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ONE) - 70.7 MILLION € LESS FOR EU DEVELOPMENT AID IN 2012

"A delicate balancing act combining austerity and growth boosting measures for 500 million Europeans". This is how Budget and Financial Programming Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski describes the draft EU budget 2012 as adopted by the Commission this 20 April 2011. The draft budget for 2012 represents € 132.7 bn in payments amounting to a 4.9 % increase on 2011. Commitments amount to €147.4bn (+3.7%). The key objective of the 2012 Draft Budget is to fully support the European economy and EU citizens. The draft budget 2012 endeavours to be in tune with the current austerity climate at national level. The Commission has made a particular effort and opted for a freeze of its administrative expenditure for 2012 i.e. a 0.0% increase compared to the 2011 budget. This has been achieved by significantly reducing expenditure linked to buildings, information and communication technology, studies, publications, missions, conferences and meetings. Furthermore, for the third year in a row, the Commission does not request any additional new post. Also, in drawing up next year's draft budget, the Commission endeavoured to identify programmes or initiatives that are not performing. The Development Cooperation Instrument has been reduced by €70.7 million as a result of its performance assessment. [...] "We owe it to the European taxpayer, says Commissioner Lewandowski: savings must include looking seriously at what we are doing and asking ourselves whether everything we do bring genuine benefit to the whole of Europe!" (European Commission)

TWO) – AFD PLEDGES 350 MILLION € FOR IVORY COAST

The board of directors at the French Development Agency, or AFD, has [approved](#) a loan of €350 million to help Ivory Coast recover from a recent political crisis and boost its economy. "Over the past four months, Côte d'Ivoire's economy has suffered serious repercussions from the crisis and the country's public finances have been badly affected," AFD said in an April 14 press release." The Côte d'Ivoire State now has outstanding payments to settle, particularly for the civil service and State suppliers. Certain basic public services also need to be boosted immediately." AFD said the financing aims to restore order to the African country's public finances in the short term, enabling the new government to back priority budget spending such as fulfilling its obligations to civil servants, and financing urgent social expenditure and sanitation works, particularly in Abidjan. It will also pay for costs of high labor-intensive railway works and help revive the national civic service program. Last week, the French government pledged €400 million worth of aid to Ivory Coast, following the arrest of former leader Laurent Gbagbo, whose refusal to hand over power to Alassane Ouattara, the internationally recognized winner of last year's presidential elections, led to months-long violence in the African country. Aside from Ivory Coast, another African state and two countries from the Americas will receive financial assistance from AFD, as per its April 14 announcement. Mozambique is due to get a loan of €40 million to support a project designed to improve water supply and service in outlying communities in its capital, Maputo. The project is currently in the completion phase, AFD noted. The agency is lending \$230 million to help ease congestion and reduce pollution in the Dominican Republic's Greater Santo Domingo region. (Devex)

THREE) – HEAVY FIRE IN ABIDJAN

Des tirs d'arme lourde ont été entendus lundi à Abidjan dans le quartier de Yopougon (ouest), où des miliciens favorables à l'ex-chef d'Etat Laurent Gbagbo rejettent l'appel à désarmer lancé par le président ivoirien Alassane Ouattara, ont rapporté des habitants. "Depuis le matin ils ont commencé à tirer, à l'arme lourde. On ne sait pas ce qui se passe. On ne peut pas sortir", a déclaré à l'AFP par téléphone une habitante du secteur baptisé "Niangon", dans le sud du quartier. Les miliciens présents dans la zone "sont des jeunes de 17-18 ans, habillés en civil, tous armés", a-t-elle précisé, sans préciser l'origine des tirs. Un autre habitant, du secteur "Toits rouges", un peu plus au nord, a dit à l'AFP entendre "régulièrement de fortes détonations depuis quatre jours", tôt le matin et en fin de journée. "Il y a de jeunes combattants qui circulent en pick-up, qui vont, qui viennent. On se blottit dans la maison", a-t-il ajouté. Depuis l'arrestation de M. Gbagbo le 11 avril, les Forces républicaines (FRCI) du président Ouattara ont progressivement pris le contrôle de la capitale économique mais affrontent encore des miliciens dans le quartier de Yopougon, fief historique de l'ancien chef d'Etat. M. Ouattara a menacé vendredi de "désarmer par la force" les derniers groupes armés encore actifs à

Abidjan, s'ils ne déposent pas "rapidement" les armes. Après des négociations avec les FRCI, certains chefs miliciens se sont engagés à déposer les armes en échange d'une protection, mais ne l'ont pas fait jusque-là. M. Ouattara a également exigé le désarmement du "commando invisible" de l'ex-putschiste Ibrahim Coulibaly, dit "IB", qui contrôle une bonne partie du nord d'Abidjan. Le groupe a dit lundi avoir demandé à rencontrer le président pour se mettre à sa disposition. (AFP)

FOUR) - E-CONSULTATION ON HOW TO ENHANCE EU MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The European Commission (EC) is developing proposals on how to enhance the external dimension of the EU's migration policy ('The EU Global Approach to Migration'), to better meet the policy objectives and interests of the European Union (EU), its partner countries and all migrants concerned. This package of proposals will include a specific focus on the Migration and Development dimension of the EU migration policy. It is envisaged that the proposals will argue that the traditional migration and development agenda should be broadened to offer a migrant-centred approach. As such, the EC considers it is important to examine migration and development policy using the following lenses and identifying the benefits which migration brings for each, together with the challenges and possible solutions: individual migrant; migrant's family/household; countries and local communities of origin; and countries of destination. It is hoped this will enable policy makers to enhance the human and social dimension of migration and development policies. A migrant-centred approach might also be strengthened by increasing the involvement of migrant groups, research institutes, media and other non-state actors in both the development and implementation of migration and development policy. Finally, given that the largest movement of migrants occurs between countries located in the global South (so called South-South migration), the contribution of these migrants to the development of their countries of origin should be recognised and supported. The European Commission (EC) is developing proposals on how to enhance the external dimension of the EU's migration policy ('The EU Global Approach to Migration'), to better meet the policy objectives and interests of the European Union (EU), its partner countries and all migrants concerned. This package of proposals will include a specific focus on the Migration and Development dimension of the EU migration policy.

To access the full discussion paper prepared by the EC, click [here](#). (European Commission)

FIVE) – EGYPT: CORRUPTION RAN IN THE FAMILY

Ousted president Hosni Mubarak ran Egypt as his own private estate, carving up its resources and siphoning off its capital into offshore accounts. But he didn't do it alone: he had help from his family and a few trusted friends.

"The Mubaraks treated this country like it was their own fiefdom," says Amir Marghany, a corporate lawyer investigating the Mubarak regime's corruption trail. "The family was crazy about luxury and prime real estate... and used the top financial brains in the country to create rules to make them richer."

Mubarak was forced to step down on Feb. 11 after nearly three weeks of nationwide demonstrations calling for his removal. The 82-year-old former dictator is reported to be under guard in an Egyptian military hospital after complaining of heart problems that began as anti-corruption investigators began to interrogate him.

Prosecutors have accused Mubarak of amassing billions of dollars during his 30 years in power through kickback schemes and corrupt business dealings. His vast wealth is believed to be tied up in secret bank accounts, gold bullion, and ritzy villas and hotels in the United States and Europe.

"Mubarak's wealth is in the billions in a country where over 40 percent of the population live in poverty," says Ahmed Sakr Ashour, a professor of business administration at Alexandria University. "The huge contrast shows that the president abused the authority of his position to enrich himself."

Egypt's interim government has launched the largest corruption probe in the nation's history to identify, sequester and – it is hoped – recover Mubarak's illicit fortune. Investigators are working with local corruption watchdogs to follow the money trail, while foreign governments have been asked to freeze the former ruling family's overseas assets.

"You can't imagine the number of people stepping forward with information," says Marghany, who recently joined the Egyptian Legal Group for Redemption of the People's Wealth (ELGRPW), an ad hoc group of lawyers and jurists seeking restitution of Mubarak's ill-gotten gains.

ELGRPW is appealing to whistleblowers and using its worldwide network of professional associates to help investigators untangle the complex web of shell companies, anonymous trusts and offshore bank accounts. The group claims to have renowned corruption investigators and "the high priests of corporate law" on its ticket.

Investigations have revealed that Mubarak, a former air force commander, sat at the top of a pyramid of corruption that extended all the way down to the lowest civil servant. But it was the privileged few – family and friends in the top tiers – who benefitted most from their proximity to the "Pharaoh," as he was often called.

"To operate any successful business in Egypt required taking on the Mubaraks or one of their proxies as a partner," a Cairo-based financial expert told. "If you cooperated, you were given a virtual monopoly over your domain; if you refused you were run out of business, or worse."

While relatively little is known about how Mubarak accumulated his personal fortune, a clearer picture has emerged about the illicit dealings of his family.

"The real shock is not the wealth of Mubarak himself, but what his two sons have been able to accumulate over the last 25 years," says Ashour. "From the time they graduated they entered into shady business dealings and exceeded their father in terms of corruption."

Alaa Mubarak, 49, and his younger brother Gamal, 47, are currently being held for investigation in a high-security prison south of Cairo.

According to Ashour, Alaa was the first to wade into business, taking shares and kickbacks in high-profile transport, construction and real estate projects. But his "mafia-style" dealings were soon overshadowed by those of his more financially savvy brother, Gamal, who after working as an investment banker in London, returned to Egypt in the late 1990s to begin a meteoric rise up the political ranks.

In Feb. 2000, Mubarak appointed Gamal and a number of his business associates to the general secretariat of his ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). Gamal was later promoted to head the NDP's powerful Policies Secretariat, fuelling assumptions that Mubarak was grooming his son as his successor – a charge the family has long denied.

Prosecutors have accused Gamal of leveraging his growing political power to introduce new economic policies and financial regulations that allowed him and his associates to plunder Egypt's public assets. Vast sums made through stock market manipulation and kickbacks from the sale of undervalued state assets were funneled into offshore bank accounts.

"It was a marriage of politics and money," says Marghany. "The schemes and the way they covered their tracks became more sophisticated over time."

The Mubarak family made a fortune on Egypt's stock market through Bullion, a Cyprus-registered securities fund with nearly 1 billion dollars under its management. Gamal holds a 50-percent stake in the fund, while Alaa owns an undisclosed stake and sits on its board.

Records show that Bullion's subsidiaries invested heavily in companies managed by Mubarak's closest allies. Those firms then recorded stunning profits, benefitting from favourable government rulings and contracts.

Investigators are also keying in on dozens of controversial land deals in which coveted state properties were awarded to Mubarak's cronies without competitive tenders and at prices far below valuation. One of the most controversial deals involves the sale of prime residential land to Sixth of October Development and Investment Company (SODIC), a developer owned by Alaa's father-in-law, Magdi Rasekh.

Meanwhile, a loophole in Egyptian company law may have helped the Mubarak family launder their kickbacks.

In order to establish a joint stock or limited liability company all shareholders are required to deposit their share of the capital into a bank account. Yet there is no mechanism to confirm who is providing the money.

"Some guy can just show up with a suitcase full of cash, or wire transfer it from anywhere in the world," Marghany explains. "This way you get your kickback in the form of free shares in the company, and on paper you've paid for your shares and are a legitimate business."

Over the last decade, hundreds of conglomerates were formed and divvied up by a small group of Mubarak associates, and in which Gamal and Alaa were assumed to be silent partners. The original shareholders would usually wait a year or two to collect dividends, and then exit with a put option on their shares – making enormous sums in the process.

Egyptian prosecutors are also putting together a case against Mubarak's wife, 69-year-old Suzanne – whose reputation for extravagance and haute fashion have earned her tabloid comparisons to Marie Antoinette.

Anti-corruption investigators recently discovered that the former first lady maintained a secret account at the National Bank of Egypt with over 147 million dollars in donations from European countries intended for

the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The library's administrators claim they were unaware of the existence of the account, for which Suzanne had sole signatory power.

The discovery appeared to confirm long-held suspicions that the former first lady's involvement in various NGOs and charities was merely a front for capturing foreign donations. Investigators are now examining her other pet projects, including literacy campaigns, a peace movement, and a children's cancer hospital. Mubarak vehemently denied the corruption allegations leveled against him and his family in a pre-recorded television speech broadcast on Apr. 10. The deposed president's defiant tone and threats angered many Egyptians and appear to have precipitated the legal action against him.

Now, as government agencies and groups like ELGRPW attempt to trace and recover the Mubarak family's illicit wealth, they are also drawing up plans on how it should be used to develop the country. Marghany says it is important to demonstrate to countries whose economies could be impacted by the restitution of these assets that Egyptians are worthy of receiving them.

SIX) – FRANCE MUST ACCEPT 'TEMPORARILY' TUNISIAN IMMIGRANTS, SAY SOCIALISTS

Le secrétaire national du PS à l'international, Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, a estimé mardi que la France devait "accueillir" provisoirement les immigrés tunisiens se trouvant à la frontière avec l'Italie, et a accusé Nicolas Sarkozy de politique électoraliste. "Pour faire face, il faut aider le Maghreb. Fermer nos frontières, ça ne règle rien", a déclaré sur Canal+ M. Cambadélis, interrogé sur la rencontre dans la journée à Rome entre le président Sarkozy et le chef du gouvernement italien Silvio Berlusconi. Ce rendez-vous a pour but d'apaiser les tensions alors que Paris a suscité la colère de Rome mi-avril en suspendant la circulation ferroviaire depuis la ville italienne de Vintimille, estimant qu'un train avec à son bord des manifestants voulant accompagner des immigrés tunisiens posait un risque pour l'ordre public. La France est, elle, irritée par l'Italie qui a décidé d'octroyer des permis de séjour de six mois aux plus de 20.000 Tunisiens arrivés sur ses côtes depuis janvier pour qu'ils rejoignent "amis et parents" ailleurs en Europe. "On les accueille, oui. On met en place un dispositif qui permet temporairement d'accueillir ces gens", a jugé Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, un proche du directeur du Fonds monétaire international (FMI), Dominique Strauss-Kahn. "Il n'y a pas d'appel d'air aujourd'hui. Il y a un flux plus important que d'habitude et l'Europe, ensemble, peut y faire face", a-t-il poursuivi. Selon lui, "on y fait face de deux manières". "Une manière de fond, c'est à dire qu'on aide ces pays", or, "aujourd'hui, on saupoudre, on se donne bonne conscience. Il faudrait une aide massive", a fait valoir le député de Paris. Et sur "le court terme, dans l'urgence, c'est donner des titres provisoires. De toute façon on va le faire, tout le monde sait qu'on va le faire. L'Italie a déjà commencé à le faire. Il faut recevoir ces hommes et leur dire qu'ils ont vocation à retourner dans leur pays quand la situation sera stabilisée", a-t-il enchaîné. "Mais aujourd'hui on ne veut pas que l'Europe réponde, on veut utiliser le problème à des fins électorales, que ce soit M. Berlusconi ou M. Sarkozy", a déploré le responsable socialiste. (AFP)

SEVEN) – FRANCE AND ITALY CALL FOR BORDER REFORM

Deutsche Welle reports that France and Italy are looking to secure a deal on tightening European border controls after recent tensions over the influx of migrants from North Africa.

French president Nicolas Sarkozy and Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi will meet in Rome today to look at resolving tensions and tightening border measures.

According to the Telegraph, the two countries will present Brussels with an ultimatum to abolish the European free travel border rules that have been in place for 16 years.

The paper says Berlusconi called the meeting after his decision to give more than 25,000 Tunisian refugees residence permits "causing the worst border crisis since the EU's 1995 Schengen treaty".

Elsewhere the FT says Italy began to issue immigrants with temporary residence papers after the EU refused to activate a "burden-sharing agreement", while France reimposed border controls and returned several hundred immigrants to Italy.

Currently the two sides are working on proposed revisions of Schengen where EU border controls could be reimposed in "exceptional circumstances when EU external borders have been breached," the paper reports.

EIGHT) – RUSSIA WARNS AGAINST NEW UN RESOLUTION ON LIBYA

Russia said on Tuesday it will not support any United Nations Security Council resolutions on Libya which could escalate the conflict in the North African nation, local news agencies reported. "If a resolution leads to a further escalation of a civil war by any means, including outside intervention, we will not be able to support this," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was quoted as saying by Interfax news agency. Russia, a veto-wielding permanent U.N. Security Council member, abstained last month from the vote on a resolution authorising force to protect civilians in Libya by enforcing a no-fly zone. But Russia's leaders have repeatedly criticised the extent of the coalition operation. Initially, leaders of the NATO Western military alliance had ruled out sending ground troops to Libya, but EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said last week the bloc's members would consider such a step if the U.N. requested it. (Reuters)

NINE) – LIBYAN FORCES EXPELLED FROM MISRATA AS NATO BOMBS PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

Des rebelles libyens ont annoncé lundi avoir chassé les forces gouvernementales de Misrata, théâtre de combats sanglants depuis deux mois, tandis que l'Otan a infligé au régime contesté un affront symbolique en détruisant le bureau de Mouammar Kadhafi à Tripoli. Plusieurs chefs de groupes de combattants de Misrata, grande ville côtière à 200 km à l'est de Tripoli, ont déclaré que les forces gouvernementales, durement pilonnées depuis deux jours, s'étaient retirées de la ville et se trouvaient dans ses faubourgs. "Des affrontements ont lieu à la limite ouest de la ville, le reste est nettoyé. Il reste sans doute quelques soldats cachés dans la ville qui ont peur d'être tués, mais il n'y a plus de groupe de soldats", a précisé l'un d'eux. Cependant le porte-parole militaire du Conseil national de transition (CNT) de l'opposition à Benghazi (est), le colonel Ahmed Omar Bani, s'est montré nettement moins optimiste sur la situation de Misrata: "C'est un désastre là-bas, Kadhafi n'est pas en train de perdre". "Misrata est la clé de Tripoli. Si (Kadhafi) abandonne Misrata, il va abandonner Tripoli. Il n'est pas assez fou pour faire cela", a-t-il ajouté. Après de violents combats et bombardements qui ont fait au moins 55 morts et plus de 200 blessés samedi et dimanche, et des explosions plus fortes que d'habitude jusque dans la nuit, Misrata connaissait une nette accalmie depuis lundi matin. Des roquettes et obus y tombaient de temps à autre, apparemment tirés au hasard au milieu des habitations, faisant au moins neuf victimes civiles, dont des femmes et des enfants en bas âge, mais selon un journaliste de l'AFP aucun bruit de combat rapproché n'était audible. Dans une mosquée, un muezzin chantait en continu "Dieu est grand, il est mon seul guide". "Il chante depuis des heures pour apaiser les gens", a expliqué à l'AFP Seilam Naas, un habitant de 55 ans, qui a perdu deux cousins en 48 heures, l'un tué par un tireur embusqué, l'autre par une roquette. Dans les quartiers auparavant contrôlés par les pro-Kadhafi, l'avancée des rebelles a permis de libérer des habitants enfermés chez eux parfois pendant des semaines à cause des tireurs embusqués. Selon les Etats-Unis, il reste encore 2.000 étrangers en attente d'évacuation dans le port de Misrata, où les stocks alimentaires sont encore suffisants. A Tripoli, cible depuis vendredi de raids intensifs de l'Otan, le bureau du colonel Kadhafi, situé dans son immense résidence du secteur de Bab Al-Aziziya, a été totalement détruit par une frappe aérienne de l'Otan avant l'aube, selon un journaliste de l'AFP. Trois fonctionnaires ont été tués et 45 personnes blessées, dont 15 grièvement, dans le raid, a déclaré le porte-parole du régime, Moussa Ibrahim, lors d'une conférence de presse devant le bâtiment détruit. En revanche, le colonel Kadhafi "va bien, il est en bonne santé et il a le moral", a-t-il assuré. Il est en "lieu sûr et il dirige la bataille". En soirée, cinq fortes explosions ont secoué l'est de la capitale, ont indiqué des témoins sans être en mesure de préciser les cibles visées. Selon la télévision d'Etat libyenne, des frégates de l'Otan ont également visé lundi un câble sous-marin de fibres optiques reliant Syrte aux ports pétroliers de Ras Lanouf et Brega (est), provoquant la coupure des télécommunications dans cette région. A Bruxelles, l'Otan a annoncé avoir mené une frappe ciblée dans le centre de Tripoli contre "un centre de communications utilisé pour coordonner les attaques contre des civils". **ITALY READY TO JOIN BOMBARDMENTS** L'Italie, ancienne puissance coloniale et l'un des quatre pays (avec la France, le Qatar et la Gambie) à avoir reconnu le CNT, s'est dite désormais prête à mener des "actions ciblées contre des objectifs militaires spécifiques" en Libye, à la veille d'un sommet franco-italien notamment consacré au dossier libyen. Tout à l'ouest de la Libye, les forces pro-Kadhafi ont bombardé dimanche des zones proches de Dehiba à la frontière avec la Tunisie, selon des témoins. La principale ville de cette zone de montagnes, Zenten, à 145 km au sud-ouest de Tripoli, a été la cible de tirs de roquettes qui ont fait quatre morts. Depuis quelques semaines, les combats se sont intensifiés dans cette zone, où les loyalistes tentent de couper les communications entre les localités à majorité amazighe (berbère) qui se sont soulevées dès le début de la révolte contre le régime à la mi-février. A Addis Abeba, l'Union africaine, qui tente de trouver une solution au conflit, a parlé de "début encourageant"

après ses rencontres avec des représentants des deux camps en vue d'un cessez-le-feu. Les rebelles exigent cependant le départ de M. Kadhafi en préalable à toute solution négociée. (AFP)

TEN) – **BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN AND MILITARY ACTION UNDERMINES AID**

The European Parliament organised a hearing on if and how military and political objectives can coexist with humanitarian action when helping civilians in armed conflicts. Politicians, military officers and NGO representatives pointed to lessons from Afghanistan, DR Congo, Haiti and Libya which could help improve the situation and uphold the independence and neutrality of humanitarian actors. Opening the meeting, the vice-chair of Parliament's Development Committee, French EPP member, Michèle Striffler, said "efforts of humanitarian aid workers providing impartial help are often jeopardised by political military and security actions", but "both sides need each other". Speaking of conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Prof. Robert Kabamba of Belgium's Liège University explained that there was confusion between military action as a first step to solve a crisis and humanitarian aid as a second step: "The role of the military forces was vague" and their mission "not clearly defined". In any case, assistance should only be based on actual needs, Ross Mountain of DARA (an NGO specialising in the review of humanitarian donor activity) underlined: "We identified politicisation and militarisation of aid as increasing problems with negative effects on access, protection and safety". Speaking from the donors' perspective, the head of ECHO, the European Commission's international aid department, Peter Zangl said: "When aid supports military force, it is no longer considered as humanitarian. The more aid is perceived as politicised, the less effective it is". (European Parliament)

ELEVEN) – **CHINA SAYS AID TO AFRICA NOT AIMED AT RESOURCES**

China slammed suggestions that its burgeoning foreign aid to Africa is driven by its interest in the impoverished continent's rich natural resources, saying Tuesday that it helps poorer countries out of solidarity. China has made significant sacrifices in trying to help African countries lift themselves out of poverty, including the deaths of more than 700 Chinese workers in aid projects, Vice Commerce Minister Fu Ziying told reporters. He said accusations that Beijing's foreign aid to Africa was targeted at securing resources were "nonsense." Fu was briefing the press on a report on China's foreign aid released last week by the State Council Information Office. The report, the first of its kind, said China's budgeted foreign aid swelled nearly 30 percent a year since 2004 and totaled 256.2 billion Yuan (\$39.2 billion) from 1950 through 2009. The gathering pace of Chinese aid is evident in many corners of the developing world. It is building roads and railways around Africa, textile mills in Syria, cement plants in Peru and bridges in Bangladesh. While welcomed by recipient governments, it has drawn fire from the U.S. and other Western donors, who say Beijing's lack of transparency is contributing to corruption and mismanagement. Many scholars and pundits have said China's action is driven by the need for natural resources. Fu said that despite Beijing's aid to Africa, less than 30 percent of the continent's total oil exports go to China and that the Chinese also work in African countries with few natural resources, such as Mali. He added that China's assistance to Africa dates back at least four decades, pointing to the Tanzania-Zambia Railway, which links east, central and southern Africa and was financed by an interest-free loan of about \$500 million from China between 1970-75. "In this environment in Africa, where many countries had just become independent and when they were abandoned by western countries, China provided assistance," he said, adding that 69 Chinese workers died in the construction of the railway. African leaders have welcomed Chinese interest, which comes without the political strings often associated with Western investment, including pressure to fight corruption and improve human rights. (AP)

TWELVE) – **MAURITANIA POLICE DISSOLVES DEMONSTRATIONS**

Une manifestation de plusieurs centaines de jeunes Mauritaniens à Nouakchott contre le régime du président Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, a été dispersée lundi par la police antiémeutes qui a procédé à une vingtaine d'interpellations, a constaté un journaliste de l'AFP. La police est intervenue en utilisant des gaz lacrymogènes au moment où ces jeunes ont tenté d'accéder par la force sur une place du centre-ville où ils avaient pris

l'habitude de se rassembler au début de leur mouvement fin février, mais qui leur a été interdite depuis plusieurs semaines. Une vingtaine de jeunes, dont trois femmes, ont été interpellés au moment de la dispersion. Les femmes ont par la suite été remises en liberté. Ces jeunes, qui se font appeler les "jeunes du 25 février", jour de leur première manifestation contre le régime, avaient commencé à affluer très tôt lundi matin vers cette place dont l'accès était barré par un impressionnant dispositif des forces de l'ordre. Ils s'étaient donné rendez-vous via Facebook pour cette manifestation baptisée "jour de la colère". Avant de tenter de forcer le passage vers la place, ils avaient occupé les rues proches, coupant la circulation en plusieurs endroits, notamment sur l'avenue Gamal Abdel Nasser, principale artère du centre. "Le peuple veut le départ du régime", ont clamé les manifestants, arborant des drapeaux de la Mauritanie et des banderoles affirmant le caractère pacifique de leur mouvement. Ils avaient également mis en garde contre toute répression "pour éviter le pire, auquel nous sommes prêts", selon l'un de leurs porte-parole. Une mise en garde relayée par les députés de l'opposition qui ont menacé dans un communiqué de "se joindre aux manifestants en cas d'intervention de la police". De précédentes manifestations de jeunes organisées depuis le 25 février à Nouakchott ont été sévèrement réprimées par la police. Pour la première fois, de nombreuses jeunes femmes affiliées à l'opposition ont participé lundi à la manifestation, preuve, selon leur porte-parole Fatimettou Mint Ahmed, de leur "contribution à l'œuvre de mise à l'écart du régime véreux en place", au nom "de toutes les femmes du pays". Selon la porte-parole, le gouvernement "est responsable de la véritable menace contre l'unité de notre peuple que constituent les heurts raciaux à l'université". De violents affrontements ont opposé la semaine dernière des membres de syndicats rivaux lors d'une élection interne à l'université de Nouakchott. Plusieurs personnes avaient été blessées. Ces syndicats ont eux-mêmes regretté des violences à "caractère racial" entre étudiants islamistes et de la communauté négro-mauritanienne. La Mauritanie est dirigée par Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, un ancien général arrivé au pouvoir par un coup d'Etat en août 2008, puis élu à la présidence de la République en juillet 2009. (AFP)

THIRTEEN) – SENEGAL: LOCAL HEALTH POSTS A QUALIFIED SUCCESS

"We no longer need to go to Hanène, three kilometres away, for vaccinations or for a check-up for our children," said Maguette Niang, a 40-year-old mother from Keur Madaro, a village in the west of Senegal. Keur Madaro is one of many Senegalese communities that now has staff watching over the health of the village from a community health post - a simple two-roomed building right in the heart of the village. This is thanks to a five-year project launched in 2006 under the title Wër (meaning "good health" in Wolof) being carried out jointly by the Senegalese Ministry of Health, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the non-governmental organisations Plan International, Child Fund, World Vision and Africare.

These partners are equipping the community health points and supplying them with medicine, in order to ensure primary health services are readily available to those who need it.

"The project has led to positive changes with respect to people coming in more frequently to seek advice or to get health care. The awareness campaigns that we carry out on malaria, acute respiratory infections, tuberculosis screening, other illnesses, as well as family planning are regularly heeded by the community," says Djiby Faye, a community health worker at Ndioukhane Sérère, in Thiès (in the west of the country). Faye credits the health posts with improving the skills of community health workers to handle treatment of some common ailments. "One no longer needs to go to see the head nurse to treat malaria, at least if it's not a serious case," said Faye.

Anti-malarial medication is free, but people have to pay for care and other medication, according to the health worker.

"This project is in the process of improving health for women and children," says Mamadou Lamine Niang, head nurse at the health centre in Hanène, which covers 23 villages including Keur Madaro. "It allows us to strengthen coverage of health programmes in our rural community, Notto (part of the western region of Thiès), by retraining community health workers, the equipping of health posts, and the putting in place of community health educators in charge of supporting activities in the health posts."

The community is pleased by the newfound proximity of health services thanks to the project which will reach its five-year term in June 2011.

"For many years, community members were reluctant to come for vaccinations. Now with the talks organised at the health posts, people are more and more attentive to their health," confirms Sophie Diouf, a resident of Keur Madaro.

"We give immediate care. People get a consultation and care right here," says Abdou Seck, Wër project supervisor for the Notto zone.

"One can't say the Wër project has attained its objectives because there is still much left to do despite the effort," says the nurse Niang.

He pointed to the absence of mid-wives and nurses, which leaves the vital area of maternal and neonatal health an area of concern. Speaking in her personal capacity, Dieynaba Niang, a community health educator for Plan International, said the health posts are not yet adequately staffed with qualified personnel - nurses and midwives - to support births.

Niang agreed, stressing that both homebirths and deliveries at the health posts are forbidden by the Senegalese authorities who consider it unsafe.

Niang notes with dismay the re-emergence of malaria due to a lack of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, the slow functioning of health posts which are not always completely equipped, and persisting weaknesses in the skills of community health workers who are not especially well-motivated".

In addition to awareness campaigns for certain diseases, health workers put on talks for women, to popularise family planning and ensure regular check-up to monitor early childhood development. But this essential work is carried out by poorly-paid agents.

The community health workers are volunteers and are not paid out of the budget; the health system only provides them with basic training necessary for their function.

"We want to have our skills strengthened. We are not motivated and by way of pay, we get just 10 to 20 percent of the receipts from the sale of drugs," says Faye.

"Moving around [in the course their duty] is difficult for the community educators due to a lack of transport. The effectiveness of this project of community health is limited, because the health centres which must support the local health posts are left stranded," explains Niang.

FOURTEEN) - BURKINA FASO: TRAINING GIVES DOMESTICS HOPE OF ESCAPING THEIR LOT

Emeline Djigma, a twenty-year-old domestic worker, is preparing for the entrance exam to the National Teachers' College this year. She hopes she'll make it, having finally obtained her secondary school certificate thanks to five years of evening classes.

"I only want to succeed to show the way to others and to tell them that by working hard at it, they can move mountains," said Djigma. She spent five years at Ouagadougou's Ouassongdo Centre (the name means "come and help me" in the local language, Moré), managing to attend classes while working as a domestic. Life for domestic workers in Burkina Faso is hard, said Pulchérie Nanan, another young woman studying at the Centre.

"I get up at five in the morning, I sweep the courtyard and clean the house before I go to the market to do the cooking; in the evening, it's more or less the same thing all over again," she said. Nanan earns just 5,000 CFA francs (11 dollars) a month, but hopes to open a hair salon at the end of her apprenticeship.

Rosalie Boutoulegou, another girl at the centre, can finally read and write her name - at the age of 18. "When the sister came to see my cousin in order to free up a part of my day, I didn't believe that I would learn to read and write one day," she told IPS. "I wasn't even getting paid because I lived with my cousin."

Come to me for help

The sister she refers to is the formidable Sister Edithe, the nun who serves as president of the Ouassangdo Centre. Sister Edithe criss-crosses the main roads and back streets of Ouagadougou to convince employers to allow the young women - sometimes just girls - who do their domestic work to come to the centre, where they spend part of the day learning to sew, cook or how to read.

According to Sister Edithe, many domestic workers are badly exploited, often under the pretext that they are being given a place to live and food to eat.

"But we can't simply take girls out of the homes of their employers, or where will they go?" says Sister Edithe.

The work of Sister Edithe's centre is complemented by a campaign to end exploitation of domestic workers carried out by the Burkina Faso Red Cross in partnership with mobile phone companies. The campaign periodically sends SMS messages to selected subscribers, targeting local authorities, traditional chiefs, teachers, and restaurant owners.

"Employers, domestic workers are your family helpers; they have the same rights as your children. Avoid submitting them to bad poor wages, abuse, heavy workloads or sexual violence," says one such message.

The SMS's are sent out three times a year, according to Naba Wangré, head of the project.

Wangré says domestic workers with no formal skills or training earn between 3,000 and 6,000 francs CFA (between \$6.50 and 13 dollars) a month. She has received numerous complaints from domestic workers who have been assaulted, abused or survived sexual abuse.

Sister Edithe, who has welcomed some 500 girls in her centre since 2002, believes that some domestic workers are paid 25,000 CFA (about 55 dollars) or more. "When there's someone backing them, people pay better and respect the rights of the girls," she says.

"It's a type of work which remains hidden and indistinct because there is exploitation. There is also silence because it is a sensitive sector and difficult to control, especially when the girls work in the families," explains Wangré.

Raising awareness of domestics' rights

Domestic workers in Burkina Faso are typically teenaged or younger girls from rural areas in the country; sometimes sent to work for their own relatives in a semi-formal employment relationship. Nearly 80 percent of Burkinabé girls between the ages of five and 17 are compelled to do household work, according to the National Inquiry Into Child Labour, carried out in 2006 by the Ministry for Labour and Social Security.

The time spent on household activities averages 15.6 hours, spent on tasks such as gathering firewood, doing dishes, cleaning, laundry and looking after children, the inquiry found.

"Domestic work is one of the worst forms of work because the domestic rises at five in the morning, sweeps, does the cooking and only gets back to sleep after midnight," says Sister Edithe.

In the absence of laws dealing specifically with such domestic work in Burkina, it's legislation dealing with child labour that is awkwardly applied. According to convention 182 of the International Labour Organisation, it is considered dangerous work for children if the nature and conditions of the work endangers their health, security or morals of a child.

"We are trying raise public awareness of domestic work, particularly for employers and the girls themselves," says Wangré.

Stella Somé, who directs efforts against child labour at the Labour Ministry believes that only awareness and training can reduce cases of exploitation of domestic workers. "The main difficulty is that this work passes for household duties; it's not easy to send an agent to see who is working in people's homes."

Confronted with the size of the problem, Somé's ministry initiated a forum in 2010 to raise awareness on this question in the regions where Burkina Faso's domestic workforce comes from: in the centre-west, southwest, and centre-east of the country, and other regions.

FIFTEEN) – KISS OF LIFE FOR DR CONGO PYGMIES

"Most of the houses in our villages are still made with small branches that we have collected, while our timber and our medicinal plants are taken by people who are enriching themselves elsewhere," said Ampibo Amuri, a traditional pygmy chief.

"It's been several weeks now since I stopped listening to the requests of these people who come and bring us drink, give us used clothes, sometimes even salt, in exchange for our products," he said.

"I want our children to study," said Antoinette Ambulampo. "The animals and the trees have been taken ... When we arrive to work in the forests where someone has cut down the trees, we are hot. We work a lot for the people who come and court us."

They met Amuri and Ambulampo in the village of Bolenge, in the Equateur Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Marginalised minority

There are roughly 200,000 pygmies living in the forests of the Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo - with smaller numbers as far east as Rwanda and Burundi, according to ethnologists Serge Bahuchet and Guy Philipart de Foy.

Across the Congo Basin, indigenous peoples are a marginalised minority. They often provide the workforce in the fields for others, exploited and sometimes paid in kind or with worthless scrip.

At the second International Forum of Indigenous Peoples, which took place from Mar. 16-18 at Ifondo in the Republic of Congo, Henri Ndjombo, that country's minister of forestry and sustainable development, acknowledged the suffering of indigenous peoples?

"We are going to have to come up with appropriate responses to indigenous peoples' problems for their survival, because they are up against a number of obstacles, notably, access to resources, which must be increasingly monitored. This is necessary in order for the development of alternative activities that allow this population to live better," he states.

There have been some successes in securing the rights of indigenous people in conjunction with conservation of the forest they traditionally depend on for a livelihood.

The international non-profit organisation The Forest Trust (TFT), based in Geneva, is part of a wider group whose work for the rights of pygmies Amuri views in a positive light. The TFT has announced the certification of sustainable environmental and humanitarian practices of an additional 571,000 hectares of forest managed by the Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB), a logging company operating in the Congo basin.

TFT says this brings the total area of tropical forest under sustainable management in the Congo Basin to more than 5.3 million hectares.

The certification of the Loundoungou and Toukoulaka concessions, according to TFT, means that all of the forest regions under CIB's management have been certified by the independent standard-setting body, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), a milestone in the protection of both the fragile environment of the forest and the livelihoods of local communities, especially semi-nomadic pygmies.

Certification alone not enough

But the lack of demand for sustainable wood and wood products (which command higher prices than other timber) could mean that the positive response of the industry to pressure from European and U.S. activists amounts to nothing, says TFT's executive director Scott Poynton.

"The consumers aren't there and the NGOs aren't pushing the sale of this certified wood. And without economic returns, the companies can't maintain these practices," he adds.

Robert Hunink of the CIB confirms that opportunities in the market are still lacking. "Nevertheless, the staff and management of the CIB are in support of the FSC process," he says. "The buyers will start to reward companies that have responded positively to the certification of their forestry operations."

Jerome Bokele, the first pygmy to be elected to the provincial legislature of Equateur Province, in the north-west of the DRC, said: "The certification of 571.000 hectares by the FSC is a good thing. But it's only an announcement. Thousands of logs are thrown into the Congo river - and often come from lawless exploitation of the tropical forests. More than 70 percent of the indigenous people in Africa are trapped in dire poverty..."

Odon Munsadi, an environmentalist in the DRC points out: "Environmental practices in this case involve the rational use of forests for their future existence. Bad practices lead to global warming and grassy plains."

"Certification can be a breath of oxygen for the indigenous people if there is rigorous monitoring and if they develop and come to the fore. If not, the theory will prevail," he warns.

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