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Apartheid murdered Samora Machel – President Guebuza

President Armando Guebuza on 19 October accused the South African apartheid regime of murdering the country's first president, Samora Machel. President Guebuza was speaking in Maputo's Independence Square, at a ceremony marking the 25th anniversary of Machel's death in a plane crash at Mbuzini, just inside South Africa, on 19 October 1986.

President Guebuza recalled that the plane crash followed "repeated public threats against our head of state made by top members of the apartheid government" – he was referring to threats against Machel's life made by the apartheid defence minister, Magnus Malan, in early October 1986.

The context of Machel's death was a diplomatic drive by the Front Line States to attempt to separate South Africa from its regional allies – the dictatorships of Kamuzu Banda in Malawi, and Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire.

On 19 October 1986, Machel had travelled to a summit in the Zambian town of Mbala. Machel, and the Presidents of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, and of Angola, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, had been mandated by a meeting of the front line states held in Maputo a week earlier to speak directly with Mobutu.

At the time, President Guebuza recalled, "Zaire was giving direct support to UNITA which, in alliance with the apartheid regime, was cutting down human lives in Angola and destroying that brother country".

But on its return from Mbala, Samora Machel's plane "was diverted from its flight path, and smashed violently into the hills of Mbuzini".

President Guebuza thought the crash was no accident – instead the plane had been lured away from its correct path by a pirate navigational beacon. The Mozambican government, he insisted, still wanted to know in full the circumstances of Machel's death and to see that justice is eventually done.

Machel "did not shed his blood in vain", added President Guebuza, "because the ideals for which he fought are becoming a reality". The evidence for this included the fact that the southern African region is now "free from apartheid and the forces of destabilisation".

Machel had supported the patriotic and revolutionary forces in Uganda and East Timor, countries which today "are at peace with themselves and their neighbours". Under Machel's government, Mozambique had welcomed many refugees from Chile, fleeing from the fascist dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet – today, President Guebuza noted, they had returned to a democratic Chile "to enjoy the freedoms that the rule of law allows".

To honour Samora Machel's internationalist ideals, the Mozambican government "reaffirms our support for the just struggle of the people of the Western Sahara for their self-determination and independence, and for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to a sovereign state and UN membership".

Machel, President Guebuza said, "embodied the most sublime dreams of our heroic people, and delivered himself, body and soul, as the mechanism for achieving those dreams. He was a man of the people and a faithful interpreter of their wishes".

"As the leader of our liberation, and as the head of our state, he deepened our sense of solidarity with the people of the world", President Guebuza added. Machel's example "of heroism and dedication to his people and to the peoples of other parts of the world" provided the indispensable teachings and inspiration "so that we may continue on this path towards freeing Mozambicans from the scourge of poverty".

"A man with the stature of President Samora Machel does not end in himself", declared President Guebuza. "He becomes intertwined with the ideals of his people, and becomes immortal. For this reason, Samora lives!"

At Independence Square, President Guebuza unveiled a gigantic statue of Samora Machel. The 4.8 tonne bronze statue shows Machel gazing down the Samora Machel Avenue towards the Bay of Maputo.

Before Mozambican independence in 1975, this spot was occupied by a statue of the Portuguese warlord Mouzinho de Albuquerque. That statue now languishes in the Maputo fortress, which has been turned into a museum.

Monuments to Samora Machel are also being built in the country's ten provincial capitals.

The ceremony was attended by three other heads of state from the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region – presidents Jacob Zuma of South Africa, Ian Khama of Botswana and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, as well as former Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, and representatives of the governments of Angola, Tanzania, Swaziland and Malawi.

Government and donors hold planning meeting

The Mozambican government and the 19 donors and funding agencies that provide direct support to the state budget on 20 October concluded the annual planning meeting drawing up the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) for 2012.

The PAF sets down indicators and targets for both the government and its partners. Complying with the PAF is a key factor in determining future budget support.

At the public session closing the planning meeting, the Minister of Development and Planning, Aiuba Cuereneia, said that the debate had been “frank and open” allowing the government and its partners to reach “consensual programming”.

One result of these discussions was to cut the number of indicators in the government’s PAF from 40 to 35. The donors also have indicators, concerned with such matters as the predictability of aid, and alignment with the government’s own planning and budgetary systems.

Among the targets the government is expected to meet next year, Cuereneia said, is to raise the number of births that take place in health units to 63 per cent of the total, to ensure that at least 73 per cent of all six year old children are at school, and to bring the number of pupils per teacher in primary education to 62.

An additional 875 schools and health units are to be supplied with electricity through solar panels, and 19,432 rural water sources are to be built or rehabilitated.

Cuereneia stressed that the government is committed to the fight against corruption, through improving the working conditions of bodies such as the Attorney-General’s Office and the Central Office for the Fight against Corruption (GCCC), both of which are now operating out of new, modern premises.

The government has also sent to the country’s parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, a package of anti-corruption legislation, which should be debated during the end of year parliamentary sitting. The draft legislation covers such matters as conflicts of interest, the declaration of assets owned by leading state figures, and protection for whistle-blowers.

Cuereneia congratulated the partners for improvements this year in complying with the agreed timetable for disbursing their aid. But he stressed the need to ensure the predictability of funds, which was essential “for the effective implementation of the government’s plans”.

In particular, he urged the donors to inform the government in due time of the indicators on which the “variable tranche” depends. This arcane term refers to additional aid which the donors may or may not disburse, depending on whether the government has met certain indicators.

But the government does not yet know what these indicators are. Cuereneia urged the donors to agree this issue among themselves so that the government was not asked to meet different indicators for each of its donors.

Speaking for the 19 partners (known as the G-19, or Programme Aid Partners), the Canadian High Commissioner, Alain Latulippe, stressed the need for aid to show results. “All over the world, our taxpayers want results”, he said.

He added that the donors were in full agreement with the government that the top priority for Mozambique remains the struggle against poverty.

Latulippe said that the “very complex international economic and financial situation” was posing “major

challenges in Europe and America to the way our governments express their international solidarity”.

The Aide Memoire agreed at the meeting noted that Mozambique’s GDP growth rate for this year is forecast at 7.2 per cent, rising to 7.5 per cent in 2012. The target for Mozambican exports this year is \$2.57 billion, and 50.5 per cent of this figure was attained by the end of the first half of the year.

Inflation from January to August stood at 3.7 per cent and is forecast to reach 8.4 per cent by the end of the year. The target for inflation in 2012 is 5.6 per cent. The Aide Memoire attributes the low inflation rate to the rise in the value of the Mozambican currency, the metical, and the rise in interest rates, arising from the government’s restrictive monetary policy, and its measures to hold down the cost of living.

The available figures show that, in the first six months of the year, the government spent 23.4 billion meticaïs (about \$865 million) on the priority sectors for the struggle against poverty. This was 49.4 per cent of total state expenditure, excluding debt servicing and subsidies. Of this sum, 9.6 billion meticaïs was spent on the education and health services.

In percentage terms, the money spent on the priority sectors has fallen – the figure was 54.5 per cent in 2010 – and the government and its partners want to reverse this trend.

As for tax collection, the Aide Memoire noted that this is set to rise in the coming period by 0.5 per cent of GDP per year. The contribution of mega-projects to tax revenue had improved in 2011, the document noted, but still accounts for a very small proportion of the total tax take.

As for the subsidies introduced by the government to mitigate rises in the cost of living (notably fuel and flour subsidies), these will continue into 2012, but at the same level as this year. The total cost of the subsidies is put at 5.24 billion meticaïs.

The Aide Memoire also warned that certain targets set for 2011 are unlikely to be met. For instance, it is now impossible to test a new Land Information Management System. This is because the company that will design the system has not yet been hired, and its work will take an estimated nine months.

The target of having 73 per cent of all six year olds in primary school has not been met, and the current figure is 70 per cent. So the 73 per cent target is now included in the 2012 PAF.

The Mozambican judiciary has also under-performed. One of the governance targets for 2011 was that the number of cases brought to trial should increase by five per cent over the 2010 figure. But in fact, in the first six months of the year, only 26,182 cases were tried, compared with 26,419 cases in the same period of 2010.

The donors are also missing several of their targets – including the percentage of budget support that uses Mozambican financial reporting, auditing and procurement procedures.

Deputy Francisco Machambisse dies

Francisco Machambisse, a deputy for Renamo, the largest opposition party in the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, died in Maputo on 9 October from an undisclosed disease.

Machambisse had represented the constituency of the central province of Sofala since the first multiparty elections in 1994, following the signing of the General Peace Agreement in Rome in 1992.

Brazil willing to invest strategically

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff has declared that Brazil is to invest strategically in Mozambique to ensure sustainable development with reciprocal benefits for the two countries.

President Rousseff was speaking in Maputo on 19 October at a meeting with her Mozambican counterpart, Armando Guebuza.

President Rousseff added that more scholarships could be made available for Mozambican students to study in Brazilian universities. “We don’t want to bring engineers and workers from Brazil, we want to guarantee that it is Mozambicans who develop their country”, she said.

In the area of health care, President Rousseff said Brazil wants to see concrete steps taken so that a pharmaceutical plant financed by Brazil, and which will make generic anti-retroviral drugs, begins to operate in Mozambique by the first quarter of next year. Access to cheap anti-retrovirals is key for the treatment of Mozambicans infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The latest statistics indicate that about 11.5 per cent of Mozambicans between the ages of 15 and 49 are HIV-positive.

“We want for other countries what we want for ourselves – respect, in which the sovereignty of the other country is taken into consideration”, said President Rousseff. “We have to show that there is another form of relationship between equal countries. We have this responsibility”.

Aquapesca suspends prawn production

Aquapesca, an aquaculture company based in the district of Inhassunge, in the central province of Zambezia, has indefinitely suspended prawn production following an outbreak of White Spot Syndrome (WSS) in the ecosystem of the Bons Sinais River. The company will terminate the contracts of their 800 workers.

WSS is a contagious disease to penaeid prawns and is caused by the white spot syndrome virus (WSSV).

The outbreak of the virus in September led to the mass death of prawns farmed by Aquapesca.

Aquapesca sent samples to the laboratory at the University of Arizona, in the United States, the main reference for shrimp and prawn pathology, which confirmed the outbreak. This led to the adoption of biosafety measures as established by Office International des Epizooties (OIE).

WSS was first reported in Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1992. Subsequently, it spread throughout Asia, America, and to almost all major shrimp and prawn farming countries.

Until recently, Mozambique, Madagascar and Australia were the only areas declared free of the virus (which is notifiable to the World Organisation for Animal Health). Indeed, this is one of the reasons that led Aquapesca to set up its business in Inhassunge in 1994.

Over the last 17 years, Aquapesca has developed 350 hectares of shrimp farm ponds, five quality control and pathology laboratories and a shrimp processing plant, which passed an inspection carried out by a team of experts from the European Union.

Since its establishment in Mozambique, Aquapesca (a company with French interests) has invested about \$50 million.

Zambezia fails to reach bilharzia treatment goals

A recent campaign in the central province of Zambezia to treat children with the debilitating disease bilharzia has failed to meet its targets due to people reacting badly against the drug used. In the provincial capital Quelimane treatment coverage remains below 15 per cent.

The Minister of Health, Alexandre Manguela, on 17 October at the opening of a meeting in Maputo on maternal and child health, said that the campaign was not well run and called for improved dialogue to meet the planned objectives.

The province’s chief medical officer, Joana Nchaque, who is participating in the five day meeting, explained that the campaign, which took place between 23 and 30 September, failed in the districts of Nicoadala, Quelimane and Morrumbala.

Nchaque stated that the campaign failed because some people reacted badly to the anti-bilharzia drug, which caused nausea and vomiting.

She said that another attempt will be made this week to cover the areas. This is planned to reach 80 per cent of the target group in Quelimane city and 75 per cent in Nicoadala. The target group is children aged between five and 15 years old.

Nchaque lamented that the bad reaction to the drug had scared away parents. In response, the health authorities are launching an information campaign to explain the dangers posed by bilharzia and the fact that the drug’s side effects can be mitigated by the children eating some food prior to receiving the treatment.

Bilharzia is endemic through most of Africa. In Mozambique, 43 per cent of the population have the parasite in their bodies.

Bilharzia is a chronic and debilitating disease that can damage internal organs, cause infertility and hinder the mental development of children. Its socio-economic impact is thought to be second only to that of malaria.

Government to hire 7,300 teachers

The Mozambican government plans to hire 7,300 teachers next year, with most being employed to work in primary schools, particularly in the most populated provinces such as Nampula and Zambezia.

Cited in the daily newspaper “Noticias”, Maria Celeste Onions, head of human resources at the Ministry of Education, explained that this figure is based on the sector’s Strategic Plan indicators, and seeks to bring down the pupil/teacher ratio.

Figures released earlier this year show that the pupil/teacher ratio in first level primary education (EP1 - first to fifth grades) 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.

Currently, the Ministry of Education employs over 147,000 people across the country, including teaching and non-teaching staff.

However, at least 2,216 employees died from HIV/AIDS over the last three years, leaving 7,836 orphans.

Zambezia was the most affected province with 537 deaths, followed by Sofala with 235 deaths. Maputo, the Mozambican capital reported 69 deaths.

At present, the Ministry of Education has 1,999 employees living with the HIV virus; of this number 1,738 are taking antiretroviral drugs (ARVs).

Aga Khan Foundation to build education academy

The Aga Khan Foundation is to build a new education academy in the city of Matola in southern Mozambique at a cost of \$50 million. The academy will have the facilities to accommodate 400 students from first to twelfth grade.

The project was announced by Education Minister Zeferino Martins on 7 October in Maputo, shortly after his arrival home from a working visit to Kenya.

Martins noted that “the education academy will focus on teaching talented young entrepreneurs, concentrating on entrepreneurial values, leadership and knowledge. This institution will be open to students from low, middle and high income families. However, students with few resources will be admitted on special criteria yet to be defined”.

The academy will follow the curriculum of the International Baccalaureate.

Martins was in Kenya at the invitation of the Aga Khan Foundation. During his visit he made a tour of an Aga Khan education academy with similar features to those that will be built in Matola.

Government authorises forestry mega-project

The Mozambican government has authorised the implementation of a forestry project in the central province of Zambezia budgeted at \$101.4 million.

The project, “Tectona Forest of Zambezia” will occupy an area of 19,540 hectares covering the districts of Gurue, Namarroi, Milange and Morrumbala.

The project was approved by the Council of Ministers (Cabinet) at its meeting on 6 October in Maputo.

According to the government spokesperson, Deputy Justice Minister Alberto Nkutumula, the project will reforest the area, manage the resources, and process and sell the teak (*Tectona grandis*). He pointed out that the project will also deal in the sale of the native species messassa (*Brachystegia spiciformis*).

The project is backed by Swedish, Norwegian and North American investors who own 90 per cent of the company. Ten per cent of the company is owned by the Diocese of Niassa.

Of the total amount to be invested, \$71 million will be spent on the plantation, \$20.3 million on the wood processing facilities and \$10.1 million on infrastructure.

The investment will take place over a 12 year period, with spending in the first decade concentrated on planting trees. Marketing is expected to only begin after 12 years.

It is planned that 70 per cent of the processed wood will be exported. It is forecast that annual revenue after 20 years will be \$50 million, rising to \$112 million after 35 years.

The project will create 1,105 direct jobs, of which only five will be filled by foreigners. On top of this, three thousand seasonal jobs will be created.

Other benefits include the building of social infrastructure such as boreholes, health posts, schools, improved access roads, support for the agricultural sector, and housing for workers.

New cement factory to be built in Magude

The construction of a new cement plant in Magude district, in the southern province of Maputo, will begin next year according to the provincial director of Trade and Industry, Fanieta Manjate.

Initially, the construction work had been scheduled to start in June, reports the daily newspaper “Diario de Mocambique”.

Budgeted at \$78 million, the project is being developed by the Chinese company “Africa Great Wall Cement Manufacturer”.

The factory will be built in Chichuo, about 11 kilometres from Magude, and will use the regions huge limestone deposits, which is one of the key ingredients of cement.

The plant will have the capacity to produce up to 500,000 tonnes of cement per year when it starts operating at the end of 2012 or early 2013.

With this plant, the number of cement factories set up by Chinese investors will rise to three.

A cement factory at Salamanga, in Matutine district, in Maputo province, is currently under construction at a cost of \$72 million. The Salamanga factory is also located in an area with massive limestone deposits, and is expected to produce about 800,000 tonnes of cement per year.

The third factory, GS Cement, will have the capacity to produce 550,000 tonnes of Portland cement. This factory will be developed at the industrial park in Boane with an investment of \$100 million.

The country’s largest producer of cement, Cimentos de Mocambique, is currently upgrading its factories in Matola, Dondo and Nacala, to double production.

Along with the proposed new factory in Sofala province, the country’s cement production could jump from the current level of 1.3 million tonnes per year to reach four million tonnes per year by 2013.

The significant expansion of cement production capacity in Mozambique is in response to the growing demand for building materials in the country.

Single ID number project to be launched nationwide

Mozambican authorities on 14 October announced the successful completion of the first phase of the Single Citizen's Identification Number (NUIC) project, which covered 4,700 people in the southern city of Matola.

The project will now be launched nationwide, and is expected to cover five million people over the next five years.

NUIC is a system whereby every citizen will be identifiable with only one number for their entire life. This will end the current system whereby each document owned by the same person - identity card, passport, birth certificate, driver's licence, single tax number (NUIT), voting card, and others - has a different number.

By the end of the project the authorities expect to cover the entire Mozambican population of about 20.2 million inhabitants at a cost of \$40 million.

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