

Mozambique News Agency

AIM Reports

Report no.422, 29th March 2011



Former Interior Minister sentenced to two years imprisonment

The Maputo City Court on 22 March sentenced former Interior Minister Almerino Manhenje to two years imprisonment. Judge Octavio Tchuma found Manhenje guilty of three counts of violating budgetary legality, one of abuse of his position, and two of paying undue remunerations. The offences dated to 2004, when Manhenje was one of the most powerful men in the country. His two co-accused, Rosario Fidelis and Alvaro de Carvalho, former director and deputy director of the financial department of the Interior Ministry, were also sentenced to two years.

The court found it proved that Manhenje had ordered the payment of 91.4 million old meticaïs (about \$3,000) to acquire fixed and mobile telephones for senior Interior Ministry staff, without any coverage for this expenditure in the budget.

He had also ordered the payment of a phone bill of 8.226 million old meticaïs (\$265) run up by his wife, which also had no budgetary coverage.

The court also found that Manhenje had used Ministry funds to pay almost 1.2 billion meticaïs in various expenditure not covered by the Ministry's budget. The Manhenje household had also benefitted personally from 551 million meticaïs worth of foodstuffs and hygiene products acquired from Ministry funds, and air tickets for his wife and niece.

The crime of abuse of position refers to Manhenje's decision to lease two ministry warehouses to UNIPOL, a company set up to produce police uniforms, and in which he had an interest.

Fidelis and Carvalho were found guilty of implementing the illegal expenditure ordered by Manhenje. In short, while Manhenje was the "moral author" of the crimes, they were the "material authors".

In addition to the prison term, the court ordered the three to pay legal costs and compensation to the state of slightly more than a million new meticaïs (about 32,700 dollars).

Manhenje received a relatively light sentence because many of the original charges brought against him by the Public Prosecutor's Office were thrown out. Initially, Manhenje faced 49 charges – but the investigating magistrate dropped 48 of them.

The prosecution appealed to the Supreme Court, which reinstated some of the charges. But the Supreme Court

rejected the charge of diverting state funds (which could have carried a sentence of 20 years imprisonment) on the grounds that Ministers do not normally have funds from the state budget under their direct control.

Manhenje's lawyer, Lourenco Malia, immediately announced that he will appeal against the sentence. Given the huge backlog of appeals in the Supreme Court, it will thus be many months, if not years, before Manhenje, Fidelis and Carvalho have to find the million meticaïs to pay the compensation.

The appeal also suspends the jail term. But in any case, none of them are likely to spend any more time in jail. They were held for 16 months in preventive detention before the Supreme Court ordered their provisional release. That time must be deducted from the sentence. Since it is normal practice that prisoners who have shown good behaviour are released on parole after completing half their sentence, it is thought unlikely that they will return to prison.

Chairperson of Constitutional Council resigns

The Chairperson of Mozambique's Constitutional Council, the country's highest body in matters of constitutional and electoral law, Luis Mondlane, announced his resignation on 17 March.

Mondlane was under immense pressure to stand down following accusations in the press of corrupt and illegal behaviour. He was accused of using the Constitutional Council budget to pay off personal bills. In particular, he had ensured that the Council pay off his mortgage for a central Maputo house that cost 24.3 million meticaïs (about \$784,000 at today's exchange rates).

Government spending on public transport

The number of passengers carried by public bus services in Maputo and the neighbouring city of Matola is rising by five per cent a year – but there is a 15 per cent decline in the number of passengers carried by private operators.

Speaking in the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, on 16 March, Transport Minister Paulo Zucula said that, under to the Transport Development Fund created last year, it has been possible to invest 3.6 million meticaís (\$1.16 million) in urban public transport.

Much of this money was used to buy 167 buses – 139 for the Maputo-Matola conurbation, 14 for Beira, and 14 for other provincial capitals.

Despite this, and the strengthening of rail passenger services in Maputo, the capital slid into a transport crisis as from last October. Zucula said this was due to a reduction in the number of private minibuses (commonly known as “chapas”) on the roads.

He said the chapas had faced increased costs of maintenance and of spare parts. The fuel they use is subsidised, but nothing else is. “In order not to lose money, they withdrew from some of the less profitable routes”, said Zucula, “which reduced the supply of such transport by over 30 per cent”.

Nonetheless, some private operators are now using large buses in Maputo, under a deal struck between the government and the Association of Mozambican Road Transport Operators (FEMATRO). But this has not yet been enough to fill the gap caused by the drop in the number of chapas.

The government must be able to step into the vacuum left by the chapa owners, stressed Zucula – and so the government has ordered and financed a further 222 buses that will arrive in the first half of this year.

Zucula implied that the fares charged by both public and private operators are unrealistically low. “The government is studying ways and means of adjusting the fares, while protecting the neediest strata of the population”, he said.

Ambitious schemes for the future include widening several of Maputo’s main avenues, greatly expanding the current one way system, and improving the main bus terminal. In the longer term, the Maputo Municipal Council wants to build a ring road around the city, and an overground metro system for Maputo and Matola is under consideration.

Looking back over the past decade, Zucula said that total public investment in transport (excluding roads and bridges) was about 900 million meticaís between 2000 and 2008. But in 2009-2010, this investment shot up to 14 billion meticaís.

CFM profits jump in 2010

Mozambique’s publicly owned rail and port company, CFM, last year almost tripled its profits, the company’s chairperson, Rosario Mualeia, revealed in Maputo on 22 March.

Speaking at the annual meeting of CFM managers, Mualeia said that in 2010 CFM made pre-tax profits of 1.49 billion meticaís (\$48 million), compared with 553 million meticaís in 2009.

This was the result of a 79 per cent increase in rail traffic revenue, a 57 per cent increase in port handling revenue, and a 55 per cent increase in income from the leasing of rail lines and port terminals to private sector led consortia.

Last year the company registered a growth of 11.3 per cent in the port sector, handling 14 million metric tonnes, compared with 12.6 million tonnes in 2009. On the railways, CFM transported 5.3 million tonnes of goods compared with 4.6 million tonnes in 2009, a growth of 15 per cent.

As for rail passenger traffic, this rose by 41.6 per cent, from 2.6 million passengers carried in 2009 to 3.7 million in 2010.

Mualeia described these figures as “very positive and encouraging”. Continually improving the company’s performance, he added, “requires greater rigour in billing for services provided, permanent collection of revenue using all the mechanisms instituted, strict budgetary discipline, an austere policy of managing human and material resources, and constant control on the company’s wages fund”.

Study on overground metro project

The municipal councils in Maputo and the neighbouring city of Matola on 21 March signed a memorandum of understanding with the Italian company SALCEF Construzioni Edili e Ferroviarie for a viability study on an overground metro linking the two cities.

Under this agreement, SALCEF will invest between €7.5 and €10 million (between \$10.7 and \$14.2 million) of its own funds in the study which should be concluded within 120 days.

The agreement was signed by the mayors of Maputo and Matola, David Simango and Arao Nhancale, and by SALCEF representative Panfilo Salciccia. The Mozambican Transport Minister Paulo Zucula and the Italian ambassador Carlo Lo Cascio witnessed the signing.

In addition to the costs of the viability study, the Italian company will disburse about €40 million to advance with the first phase of building the electrical system for the metro.

“This company will risk its own capital for the study which should absorb between 15 and 20 per cent of the total of €50 million that the company will use up to the conclusion of the first phase of the project”, Zucula told reporters.

More disciplinary proceedings in 2010

The Mozambican public administration last year initiated 1,700 disciplinary proceedings against state employees for various offences.

According to data from the Ministry of the Public Service, this is an increase of 64 cases in comparison to the 2009 figure.

About 1,300 of the disciplinary proceedings are at provincial level while 400 concern people employed by the central state apparatus.

The main offences alleged, at both central and provincial levels, are unjustified absences from work, and the theft of state funds and property. Between them, these offences account for 1,063 disciplinary proceedings, or 62 per cent of the total.

In the provinces there were 627 accusations of absenteeism, 201 of theft of money or property, and 112 of falsification of documents, while at central level there were 151 charges of absenteeism, 84 of theft, and 59 of negligence.

But not a single civil servant was accused of providing a poor service, even though they are angry complaints every day from the users of state services, and these are reflected in the comments and suggestions written in the complaints books that every state department must keep.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service – for details contact aim@aim.org.mz

\$161 million for Education Strategic Plan

The Mozambican Government's cooperation partners, including the World Bank, have promised to disburse \$161 million to fund the Education Strategic Plan for the period 2012-2016.

According to Education Minister Zeferino Martins, these funds have been mobilized under the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI), as requested by Mozambique in 2010.

The Strategic Plan is being drawn up, and on 24 March the Education Ministry and its local and foreign partners met to analyse it at the 12th Annual Review Meeting in Maputo.

During the meeting, the Government and its partners recognized that quality education is a as pupils are failing to develop basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Zeferino Martins stated that the Ministry's operations should continually focus on curriculum reform, provision of school books and other teaching materials, development of an integrated teacher training system as well as the increased recruitment of trained teachers.

Meanwhile, the international partners, represented by Patrick Empey, Head of Cooperation at the Irish Embassy, said the new Strategic Plan is an excellent opportunity to define measures to improve pupils' results, so that Mozambique can achieve the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All.

"This is an opportune time to identify the results to be achieved in the coming years to ensure that Mozambican citizens are empowered professionally and contribute to the development of the country", said Empey

Civil society, represented by the Education or All Movement (MEPT), argued that the plan must be inclusive, creating strategies needed to meet the challenges imposed on education in Mozambique.

MEPT was established in 1999. It has more than 70 members, including non-government organizations, religious institutions and trade unions.

Slight improvement in teacher-pupil ratio

Despite all the problems involved in hiring new teachers, the teacher-pupil ratio in Mozambican first level primary education (EP1 - first to fifth grades) improved slightly last year.

According to the report presented on 24 March to the joint annual review meeting, the number of pupils per teacher in EP1 fell from 67 in 2009 to 65.8 in 2010. In 2008 the ratio had been one teacher per 71 pupils.

Despite this improvement, the figures are far from reaching the desired ratio of 30 pupils per teacher. And there are fears that this year the progress may be reversed, since the resources available to the Ministry of Education only allow it to recruit 8,000 new teachers for all levels of education (the average figure in recent years has been 12,000).

Faced with the huge budgetary deficit for hiring teachers, the donors have decided, as an exceptional measure, to provide \$4.3 million to pay wages to the 1,200 secondary and vocational teachers who should be recruited this year.

The joint report notes that several targets concerning girls' education were not met in 2010. Only 68.6 per cent of girls aged six entered primary school that year instead of the 79 per cent planned.

And the finishing rate for girls in second level primary education (EP2 - sixth and seventh grades) was a mere 42.8 per cent, rather than the already modest target of 46 per cent. This is slightly worse than the figure for 2009 (42.3 per cent), although considerably better than that for 2008 (34 per cent).

IFAD to provide \$21 million for fishing

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is to provide a loan of \$21 million to Mozambique to enhance artisanal fisheries and increase the income of poor rural households in fishing communities, under an agreement signed in Rome on 25 March by IFAD President Kanayo Nwanze, and the Mozambican representative Carla Mucavi.

According to IFAD "inshore waters in many coastal areas of Mozambique are becoming heavily overfished due to the widespread use of fishing techniques such as beach seines, and large weighted nets that can catch an entire school of fish. Catch sizes are falling, and return per unit of effort is starting to decline".

The purpose of the Artisanal Fisheries Promotion Project is to persuade fishermen to move away from the shore and to diversify their operations. The project, IFAD claims, "will both raise the incomes of poor fishing households and provide incentives to reduce fishing in inshore waters. It will also bring a sustainable increase in returns from fish sales for artisanal fishers and small market operators".

"Technical advances in catching, processing and marketing fresh fish will bring innovation and scaling-up throughout the whole fishing process – from boats and propulsion systems to fishing gear and post-catch processing, and particularly in the use of ice", added IFAD.

Under this project, a risk mitigation fund will be established to encourage private financial institutions to invest in artisanal fisheries. "Community-based savings and credit groups", IFAD says, "will be more professionally structured and linked with the formal financial sector, increasing fishermen's access to credit".

According to IFAD that the project will directly benefit over 40,000 vulnerable rural households for whom fishing and fish products are the principal source of livelihood and often the only source of cash income, while a further 40,000 households will receive indirect benefits.

The project brings IFAD's total investment in Mozambican artisanal fishing to \$45 million. In total IFAD has invested \$196.2 million in Mozambique.

EDM investing \$120 million a year

Mozambique's publicly-owned electricity company, EDM, will invest \$120 million a year in expanding the national grid and improving the quality of the electricity supplied, according to the EDM chairperson, Manuel Cuambe.

Speaking to reporters in Maputo, during an interval in a meeting of top EDM managers drawing up a balance sheet of the company's activities in 2010, Cuambe said that, out of its own funds, EDM is investing \$60 million a year, "and on top of that comes support from the government and cooperation partners, bringing the total to around \$120 million a year".

In 2010 EDM connected 181,000 new clients to the grid, an increase of 10 per cent on the figure for 2009, and there are now 858,000 clients on the grid.

This year, EDM plans to connect between 140,000 and 150,000 new clients.

In 2010 seven district capitals were connected to the grid, namely Zumbo (in Tete province), Mocimboa da Praia (Cabo Delgado), and Sanga, Mechanhelas, Maua, Metarica and Marrupa (Niassa). So far in 2011 two more Cabo Delgado districts, Macomia and Mueda, have been connected.

There are now 96 district capitals electrified, compared with 87 at the end of 2009. "Our perspective is to continue connecting more district capitals so that, by 2014, all 128 district capitals are on the national grid", said Cuambe.

WFP providing food for refugee camp

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) will provide a further ten tonnes of food to the Maratane refugee centre in the northern province of Nampula, following hunger-related deaths, notably among Ethiopian refugees.

A WFP mission visited the camp recently to assess the situation, and concluded that there is an urgent need to increase food aid for the refugees.

The reports of deaths at Maratane were sufficiently alarming for Deputy Foreign Minister Henrique Banze to visit the camp. He recognised that hunger and disease were among the factors causing the deaths – but stressed that refugees often arrived at Maratane in a severely weakened condition, due to the rigours of their journey from the Horn of Africa.

Recent inflows of refugees had put food supplies under great stress. “For years the centre operated with a limited number of asylum seekers”, said Banze, “but recently there has been a startling growth in the number of refugees”.

Maratane also faces problems of poor sanitation and shortages of clean water. Nonetheless, Banze was encouraged by the expansion of the local health centre, which now offers emergency services and hospitalisation.

Banze said that most of the 32 people who died at Maratane since January had not sought assistance from the health centre.

“You must continue to work to improve the management of the centre, so that all possible assistance can be given”, Banze told the Maratane staff. “We are going to continue receiving more refugees and we must be prepared for this”.

He urged the camp managers to ensure constant dialogue with the various groups of refugees, to ensure that the differences they brought from their home countries are not reflected in the camp.

The arrival of more asylum seekers, mostly from Somalia and Ethiopia, forced the camp to expand. A further 600 tents, provided by the Mozambique Red Cross are being erected.

The Maratane administrator, Francisco Cihale, told reporters there are now 14,487 refugees in the camp – but only 10,102 were receiving food aid.

South Korean aid for solid waste management

The Ministry for the Coordination of Environmental Action (MICOA) and its South Korean counterpart on 24 March in Maputo signed a cooperation agreement for the management of urban solid waste and waste water.

According to Mauricio Xerinda, the Permanent Secretary at MICOA, the agreement provides for the development of a master plan based on Mozambican reality. The project in its first phase will cover the municipalities of Beira and Dondo in the province of Sofala; Quelimane in Zambezia; Nampula and Nacala in Nampula; and Pemba in Cabo Delgado.

Xerinda explained that the plan will last for ten months and is budgeted at about \$500,000 funded from the South Korean Ministry of the Environment.

Xerinda told the daily paper “Diario de Mocambique” that for the cities of Beira, Dondo, Nampula and Pemba, the intervention will be in the urban management of solid waste and waste water, while in Nacala and Quelimane the plan only covers the management of solid waste.

Through this project, the Mozambican Government intends by 2014 to create landfill sites in all the provincial capitals to end the widespread unhygienic practice of solid waste being left in open rubbish dumps, which are a threat to public health.

Xerinda said that a major problem facing the country is related to sanitation, reflected in the fundamentally defective management of urban solid waste and waste water.

“The Government has been developing a series of legal and operational instruments that contribute to the efficient management of the environment and the rationalisation of resources, to make possible the maximisation of gains using our scant resources”, said Xerinda.

World Bank support for irrigation

The World Bank on 17 March approved an International Development Association (IDA) credit of \$70 million to support the Mozambican government’s Sustainable Irrigation Development Project (PROIRRI).

According to the World Bank, Mozambique’s agricultural potential remains largely untapped, with the country having amongst the lowest yields in southern Africa. It adds that Mozambique ranks third amongst the African countries most exposed to risks from multiple weather-related hazards, mainly floods and droughts.

Despite recent progress, the area under irrigation in Mozambique is still only about 62,000 hectares – or about two per cent of the potential, which is estimated at three million hectares.

The project aims to increase agricultural production and raise productivity through new or improved irrigation schemes in the central provinces of Sofala, Manica and Zambezia.

According to the World Bank’s Olivier Godron, “sustaining agricultural growth and improving access to inland markets while tapping into regional and international agriculture markets are central to boosting food production, agricultural growth, rural poverty reduction, and lifting up the whole economy”.

The project will not only cover irrigation, but will also include improving farmers’ access to roads, energy and finance. The project is to be implemented over six years, and is expected to directly benefit 16,000 farmers.

The project will also support implementation of the country’s new Strategic Irrigation Plan as well as the development of a National Irrigation Program.

Last December the Government approved the Strategic Irrigation Plan, which is expected to cost \$645 million by the year 2019. The government has already put aside \$135 million and hopes to mobilise the other \$510 million through public and private investment over the next eight years.

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