials for the world and a vital source of the commodities that help power China's economic engine. Sisulu said a military strategy, which would flesh out the operational and funding requirements to deal with piracy, would be presented to cabinet within a month, following mounting pressure from the European Union to boost the global fight. "We are responding first and foremost in our national interest and secondly in support of international effort." South Africa, one of Africa's largest peace-keeping contributors on the continent with troops in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Central African Republic, intends to go the market next year to tender for urgently needed military transport aircraft, Sisulu said. Its current airlift capacity is constrained after it cancelled a \$5.2 billion contract to buy eight Airbus A400M aircraft due to rising costs and delivery delays. "We don't have one and we depend on renting the aircraft," she said. Sisulu did not rule out humanitarian or peace-keeping assistance to Ivory Coast, as the west African nation sought to rebuild in the aftermath of a violent power struggle following a disputed election. South Africa's dispatch of a naval vessel to waters off the Ivory Coast worried some African leaders, who saw it as an unwarranted projection of force. The ship has returned to South Africa. "Should at any point we be asked to contribute to creating any stability in Cote d'Ivoire we would be happy to do that," Sisulu said. (Reuters)

TWENTY) - **SWAZILAND FORCES FIRE AT CROWDS TO HALT ANTI-KING PROTEST**

Swazi police fired rubber bullets on Tuesday to break up protests against the state's absolute monarchy, which has been widely criticised for human rights abuses and mismanaging a weak economy. Activists said police arrested scores of people who were planning an uprising against King Mswati III similar to the ones that toppled the leaders of the North African states of Tunisia and Egypt. Police also fired tear gas and deployed water cannon in the main commercial city of Manzini to head off any mass protest, witnesses said. "The situation almost got out of control. They were compelled to shoot tear gas canisters to disperse the crowd," South Africa's SAPA news agency quoted Swazi police spokeswoman Wendy Hleta as saying. Police have blocked roads into Manzini, attacked teachers, closed universities and arrested labour leaders to try to keep a lid on the protests, the Swaziland Solidarity Network activist group said. "The people are leading themselves," spokesman Lucky Lukhele told Reuters, saying he expected the protests to continue. The U.S. Embassy in the capital Mbabane expressed concern about the crackdown, saying in a statement: "The U.S. calls on the Government of Swaziland to respect the rights of all its citizens to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression." Swaziland, with a population of about 1.4 million sandwiched between regional economic power South Africa and war-scarred Mozambique, is one of Africa's poorest states, with an unemployment rate of about 40 percent. About seven in 10 people live below the national poverty level. In contrast, King Mswati III has 14 wives and a personal fortune of \$200 million, according to Forbes magazine. The king's wealth is equal to about 8 percent of the state's GDP. Swaziland is running out of money due to a 60 percent decline in revenue from regional trade and by June it may not be able to service its debt and pay civil servants' salaries. (Reuters)

Fernando Matos Rosa

Brussels

