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President Guebuza calls for youth to fight poverty

President Armando Guebuza on 26 March challenged the youth of Mozambique, and of all Africa, to contribute to the battle against poverty. Speaking in Maputo at the opening session of a six day African Congress of Young Leaders, organised by the International Association of Students in Economic and Business Sciences (AIESEC), President Guebuza said that fighting against poverty would be a tribute paid by the younger generation to all those who had stood up against foreign domination and fought for independence.

Young people in the past had given the best of themselves to free the continent from colonial rule so that Africans might be independent and free, and their example should be followed by the young people of today, he stressed.

“In the current phase of the struggle against poverty and for our well-being, young people are in the majority, as they always have been”, said President Guebuza. “History has reserved for you a page in which you will write, in letters of gold, the achievements of your generation; above all so that the turn towards prosperity in Africa becomes a reality built by your talent and skilful hands”.

He added that the fight against poverty “requires enterprising young people of your vision, lovers of peace, innovative and pragmatic, and those who can link theory to practice, turning science into a weapon in the struggle against the curse of poverty”.

“The challenge of the battle against poverty and for the welfare of our people requires from each of us, regardless of our generation, perseverance, self-esteem, the culture of hard work and the spirit of sacrifice, and above all the sense of solidarity with each other”, President Guebuza stressed.

The chairperson of AIESEC-Mozambique, Silvia Ferreira, a 22 year old final year student at the Economics Faculty of Maputo’s Eduardo Mondlane University, said that the conference will discuss the question of leadership and how young people can contribute to the fight against poverty.

“We want responsible young leaders with values, dreams, plans and goals to achieve”, she said. “Young people who are committed to the destiny of the country, of the continent and of the world”.

For Ferreira, training was the key to success, and AIESEC had been focusing on promoting training courses within Mozambique and abroad so that young people, after acquiring theoretical knowledge at university, would be able to apply it in practice.

“Since we were set up in 2009, more than 20 Mozambicans have been sent for training abroad. We are already involving more than 6,000 students in various training activities with companies and non-corporate

organisations within the universities, in order to prepare students better so that they can respond to the challenges of the labour market, and hence to the aspirations of our nation”, said Ferreira.

With over 60,000 members in 107 countries, AIESEC claims to be the largest youth-run organisation in the world. It says that its goal is to stimulate the leadership potential of its members with a positive impact on society.

Thousands dig for gold in Moma

Three thousand people are illegally digging for gold in the coastal district of Moma, in the northern Mozambican province of Nampula, according to a report in the Beira daily newspaper “Diario de Mocambique”.

The mining began in the locality of Marins after claims were made that a group of local youths had found gold near the Mikikisa River. The information spread rapidly, attracting not only would-be miners, but also traders who have set up stalls in the vicinity to sell goods to the miners.

The area in question covers 10,000 hectares, which the Ministry of Mineral Resources allocated three years ago to Brazao Mazula, former chairman of the National Elections Commission and former Vice-Chancellor of Maputo’s Eduardo Mondlane University.

Mazula’s exploration licence is about to expire, and he does not seem to have achieved anything with it. The chief inspector of mineral resources in Nampula, Fila Lazaro, told the paper that Mazula had partially abandoned the area.

In the light of the invasion by the artisanal miners, the inspectorate sent Mazula a notification two weeks ago, asking him to explain what was going on. Lazaro said the Provincial Directorate of Mineral Resources might have to cancel Mazula’s licence, and parcel the area up among the miners.

Some gold is certainly being dug up at Marins, said Lazaro, but, in the absence of any proper geological work, nobody knows the real potential of this deposit.

Ncondezi increases estimated coal reserves

The London-based Ncondezi Coal Company has announced an increase in the coal reserves in the Ncondezi Project in the western province of Tete to 4.66 billion tonnes.

The project covers 38,700 hectares in the Moatize coal basin, north of Tete city, and just ten kilometres from the Sena railway line linking Moatize to the port of Beira. The area is divided into six blocks, and initial drilling of boreholes in three of them identified a coal resource of 1.8 billion tonnes.

But the latest Ncondezi statement says that work on the other three blocks (the East, West and River blocks) has increased the total estimated resource to 4.655 billion tonnes – an increase of 157 per cent, compared to the initial discoveries.

Over four billion tonnes of the coal occurs at depths of less than 250 metres below the surface, and can thus be extracted by open cast mining.

According to Ncondezi Chief Executive Officer, Graham Mascall, “the increased resource estimates represent a significant development for the Ncondezi Project and are a clear indication of its full potential”.

Ncondezi is working on a definitive feasibility study (DFS) which should be complete by the third quarter of this year. “The next phase of the DFS work programme will focus on mine optimisation and scheduling”, said Mascall.

Ncondezi has also drilled at two other areas, one in the far west of the province, north of the Cahora Bassa Lake, and one in the southern part of Changara district, on the border with Zimbabwe. In neither area did the company find commercially viable reserves, and so it has returned the exploration licences to the Ministry of Mineral Resources.

ENI announces further large gas discovery

The Italian energy company, ENI, has announced a further massive discovery of natural gas in the Rovuma Basin, off the coast of the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

The new discovery was made at the Mamba North East 1 exploration well in the eastern part of Area 4 of the Rovuma Basin. The results from this well, ENI says, increase the resource base of Area 4 by at least 10 trillion cubic feet of gas, bringing the total amount discovered by ENI from three wells in Area 4 to at least 40 trillion cubic feet.

The Mamba North East 1 well is 50 kilometres east of the Cabo Delgado coast. The water here is 1,848 metres deep, and the well was drilled to a depth of 4,560 metres. This well is 15 kilometres north-east of Mamba South 1 and 12 kilometres south-west of Mamba North 1 – the two wells where ENI’s earlier discoveries were made.

According to ENI, Mamba North East 1 “encountered a total of 240 meters of gas pay in multiple high-quality Oligocene and Eocene sands and proved reservoir continuity and pressure communication with Mamba South 1 and Mamba North 1 wells”.

ENI plans to drill at least another four wells in Area 4 later this year.

ENI is the operator of Area 4, with a 70 per cent participating interest. Its partners are Galp Energia of Portugal, Kogas of South Korea, and Mozambique’s own National Hydrocarbon Company (ENH), each of which has a 10 per cent share.

If one adds together the discoveries announced by ENI, and those made by the US company Anadarko (in Area 1 of the Rovuma Basin), the total gas reserves discovered so far amount to over 70 trillion cubic feet.

Agreement with World Bank signed

Mozambique’s Minister of Planning and Development, Aiuba Cuereneia, and the World Bank’s Director for Mozambique, Laurence Clarke, on Monday signed an agreement on a Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC) to the value of \$110 million.

This credit is general budget support from the World Bank, intended to support the Mozambican government’s poverty reduction priorities. The World Bank is one of 19 donors and funding agencies, known as the Programme Aid Partners, or the G-19, who provide general support to the Mozambican state budget, based on a memorandum of understanding that all 19 have signed with the government.

This is the eighth such annual credit granted to Mozambique by the World Bank.

At the signing ceremony, Cuereneia said the government’s priorities for this year, laid out in the Social and Economic Plan (PES) approved by the country’s parliament in December, include achieving a growth rate of 7.5 per cent, holding inflation to 7.2 per cent, boosting job creation and creating an environment favourable to private investment.

Clarke pointed out that the PRSC is part of the World Bank’s strategy to support the government’s successive poverty reduction action plans.

IMF renews backing for government policies

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has once again given its backing to the economic policies of the Mozambican government.

After visiting Mozambique from 5-16 March, to conduct the fourth review under the Policy Support Instrument (PSI) approved in June 2010, an IMF mission declared its agreement with “the authorities’ structural reform priorities”.

According to the Mission Chief for Mozambique, Johannes Mueller, the IMF welcomes the government’s “sustained commitment to further strengthening financial sector development, public finance management, tax policy and administration, debt management and investment project selection, natural resource management, and the framework to fight corruption and money laundering”.

Mueller noted that the Mozambican economy “sustained a strong performance in 2011 despite a marked deterioration in the global economic environment”.

He praised the government’s success in reducing inflation which “greatly benefits the poor”. The slowdown in inflation, said Mueller, “reflects the determination of the authorities in tightening monetary and fiscal policies, favourable developments of international prices, a good harvest, and a stronger metical”.

“Exports and foreign direct investment have remained strong”, he added, “setting the stage for a surplus in Mozambique’s balance of payments and a further strengthening of international reserves in 2012”.

Muller stated that the IMF mission “agrees with the authorities’ policy intentions for 2012 to cushion the possible impact of a temporary global slowdown through the adoption of more accommodating policies, while safeguarding the recent disinflation gains”.

Mozambique is no longer borrowing money from the IMF, but it remains subject to IMF monitoring through the Policy Support Instrument (PSI), without which Mozambique’s relations with donors and other funding agencies would be imperilled.

Assembly passes bill on territorial organisation

The Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, on 21 March unanimously passed the first reading of a government bill on territorial organisation, which, for the first time, sets limits to the size of districts and smaller territorial units.

The bill stipulates that a district should cover between 2,000 and 20,000 square kilometres, and should contain at least 100,000 inhabitants in provinces of high population density, 40,000 in provinces of medium population density, and 10,000 in provinces of low population density.

The next rank down the local government ladder, the administrative post, should cover between 1,000 and 5,000 square kilometres, with a population of between 2,000 and 50,000. A locality should cover between 500 and 2,000 square kilometres, with a population of between 1,000 and 10,000.

The lowest rung in the formal territorial division, the “povoacao” (a village or group of villages) should cover between 100 and 700 square kilometres, with a population of between 100 and 3,000.

In the debate, the only significant change proposed was that the bill should be extended to cover provinces as well, an amendment that the government immediately accepted.

This bill is a necessary prelude to a government proposal to split several existing districts into two which will be discussed later in this Assembly sitting.

Government wants to change working hours

The Mozambican authorities are considering altering the working hours for some economic sectors to reduce traffic congestion in the major cities.

Speaking on 21 March at a meeting of the Consultative Labour Commission, the tripartite negotiating forum between the government, trade unions and employers’ associations, Deputy Transport Minister Manuela Rebelo said her Ministry is drawing up a proposal to be submitted to the Labour Ministry.

One of the sectors that might be affected is banking, which could start at midday. “We’ve already begun to work with some banks to hear what they think about the proposal”, she said.

Rebelo said the traffic jams that are now part of the landscape in Maputo and the neighbouring city of Matola are caused partly by the fact that almost all services begin at the same time (usually 7.30 am).

The government had no intention of limiting the growth in the number of cars in the country, by imposing an administrative ban on importing more vehicles. Changing working hours, she said, was a feasible alternative to such measures.

Last year, Maputo and Matola Municipal Councils turned many major roads into one way streets to alleviate congestion. Rebelo said this had improved matters somewhat “but it does not solve the problem”.

Second phase of municipal development programme launched

The Mozambican government plans to reduce urban poverty through strengthened autonomy and balanced and sustainable development in the country’s 43 municipalities,

To this end, the Ministry of State Administration, in partnership with three European development cooperation agencies, on 23 March launched the second phase of a Municipal Development Programme (PDA), valid for three years (2011/14) and with a budget of \$5.6 million a year. The first phase ran from 2008 to 2010.

The partners for the programme are the Austrian Development Cooperation Agency (ADA), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency (SDC).

The purpose of the PDA is to improve environmental conditions and to ensure greater inclusiveness for the services provided in the target municipalities.

This phase of the programme will cover 13 municipalities in the centre and north of the country, namely: Beira, Dondo and Marromeu (Sofala province), Mocuba and Quelimane (Zambezia), Nampula, Nacala and Mozambique Island (Nampula), Pemba, Montepuez and Mocimboa da Praia (Cabo Delgado), and Cuamba and Metangula (Niassa).

According to the Ministry, the choice of the municipalities took into account their level of socio-economic development, and the challenges they face in town planning, solid waste management, and issues of gender and HIV/AIDS.

The Deputy Minister of State Administration, Jose Tsambe, said that, despite the achievements made in 14 years of municipalisation, there are still great challenges to be overcome, particularly in the ten towns raised to municipal status in 2008.

Among the challenges facing the new municipalities was the need to provide them with all the facilities required to provide public services to the citizens.

The municipalities needed to strengthen their financial capacity, he added, “to respond to the needs of population growth, in the area of planning and managing urban land, and requalifying informal settlements in order to improve the quality of life of municipal citizens, create jobs and reduce urban poverty”.

He stressed that over the past 14 years the public has been involved in municipal management, and there have been improvements in the collection of municipal revenue and in accountability.

At the same ceremony, the Ministry of State Administration and its partners initialled a memorandum of understanding that lays the foundations for implementing the Municipal Development Programme.

Tuberculosis still a serious public health problem

Tuberculosis remains a serious public health problem in Mozambique, particularly because of combined HIV/tuberculosis infection and the rise of strains of the disease that are multi-drug resistant, according to the Health Ministry.

In a statement issued on World Tuberculosis Day on 24 March, the Ministry said that last year 56 per cent of patients diagnosed with tuberculosis were also infected with HIV. The number of cases of TB diagnosed is steadily growing – rising from 38,044 in 2077 to 47,301 last year.

According to the Ministry, efforts have been redoubled to diagnose the disease in its early stages. “Access to diagnosis and free treatment has been increasing gradually, due to the expansion of the network of tuberculosis laboratories, the decentralization of care down to the peripheral level, so that there are successful interventions in the communities with the support of community health agents, activists, and practitioners of traditional medicine, who undertake various prevention and control activities”, said the Ministry statement.

In a message marking the occasion, President Armando Guebuza reiterated the determination of his government to continue working so that all citizens, particularly children, can live “in an environment where nobody dies of tuberculosis”.

The President stressed the need to prevent patients abandoning treatment. “By acting in this way, these patients are contributing to the appearance of more cases of drug-resistant tuberculosis, making treatment more difficult, longer and more expensive”, he said.

The government, he added, “will continue to prioritise a reduction in cases of this disease, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups, namely children, prisoners and Mozambican miners”.

Plan to cut chronic malnutrition

The Mozambican government has set itself the ambitious task of reducing the rate of chronic malnutrition (stunting) among children under the age of five from the current figure of 44 per cent to 20 per cent by 2015.

Deputy Health Minister Nazira Abdula announced this target on 15 March at the launch of the National Committee for Fortifying Foodstuffs (CONFAM), which aims to fortify a range of foods by adding the micronutrients that many Mozambicans currently do

not obtain in their diet.

Abdula said a multi-sector plan has been designed for reducing chronic malnutrition among under-fives. Among the institutions expected to play a role in this plan are the Ministries of Education, Youth and Sport, and Industry and Trade.

Abdula said that the problem of chronic malnutrition was not due to a shortage of food production, but to a lack of knowledge in households about how to use the available food. With the effort of all the sectors involved in the plan, Abdula said it would be possible to bring knowledge about nutrition to vulnerable households.

A recent assessment of the school curriculum, carried out jointly by the Health and Education Ministries, has led to the proposal to incorporate content on nutrition into the curriculum.

The Minister of Industry and Trade, Armando Inroga, said that CONFAM is an essential step to ensure success in fortifying food with micronutrients.

Fortifying commonly consumed foods is regarded as the most cost-effective strategy for preventing deficiency in micronutrients. So far the only fortification in Mozambique has been adding iodine to salt. A ministerial diploma made iodation compulsory in all salt sold in the country.

Further fortification would require “innovative strategies” involving all the relevant actors in the public and private sectors, including food producers.

French support for development

The French government is to provide Mozambique with €40.9 million (about \$53.8 million) for water supply and health training projects.

Of this sum, €40 million is a loan for the expansion of water supply in Maputo and the neighbouring city of Matola. The remaining €900,000 is a grant to strengthen training in anaesthesia and reanimation.

The loan and grant were formalized in two agreements signed in Maputo on 19 March by Finance Minister Manuel Chang, French ambassador Christian Diziano, and the Maputo director of the French Development Agency (AFD), Dimitri Kanounnikoff.

Speaking at the ceremony, Chang said the loan was part of the finance mobilised to implement an ambitious water supply project for the Greater Maputo Metropolitan Area, which will raise the number of people in the area benefitting from clean drinking water from 880,000 to 1.5 million by 2014.

The grant is to train 10 doctors and 10 trainers in the specialisms of anaesthesia and resuscitation.

Mozambique News Agency, c/o 26 Withdean Crescent, Brighton BN1 6WH, UK. Tel: +44 (0)7941890630 - mozambique-news@geo2.poptel.org.uk

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