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“Justice delayed is justice denied” – President Guebuza

President Armando Guebuza said on 13 September that in his tours of the provinces and districts he had heard “constant and repeated clamour for a justice service that provides timely answers to complaints, claims and petitions from citizens”.

Speaking at the opening session of a “Congress for Justice” organised by the Mozambican Bar Association, President Guebuza warned that the question of speed in dealing with legal matters was fundamental “if we believe that justice delayed is justice denied”.

When court decisions are not taken in good time, “they do not help, and even frustrate, the implementation of our national agenda in the struggle against poverty”.

The lethargy in the courts, President Guebuza said, “does not help improve the business environment, which is fundamental for attracting investment that creates new jobs, and brings income to Mozambican households”.

“We must maintain our determination to ensure a justice of quality that is delivered speedily, a justice that promotes and supports the advances we have been making and that we desire”, he declared.

President Guebuza argued that citizens must be constantly educated about the country’s laws “so that can internalize the concept and the operation of the rule of law in the Mozambican context”.

The chairperson of the Bar Association, Gilberto Correia struck a sombre note, saying that the continuing crisis in the Mozambican administration of justice could not be disguised.

“It is simultaneously a crisis of resources and results, of speed and quality, of predictability and credibility”, he said.

Improvements had been made, in attempts to expand the justice system and bring it closer to citizens, “but we still have an inefficient judiciary incapable of responding to the demand and to the needs of this country’s citizens”.

Reforms had been piecemeal “and do not lead to a holistic and harmonious vision of the system, producing results that are always less than desired”. Justice was still expensive, slow, and difficult for citizens to gain access to.

“The machinery of the administration of justice seems to call out for a profound, horizontal and overall reform based on the lessons learnt from the mistakes of the past, the projection of future needs, and our accumulated collective knowledge and experiences”, said Correia.

Most Mozambicans, living as subsistence farmers, do not submit their problems to modern courts but resort to traditional methods of settling disputes. But despite the fact

that the modern justice system does not cover the majority of the population, it is still showing signs of congestion, and finds it difficult to respond to the demand for its services.

Correia warned that this was likely to get worse as the urban population increased, as did the number of well-educated Mozambicans. They would make demands that a system already showing “evident signs of fatigue” would find it impossible to meet.

Paulino sworn in for second term

President Armando Guebuza on 14 September swore Augusto Paulino into office for a second five year term as Attorney-General.

Speaking at the ceremony, President Guebuza praised Paulino’s commitment and dedication. “When he took office in 2007, Augusto Paulino swore publicly to serve faithfully the Mozambican state and motherland, aware that the sector he was to head was crucial and fundamental to our national agenda in the struggle against poverty, in which the fight against crime, and against corruption in particular, occupies a prominent position”, said the President.

Paulino told the ceremony that his mission is to continue the activities already begun, implementing the strategic plan of the Attorney-General’s Office, broken down into annual plans.

He pledged to continue the fight against corruption and against the theft of public funds. “We have to take advantage of the various legal instruments that have been approved, also taking into account the strategic plan of the Central Office for the Fight Against corruption (GCCC)”, he told reporters.

He also pledged to maintain a healthy relationship with other state institutions, in order to guarantee the flow of information that assists the Public Prosecutor’s Office in the battle against crime.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service.
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Central bank cuts interest rates

The Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of Mozambique on 12 September announced a cut of 100 base points in its key interest rates.

Thus the Standing Lending Facility (which is the interest rate paid by the commercial banks to the central bank for money borrowed on the Interbank Money Market) falls from 11.5 per cent to 10.5 per cent. This follows four cuts in this rate earlier in the year – in December the Standing Lending Facility rate was 15 per cent.

The interest rate paid by the central bank to the commercial banks on money they deposit with it (the Standing Deposit Facility) falls by 50 base points, from three to 2.5 per cent, while the Compulsory Reserves Coefficient – the amount of money that the commercial banks must deposit with the Bank of Mozambique – remains at eight per cent.

The statement from the Monetary Policy Committee said that it “took note of the prevailing risks in the international economic and financial situation, particularly those associated with the worsening sovereign debt crisis in the Euro Zone”

But the economic and financial indicators for Mozambique had continued to develop “in line with the programme for this year”. In particular, economic growth remained strong and inflation low.

The preliminary information from the National Statistics Institute (INE) showed that, in annual terms, the economy grew by eight per cent in the second quarter of this year, an improvement of 1.7 per cent when compared with the first quarter, and of two per cent when compared with the second quarter of 2011.

The sector that showed most growth – 54 per cent – was mining, undoubtedly because of the giant open cast coal mines operated by the companies Vale and Rio Tinto in the Moatize coal basin in Tete province. Transport and communications grew by 14.8 per cent (and no doubt the coal traffic on the Moatize-Beira line was a significant contributor to this). Manufacturing industry grew by 11.6 per cent and trade by 10.2 per cent.

As for inflation this has disappeared from the Mozambican economy, replaced by a slight deflation. As measured by the Maputo Consumer Price Index, inflation was negative for the fifth month in a row at minus 0.07 per cent.

This deflationary picture remains broadly true even when the slight price rises in the other two major cities, Beira (inflation of 0.04 per cent) and Nampula (0.03 per cent), are included. Putting the three indices together gives an overall Mozambican inflation rate for August of minus 0.02 per cent. For the first eight months of the year, inflation was minus 0.5 per cent.

The central bank argues that prices have remained steady or fallen slightly because of the greater supply of goods produced domestically, the decline in prices of some key commodities on the world market, the stability of the Mozambican currency the metical against other currencies, and “continued economic policy measures seeking to soften the exogenous shocks caused by the international economic and financial crisis”.

Mozambique’s net international reserves grew slightly in August (by \$11.1 million), and by the end of the month they stood at \$2.42 billion, enough to cover 5.3 months of imports of goods and services.

On the Inter-Bank Exchange Market, the metical continued to lose value slowly against the dollar. On the last day in August the exchange rate quoted was 28.69 meticals to

the dollar, a depreciation of 1.67 per cent when compared with the rate of 28.22 meticals to the dollar at the end of July.

But the metical gained in value against the South African rand. At the end of August there were 3.42 meticals to the rand, an appreciation of 0.87 per cent. In annual terms (1 September 2011 to 31 August 2012) the metical has appreciated by 11.63 per cent against the rand, but depreciated by 5.67 per cent against the dollar.

Despite the central bank’s repeated cuts in its interest rates, the commercial banks are continuing to charge their clients high interest rates. The average rate charged on a loan for a year was 21.84 per cent in July – a slight decline, of only 20 base points, on the figure for June. The prime rate for favoured customers, however, has fallen to an average of 17.11 per cent.

Government revises water supply policy

The Mozambican government’s National Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (PRONASAR) will need to spend about 75 per cent more than initially forecast in order to ensure that 70 per cent of the population has access to clean drinking water, by 2015, the cut-off date for meeting the Millennium Development Goals, set by the United Nations in 2000.

The official government spokesperson, Deputy Justice Minister Alberto Nkutumula, told reporters in Maputo on 11 September that, between 2013 and 2015, the government will need to spend \$35 million a year on water sources, rather than the earlier estimate of \$20 million a year.

This is because the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet) approved alterations to the National Water Policy.

Previously “full coverage” meant one water source (a well, borehole or standpipe) per 500 people living within a radius of 500 metres.

This was too many people per source, and in the more densely populated areas, such as peri-urban zones and parts of Nampula and Zambezia provinces, women had to queue an unacceptably long time just to fill a can with 20 litres of water.

The figure of 500 people per source created an illusion of coverage, while in reality many households were still going short of water.

So the figure has been revised downwards, said Nkutumula. Each water source should now supply 300 people living within a radius of 500 metres. This means that, in order to reach the 70 per cent target, the government must invest in between 3,900 and 4,300 extra water sources between now and 2015.

“This is a challenge for the government”, Nkutumula said. “We must build new sources and repair others that are out of order”.

With the old figure, he added, it was difficult to persuade potential donors that the country still faced serious water shortages. Looking at the government’s own figure of 500 people per source, donors might logically conclude that 100 per cent coverage had been achieved – so why should they give more money to a water supply programme?

The figure of 300 people per source was much more realistic, and might persuade donors to maintain their support.

On the old figure, access to safe drinking water had risen from 30 per cent of the population in 2000 to 70 per cent in 2011. But with the new figure, the real coverage rate in 2011 was much lower – perhaps 60 per cent.

Prime Minister condemns violence against the elderly

Prime Minister Aires Ali on 12 September strongly condemned all forms of violence and abuse directed against elderly people, which he regarded as an affront to Mozambican culture and to the principle of mutual respect.

Speaking in Maputo at the opening of a national conference on old age, Ali said he noted with serious concern the persistent reports of violence against old people.

“Every day we hear reports of elderly citizens attacked, abused, neglected and expelled from their families and communities, because they have been accused of witchcraft and other social ills”, he declared.

With an estimated population of 23.7 million in mid-2012 (according to the projections from the 2007 census), the country has 724,000 people over the age of 65, and about 250,000 over the age of 75.

There are no specific statistics on elderly people in a situation of vulnerability, but data from the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Welfare indicated that there are about 450,000 elderly heads of households, of whom 145,000 are living on their own.

This type of Conference happens every three years (the first one was in 2006) and, according to the Minister of Women’s Affairs and Social Welfare, Iolanda Cintura, it is an opportunity for the government and the various stakeholders, including elderly people themselves, to reflect upon the issues surrounding old age.

The Mozambique director of the NGO HelpAge International, Janeth da Field, told the gathering that, since the last conference (in 2009), the country has made progress in care for the elderly. There had been a gradual expansion of social protection for the elderly, an increased presence of the elderly in the media, and greater activity by old people themselves in discussing their rights.

But she expressed great concern at cases of “shocking violence” against the elderly, and called for “strategic alliances” to deal with the problem.

The bill on old people’s rights under discussion would not in itself solve the problems, she warned. “The law must be disseminated so that people know about it. If society does not know the law, there will be no change”.

Tanzanian drug mules arrested

The Mozambican police arrested seven Tanzanian drug traffickers on 5 September at Maputo International Airport.

The seven had come from Brazil via South Africa and were found to be carrying 280 ampoules of cocaine in their stomachs.

On 21 August of a Tanzanian man and a Bolivian woman were arrested at the airport carrying 122 ampoules of cocaine in their stomachs. They had also travelled from Brazil, but their journey had taken them via Lisbon.

The police also announced that they had barred the entry of four Bangladeshi citizens into the country.

According to Orlando Mudumane, a spokesperson for the Maputo City Police Command, the four arrived from Nairobi on a Kenya Airways flight. “They had visas”, he said, “but they were prevented from entering Mozambique because they could not explain what they were going to do here, or where they were going to stay”.

A fifth man, a Cameroonian citizen, who arrived on the same flight, was also denied entry – this time because the immigration authorities discovered that his entry visa had been forged.

Maputo to host regional rail conference

The chairperson of Mozambique’s publicly owned ports and railways company (CFM), Rosario Mualeia, on 14 September announced that the third conference of the Southern African Railways Association (SARA), which he currently chairs, will be held in Maputo on 6-8 November.

The conference will bring together representatives of rail companies from the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region and elsewhere to discuss the integration of transport services to make trade more competitive.

Among the key questions, Mualeia said, were the harmonization of rail policies between SADC countries and the elimination of non-fiscal barriers for goods in transit.

The rail companies also want SADC governments to exempt the railways from fuel taxes, and also to reduce or eliminate taxes on the import of rail equipment.

SARA also wants much tougher action against the vandalism and theft of rail components. The current fines that countries such as Mozambique impose on people caught stealing metallic components from the railways are regarded as far too lenient. An alternative, regarded favourably by SARA, would be mandatory prison sentences for anyone convicted of damaging rail infrastructures and equipment.

Madal losing battle against lethal yellowing disease

The Mozambican copra processing company Madal has spent \$3.2 million trying to control the lethal yellowing disease that is decimating palm trees in the central province of Zambezia.

The Madal coconut plantation was once the largest in the world but the disease has killed over seven million trees.

Lethal yellowing is caused by a phytoplasma, which is a form of bacteria that lacks cell walls and acts somewhat like a virus. This micro-organism is transmitted from tree to tree by the planthopper bug (scientific name: *haplaxius crudus*). When a tree is infected, the coconuts drop prematurely, and the foliage turns yellow, then eventually brown. Infected trees usually die within six months.

Madal has had to lay off 10,000 workers, because the company no longer has sufficient raw material to turn into coconut oil, soap and other products. Thus the disease is not only killing off trees, but has plunged large numbers of households in coastal Zambezia into extreme poverty.

Madal has set up two experimental fields to test 30 imported varieties of palm to see whether they might be resistant to the disease.

Rhino horns seized in Philippines

The Philippines customs authorities on 7 September sized six rhinoceros horns at the port of Manila, hidden inside a consignment of cashew nuts from Mozambique.

The horns weighed about 13 kilos, and are valued at \$1.7 million. The horns arrived at the Manila International Container Port on 25 August hidden inside 300 sacks of cashew nuts.

The horns are most probably from South Africa. 448 rhinos were killed in South Africa in 2011, and 373 are known to have fallen to poachers in the first eight months of this year.

Mozambicans are known to have been involved in poaching rhinos in South Africa’s Kruger National Park. Earlier this year, a South African court sentenced three Mozambicans to 25 years in prison for their part in the slaughter of rhinos.

Mozambique seeks Indian help for tea industry

Agriculture Minister Jose Pacheco is requesting assistance from India in the recovery of the Mozambican tea industry.

Mozambique was once a major tea producer – but the tea processing plants in Gurue district, in the central province of Zambezia were systematically destroyed by apartheid backed rebels in the mid-1980s during the war of destabilisation.

Subsequent attempts to revive the tea industry have not been successful and it is still characterized by low productivity and quality.

Pacheco held a meeting with officials in the Indian tea industry at the Indian Tea Board headquarters in Kolkata on 3 September. Pacheco hopes to interest Indian businesses in investing in upgrading and modernizing the Mozambican tea industry.

The chairperson of the Tea Board, MGVK Bhanu, told Pacheco that an Indian delegation will visit Mozambique to explore investment opportunities and invited a Mozambican delegation to attend the next International Tea Conference, to be held from 7 to 9 November in Goa.

Bhanu said that India produced 988 million kilos of tea in 2011, which accounted for 28 per cent of the world market. India is the world's biggest producer of black tea

Human Rights Commission sworn into office

The main challenge facing Mozambique in the human rights area "is to educate the public about their rights", declared Justice Minister Benvinda Levy on 6 September.

The minister was speaking at a ceremony where the 11 members of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) were presented publicly, a day after they had been sworn into office by President Armando Guebuza.

The government hopes that the CNDH can start its work this year – even though it is not covered by the 2012 budget. The minister pledged that the CNDH would have a budget as from January 2013.

The Commission's chairperson, prominent human rights lawyer Custodio Duma, said the CNDH has been set up to defend the interests of the public, to guarantee legal protection of citizens, and to promote human rights.

He believes the composition of the Commission will help it in achieving its goals. Of the CNDH's 11 members, three were appointed by the Prime Minister, three were selected by the political parties represented in parliament, four were chosen by civil society organisations, and one (Duma himself) was elected by the Mozambican Bar Association.

"The Commission consists of people from various areas of knowledge, from the law and justice, to education, to health and culture", said Duma. "It includes women, though few in number, there are members from the provinces, and there is even religious representation. This diversity, allied to the experience of each of these people will be an added value and will help the Commission comply with its mission".

Government approves plan for disabled

The Mozambican government on 4 September approved a National Plan for the Disabled (PNAD), which will cost 890.6 million meticais (about \$31 million) to implement.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet) that approved the plan, the government spokesperson, Deputy Justice Minister Alberto Nkutumula, said the PNAD is an instrument for planning, budgeting, monitoring and assessing the activities of various bodies in support of disabled people.

He said the money necessary for implementing the PNAD will come from the institutions involved, including the government, associations of and for disabled people, international NGOs, United Nations agencies, and other international partner organisations.

The plan is to be implemented over seven years (2012-2019), and was drawn up by a multi-sector team, with members from state bodies, civil society organisations and international partners.

There are an estimated 475,000 Mozambicans with disabilities – about two per cent of the total population of 23.7 million.

"Many of the disabled people live in rural areas where the levels of poverty are higher", said Nkutumula.

The plan, he added, is intended to guarantee the principle of equality of rights and opportunities for people with disabilities. Areas of intervention include vocational guidance and professional training, identification of alternative mechanisms for self-employment, expansion of basic education for disabled children and adults, facilitation of access to the formal and informal job market, guaranteed medical assistance, and the creation of a data bank about disabled people.

HIV/AIDS hits education in Manica

About 370 teachers in schools in the central province of Manica are no longer able to work full time because they are suffering from HIV/AIDS and associated illnesses.

According to the Manica Provincial Director of Education and Culture, Estevao Rupela, this situation worsens a critical teacher shortage in the province. Currently, Manica is short of about 1,200 teachers.

"We have many teachers who are ill", Rupela told AIM. "Our province is a corridor where we face many situations of illness, and we have colleagues who cannot give their best because they are sick".

To overcome the shortage, healthy teachers are obliged to work longer hours than normal, for which they are paid overtime and shift allowances.

The situation is at its worst in technical education, where there are no qualified staff at all to teach certain subjects.

Manica currently has five technical and professional colleges, and a sixth is under construction in Machaze.

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