

# Mozambique News Agency

## AIM Reports

Report no.593, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2021



## Mozambican and Rwandan forces capture Mocimboa da Praia

A joint operation by Mozambican and Rwandan forces on 8 August recaptured the port town of Mocimboa da Praia, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, which had been held by terrorists affiliated to the “Islamic State” (ISIS) network for the past year.

At a Maputo press conference, Defence Ministry spokesperson, Colonel Omar Saranga declared that the Mozambican forces and their Rwandan allies now control the main public and private infrastructures in the town, including the local government buildings, the port, the airport, the district hospital, and the markets.

Saranga explained that the joint forces are remaining in the town to consolidate their control over areas regarded as critical, including outlying neighbourhoods, and the water treatment station.

He added that the success of the operations leading to the expulsion of the terrorists from the town was due to the collaboration of the local communities. Saranga called for collective vigilance since, driven back by the Mozambican/Rwandan offensive, the terrorists may try to slip into the local population, disturbing attempts by the authorities to register the people rescued from ISIS control.

Mocimboa da Praia was the only district capital in ISIS hands. Its port and airport could be important in the logistics required for reviving the liquefied natural gas (LNG) project in the neighbouring district of Palma. The gas project is in the hands of a consortium led by the French oil gas company Total Energies. Total withdrew all its staff, in the wake of a terrorist raid on Palma town on 24 March. The restoration of security in the area will be key for the resumption of the LNG project.

Rwanda has committed a thousand soldiers and police to the conflict. These men arrived in Cabo Delgado on 9 July and went into combat almost immediately. By the end of July, forces from member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) were beginning to deploy with South Africa providing the largest contingent of 1,495 troops. Botswana is deploying 296 soldiers, while Angola has promised 20 specialist air force instructors. Zimbabwe says it will send 304 non-combatant troops to help train the Mozambican forces.

Tanzania sent a large cargo plane that landed in the Cabo Delgado provincial capital, Pemba, on 1 August to unload vehicles and other military equipment. The details of this equipment have not been made public.

### US names terrorist leaders

For the first time, the US State Department has named two of the leaders of the Islamist terrorists operating in Cabo Delgado. They are Bonomade Machude Omar (also known as Abu Sulafya Muhammad and as Ibn Omar) and Abu Yasir Hassan.

An announcement issued on 6 August and signed by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, describes Hassan as “the leader of ISIS-Mozambique” and Omar as head of “the Military and External Affairs Departments for ISIS-Mozambique”.

The terrorists are known locally as Al-Shabaab, although they seem to have no organisational ties with the Somali terrorist group of that name. The State Department, however, has reached the conclusion that the group’s ties with the terrorist network that calls itself Islamic State, or ISIS, are strong enough to justify referring to it as a branch of ISIS.

Blinken said that Omar “serves as the senior commander and lead coordinator for all attacks conducted by the group in northern Mozambique, as well as the lead facilitator and communications conduit for the group”.

He added that, during the 24 March attack on the town of Palma, “Omar led one group of fighters while Abu Yasir Hassan led another group”. In particular, Omar was responsible for the attack on the Amarula Hotel, on the outskirts of Palma town. Blinken stated that Omar ordered attacks not only in Cabo Delgado but also in Mtwara province in southern Tanzania.

Blinken stated that the US is committed to disrupting the finances of ISIS-Mozambique, along with Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) in Mali, and al-Shabaab in Somalia. This would “limit their abilities to conduct further attacks against civilians”.

He concluded that “addressing the terrorist threat across the continent will require working closely with our partners to degrade the capacity and operations of these terrorist groups, combatting their control and influence in West, East, and Southern Africa”.

## Chissano raises possibility of dialogue

Former President Joaquim Chissano has urged the current government to consider the possibility of entering into a dialogue with the terrorist groups operating in Cabo Delgado.

In an interview with Radio Mozambique on 4 August, Chissano said that historically there have been “certain types of terrorism” which ended through negotiations. “It may be that a leader of this group appears who offers us the opportunity of a dialogue”, he added.

There were cases, Chissano said, in which extremists had been convinced to negotiate and end their violence. He did not give examples, but it is not unreasonable to assume that he may have been thinking of an earlier war in Mozambique.

In the 1980s, the apartheid-backed Renamo rebels were often referred to as terrorists and initially the position of the Mozambican government was that negotiations should be held with the South African regime and not with its puppets.

Nonetheless, in the late 1980s channels of communication were opened between Chissano’s government and Renamo, and in October 1992 Chissano signed the general peace agreement with Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama.

The Islamist terrorists in Cabo Delgado, however, are much more shadowy than Renamo ever was. The leadership of the group is unnamed and faceless. They do not even have an agreed name – locally they are known as Al-Shabaab or as Ansa al-Sunna, but since 2019 they have operated as loosely affiliated to the terrorist network calling itself Islamic State.

Chissano stressed the importance of studying the causes of the armed violence in Cabo Delgado to solve the crisis in the province.

## No elephant poaching recorded in Niassa National Reserve

President Filipe Nyusi announced on 31 July that, for the third consecutive year, no elephants have been poached in the Niassa National Reserve in the far north of the country, nor in the Gorongosa National Park in the central province of Sofala.

Speaking in the Niassa Reserve during celebrations of World Ranger Day, President Nyusi attributed this success to the combined efforts of the forestry and wildlife rangers, the defence and security forces, the bodies of the administration of justice, and the local communities in the fight against environmental crimes.

The President stressed that Mozambique will continue to transform itself into a natural reserve for elephants and will take measures to protect lions which are currently under great threat from poachers. He lamented that “without these animals, we cease to be Mozambique”.

World Rangers Day highlights the role of rangers in protecting and conserving biodiversity and pays tribute to those rangers who have lost their lives in the defence of wildlife.

## President Nyusi inaugurates Gorongosa dam

President Filipe Nyusi on 5 August inaugurated the Gorongosa dam on the Nhandare River in the central province of Sofala.

The dam can store 300,000 cubic metres of water and will allow water coverage in Gorongosa district to rise from 38 to 53.7 per cent of the population. The dam cost 327 million meticaís (about US\$5.2 million).

Addressing the crowd who attended the inauguration ceremony, President Nyusi explained that the dam, in addition to flood control and its hydroelectric potential, will bring enormous benefits for the Gorongosa population and the local economy. “Gorongosa needed added water storage capacity”, he said, “and so, in light of our national water resource plan, we mobilised resources to pay for the construction of the dam”.

He added that the availability of water in the reservoir would allow a local fishery to flourish, contributing to food security, employment, and income.

President Nyusi pledged that the government will continue to mobilise funds to build more water facilities across the country to complement the investments already guaranteed through the “Water for Life” Programme (PRAVIDA).

The Gorongosa dam, he added, would also make water available for irrigation, adding to Gorongosa district’s potential as the breadbasket of Sofala. “With the dam and the availability of water, we are launching the challenge to boost the value chains of cotton, oilseeds, vegetables, grain and livestock”, President Nyusi stressed.

He urged the Gorongosa local government, the public, and the water management bodies to ensure the sustainability of the dam and its durability, in order to honour the investment made. “This dam cost money, and it would be an enormous waste if, in a little while, we were to be asked to make more money available to rehabilitate it”, said the President.

While in Sofala, President Nyusi also inaugurated new water supply systems in Cheringoma and Maringue districts.

The system in Inhaminga, the Cheringoma district capital, gives 25,000 people access to clean drinking water. The system consists of six tanks with a storage capacity of 1,600 cubic metres, which can supply the population of Inhaminga with water for 24 hours a day. A distribution network running for 57 kilometres, and ten standpipes were also installed.

Work on this system took two years and cost about 123 million meticaís (US\$1.94 million). It was financed by the government and its partners under the PRAVIDA programme.

The previous water supply system in Inhaminga had been paralysed for the past 20 years, obliging the people of the town to walk long distances to obtain water.

The Maringue system cost about 67 million meticaís. It consists of four boreholes and two pumps, plus tanks that can store 270 cubic metres of water. The new system should improve the lives of 19,000 Maringue residents.

## Death toll from Covid-19 reaches 1,600

The Mozambican health authorities on 7 August announced a further 34 deaths from the Covid-19 respiratory disease. This equals the figure from 27 July for the highest number of deaths reported in a single 24 hour period. This brings the total death toll from Covid-19 in Mozambique to exactly 1,600. Since the start of the pandemic, 131,799 people have tested positive.

As part of its efforts to protect the population from Covid-19, the Mozambican government is stepping up its vaccination campaign.

On 2 August the Health Ministry received a further half a million doses of the Verocell vaccine, manufactured by the Chinese pharmaceutical company, Sinopharm. This follows the reception of a million doses of the Verocell vaccine during the previous week. These vaccines are part of the government's drive to acquire 11 million doses by the end of August and to ensure that, by the end of the year all 17 million eligible adults will have been vaccinated.

Deputy Health Minister Lidia Cardoso explained that during the current phase of the country's mass vaccination campaign, which began on 4 August, the target groups are anyone in the urban areas aged 50 and above, all state employees and teachers not covered by earlier phases, and all drivers and fare collectors of passenger transport vehicles (including drivers of bicycle and motorbike-taxis).

Cardoso said that mass vaccination will reduce the impact of the disease and will allow the relaxation of some of the restrictive measures imposed by the government to halt the spread of Covid-19.

Cardoso called on the target groups to go en masse to the vaccination posts. Unlike the earlier phases of the vaccination campaign, which involved smaller numbers of people, citizens should first register at the post nearest to their homes, and they will then be given a date and a time for receiving the vaccination. The vaccination, Cardoso stressed, is evidence of the government's commitment to public health.

Meanwhile, the vaccination initiative of Mozambican private companies, Univax, has so far succeeded in vaccinating over 70,000 people across the country. The Univax initiative is supported by 319 companies, and on 30 June it imported 500,000 doses of the VeroCell vaccine, made by the Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinopharm. Under an agreement with the Ministry of Health, Univax donated 139,590 doses to the government to vaccinate the vulnerable population as part of the national vaccination campaign. The rest is being used to vaccinate workers of the companies involved and their families. This vaccination drive started on 5 July, and to date 72,491 people have received their first dose of the vaccine, and 13,401 have already received the second dose.

## Clinical trials to be held in Beira and Maputo

The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the International Vaccine Institute (IVI) on 21 July announced that they are going to hold clinical trials in the Mozambican cities of Beira and Maputo to test the efficacy of the VeroCell Covid-19 vaccine produced by the Chinese company Sinopharm.

The vaccine has already been approved by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for emergency use and its efficacy for symptomatic and hospitalised disease is estimated by WHO to be 79 per cent. However, until now there have been no clinical trials to test its effectiveness against the main strains of Covid-19 circulating in southern Africa, known as the Beta and Delta variants.

In a press release, the chief executive of CEPI, Dr Richard Hatchett, explained that "only a handful of clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines have taken place in sub-Saharan Africa. But for vaccines to have the maximum impact they must be evaluated in the populations that will receive them and against the variants those populations are most likely to encounter".

The first clinical trial is a Phase 3 trial, which means that the VeroCell vaccine has already undergone Phase 1 and 2 trials to check that it is both safe and effective. In addition, the vaccine has already undergone Phase 3 trials in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain confirming its effectiveness. In fact, the vaccine is currently being used in over fifty countries around the world and at the end of June half a million doses arrived in Mozambique for distribution under the United for Vaccination Against Covid-19 (UNIVAX) initiative.

Apart from testing the vaccine's effectiveness against the Beta and Delta strains, the trial will also assess its safety and immunogenicity in HIV-infected individuals. Another task of the trial is to test if it can be co-administered with seasonal influenza vaccines.

The trial is urgently needed due to the agreement signed on 12 July between Sinopharm and the COVAX initiative (which is coordinated by WHO) under which up to 170 million doses of VeroCell will be distributed to developing countries. According to CEPI, the trials will begin shortly, with the first interim results expected before the end of 2021.

A separate Phase 2 trial will evaluate the safety and effectiveness of giving one dose of VeroCell and one dose of Covishield (the Indian brand name for the AstraZeneca vaccine). The practice of mixing vaccines is becoming more common around the world and there is growing evidence that the practice increases protection against Covid-19.

The trials are being led by IVI in partnership with Mozambique's National Health Institute (INS), the University of Heidelberg and others.

CEPI is a partnership between public, private, philanthropic, and civil organisations. IVI is a non-profit intergovernmental organisation established in 1997 through an initiative launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

## **New prison officials appointed**

Justice Minister Helena Kida on 5 August swore into office Herminia Nhamuze as the new director of the Maputo Special Penitentiary for Women, better known as the Ndlavela Women's Prison.

Nhamuze, who holds the rank of deputy superintendent of the prison guards, takes over from her disgraced predecessor, Albertina Dimande. She must run a prison that became notorious in June, when the anti-corruption NGO, the Centre for Public Integrity (CIP) exposed a prostitution racket run by some of the guards, who had forced women prisoners into sexual relations with male clients who paid the guards substantial sums.

A commission of inquiry was set up which, although it could not verify all of CIP's findings, concluded that guards had indeed exploited inmates, who were forced to have sex with guards and with men brought into the prison by the guards.

"Sexual abuse by prison guards are acts of torture or cruel treatment," declared the Commission, which recommended that disciplinary measures should be taken against those involved.

Kida also appointed a range of other senior prison officials, including the National Director of the Prison Inspection Service, Yazalde Viana Serafina de Sousa; the National Director of Prison Operations, Fernando Mario Sumbana; the National Director of Rehabilitation and Reinsertion, Justino Bonaze; the Director of the Maputo Maximum Security Prison, Ramos Zambuco; and the Director of the Maputo Civil Prison, Ildio Mutola.

Kida warned the newly appointed officials to avoid corruption and other criminal practices and promised that she would be "implacable" towards offenders. There would be no toleration for "acts of indiscipline, insubordination, corruption, illicit acts by prison staff involving inmates, and the violation of the fundamental rights of inmates", she stressed.

Kida insisted there must be greater control of legality in the prisons, where the staff must study all the legislation governing the sector.

## **President Nyusi launches industrialisation programme**

President Filipe Nyusi on 6 August launched the "Industrialise Mozambique" programme in Vanduzi district, in the central province of Manica.

The programme is a presidential initiative intended to improve efficiency and boost the potential of the country's industries. President Nyusi added that it will generate employment and income for young people and increase industrial production.

Implementing the programme will involve building more industrial infrastructure and overcoming constraints related to rural roads, electrification, telecommunications and water supply.

"Let's get out of our comfort zone and embrace hard work", declared President Nyusi, adding that

Mozambique already has everything needed to ensure success. "Let us stimulate production and marketing to generate jobs and income for young people and women", he urged.

The public and private sectors, civil society, and cooperation partners, President Nyusi said, should all be involved in the goals of boosting the weight of industry in the Gross Domestic Product, increasing industrial exports, and substituting imports.

The programme, he added, has a medium and long term institutional perspective, based on the principles of "One Country, One Vision, One Industrial Strategy".

"This initiative", said President Nyusi, "will be monitored in its various phases, in order to validate the results, and the process of transforming the economy, and catalysing the goal of building a medium-income country, where every Mozambican benefits from the riches of the soil and the subsoil".

He promised that there will be finance for "projects whose anchor criteria take as their basis the competitiveness of the sector, resulting in economic and financial viability".

President Nyusi insisted that new industrial units should not follow a business model that rests on anti-competitive practices, dependent on customs and fiscal benefits. Furthermore, a long term programme should be independent of political cycles, in order to allow continuity.

"Leave politics to the politicians", he urged. "Think about business and how to make money. This is what we mean we speak of the value of our resources growing in a sustainable and realistic way, without preconceptions. In this way, we adapt to the new reality, giving shape to our policy instruments in the context of the SADC region, the continent and the world".

## **Government approves strategy for managing displaced**

The Mozambican government on 3 August approved the policy and strategy for managing internally displaced people to reduce and solve the problems facing displaced people through appropriate actions of prevention, assistance, and socio-economic re-insertion.

Speaking to reporters after the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), the government spokesperson, Deputy Justice Minister Filimao Suaze, said the policy applies to people who have been forced to leave their normal places of residence due to the adverse effects of armed conflicts.

The policy also covers situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights, and natural or man-made disasters, which have not crossed the borders of Mozambique.

"This policy and strategy seek essentially to improve the coordination of support and assistance for the displaced", said Suaze. "Naturally central coordination will always be done by the government authorities, but there will also be the intervention of other humanitarian bodies, civil society, and individuals. So, there is always a need to improve coordination mechanisms".

## Leader of Renamo Military Junta still wants talks

The leader of the self-styled “Renamo Military Junta”, Mariano Nhongo, has broken a silence that lasted for months to proclaim that he is open to a dialogue to reach peace with the Mozambican government.

Interviewed on 28 July by the German agency DW Africa, Nhongo made it clear that he only wants to talk with the government and not with the mainstream of Renamo. Nor does he want the United Nations to be involved in any discussions.

However, the government has made it repeatedly clear that it regards Nhongo’s group as a faction within Renamo, and it has already, in August 2019, negotiated a peace agreement with the Renamo leadership, signed by President Filipe Nyusi and Renamo leader Ossufo Momade. It is not prepared to sign a separate deal with people who broke away from Renamo.

Momade was elected president of Renamo at a Renamo congress in January 2019. But Nhongo rejected the decisions of that congress, denounced Momade as “a traitor”, and proclaimed himself the true leader of Renamo.

The Military Junta ran a low-level insurgency in the central provinces of Manica and Sofala in late 2019 and throughout 2020, mainly aimed at ambushing vehicles on the main roads. But no attacks have been reported since January 2021, and there has been a steady trickle of deserters from the Junta, turning themselves over to the government so that they can accept the benefits of the demobilisation package on offer.

Nhongo complained that the Junta sent a document to the government in 2019 but has not received a reply. “We expected that the government would give us a good reply”, he said, claiming that “the people will understand and will accept me negotiating with the government. If the government wants to deceive me, the people will immediately find out and will not allow me to negotiate”.

He added that if the government set up a negotiating team he would not allow Andre Matsangaissa Junior to be a member of it. Matsangaissa, a nephew of the first Renamo commander, Andre Matade Matsangaissa, is one of the Junta figures who publicly abandoned Nhongo. “The Government can set up a commission to negotiate with the Military Junta’s commission, but not including the traitor”, said Nhongo. “We’ve had enough of his betrayals”.

Nhongo claimed he was not worried by desertions from the Junta’s ranks. He said he has enough men to carry out new attacks but claimed he would rather enter into dialogue with the government.

“The military Junta still exists, and it will always exist”, Nhongo boasted. “It will never finish, and it’s waiting for a reply from the government. If the government is interested in negotiating, the Military Junta is ready”.

Nhongo did not explain why he wants no further contact with the United Nations representative, Mirko Manzoni (who is the personal envoy to Mozambique of

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres). Manzoni told reporters months ago that it has been difficult to contact Nhongo to talk about the current demobilisation of the Renamo militia.

## MCC chooses agriculture and rural transport as top priorities

The United States development agency, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), has chosen agriculture and rural transport as the key sectors for its next package of aid to Mozambique, scheduled to start in 2023.

This information was shared by the MCC country director for Mozambique, Kenneth Miller, in Maputo at an audience granted by Foreign Minister Veronica Macamo.

Speaking to reporters at the end of the meeting, Miller said the MCC is committed to working with the Mozambican government to guarantee that its investment has a significant impact on poverty reduction and economic growth.

“We are already working with several ministries for investments in the areas of agriculture and rural transport as a way of creating jobs that can reduce the level of poverty in Mozambique”, Miller stressed.

Among the MCC’s priorities, Miller added, was the empowerment of women and young people. “We shall ensure that our joint investments strike at the roots of poverty”, he said. “We do not yet have a specific plan for these areas, because it’s a process that takes time, but the idea is that we shall also invest in these areas”.

The MCC’s aid packages are known as “compacts”, and the US ambassador to Mozambique, Dennis Hearne, said, “this next MCC compact is an opportunity to make lasting investments in rural transport and in the agricultural area”.

The National Coordinator of the Mozambican government’s Office for the Development of Compact II, Higinio de Marrule, reiterated that the results of a joint assessment showed that agriculture and rural transport are priority areas.

He confirmed that the Compact is scheduled to begin in 2023, but the Mozambican team hopes to start work earlier. “Well before 2023, we want to deliver a package of projects constituting Compact II that will be signed by the Mozambican government and the MCC”, said Marrule.

Marrule added that the cost of the Compact has not yet been defined “but we hope it will reach close to US\$500 million”.

Mozambique’s first MCC compact was signed in 2007 and ran for five years. It was a grant of US\$506.9 million, of which only US\$447.9 million (88 per cent) was spent. The largest component was a water and sanitation project budgeted at US\$203.6 million intended to improve access to safe, reliable water supplies and sanitation services.

The MCC Board of Directors announced in December 2019 that it had selected Mozambique for a second compact.

## **GALP accused of selling underweight gas bottles**

The Portuguese fuel company GALP has been accused of selling underweight bottles of domestic cooking gas.

Inspectors from Mozambique's National Norms and Quality Institute (INNOQ) visited GALP sales points in Maputo and the neighbouring city of Matola on 4 August. In Maputo, they visited five sales points but found that at only one of them was any gas available. Here they checked 32 bottles of gas, each of which should have weighed 11 kilogrammes. According to INNOQ, 29 of them were underweight, weighing an average of only 10 kilogrammes. INNOQ reacted by banning the sale of the entire consignment of 485 bottles from which those inspected came.

In Matola, the inspectors visited four sales points, three of which had gas available. Out of a sample of ten bottles, six were found by INNOQ to be underweight, weighing between nine and ten kilogrammes.

The inspectors also allege that a second company, Petrogas, was selling underweight bottles: 13 Petrogas bottles which should have weighed nine kilos were found to weigh an average of 8.87 kilogrammes. Larger bottles are supposed to weigh 14 kilogrammes, but the inspectors found 13 that weighed an average of 13.78 kilogrammes.

INNOQ promised that it will continue these inspections in order to protect the rights of consumers.

GALP immediately issued a protest claiming that the INNOQ inspections were "not credible". It said that the process of filling its gas bottles "is undertaken with the greatest of rigour and is subject to adequate control, both internal and external".

GALP added that it has been present in Mozambique for 60 years and "always fought for a posture of seriousness, good quality services, and a contribution to the development of the country".

## **Competition regulator urged to protect consumers**

Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario on 2 August urged the new chairperson of the Competition Regulatory Authority (ARC), Iacumba Ali Aiuba, to focus on activities that protect consumers.

At the swearing-in ceremony, Rosario said that Aiuba and his team should concentrate on publicising and implementing the Law on Competition and on improving competition "so that we continue to promote a culture of healthy competition in our country".

The Prime Minister added that "the promotion of competition between different operators in the market stimulates a business environment favourable to the consolidation of the private sector and creates the conditions for attracting more investment".

He stressed that ARC should be guided by the principles of independence, impartiality, transparency, and technical competence. "Only in this way will the Regulatory Authority guarantee competition which

promotes efficiency and stimulates innovation in the national business sector", he said.

Rosario also swore into office the new general directors of the Investment and Export Promotion Agency (APIEX), Gil da Conceicao Bires, and of the National Norms and Quality Institute (INNOQ), Geraldo Albasini.

The Prime Minister challenged Bires to strengthen the role of APIEX as a centre providing information on investment, business, and foreign trade.

He also called on APIEX to ensure the regular holding of the Maputo International Trade Fair (FACIM) – particularly this year's which is taking place while the world is still grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic.

As for INNOQ, Rosario said it should protect consumers through verifying the instruments of measurement and inspecting products. He urged the INNOQ management to improve the norms of certification in order to cover the greatest possible number of products and services. "Ensuring the observance of quality standards and norms will protect human health, improve productivity, minimise waste, and hence reduce the costs of production and the price of the final product", he declared.

## **German aid to WFP**

The German government has granted €26 million (US\$31 million) to the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in Mozambique.

According to a joint release from the German embassy and the WFP, this grant is to assist the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by terrorist activities in the northern province of Cabo Delgado and to counter the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The new funding is in response to an urgent appeal by the WFP for more funds so that it can continue to provide support to people in need and buy and store food stocks to face the approaching 2021/2022 rainy season to protect against any disturbances in aid that may result from logistical problems caused by heavy rains.

According to German ambassador Lothar Freischlder, "Germany has doubled its contribution, because it is important for us to attend to the needs of people affected by crises and disasters, and so I am proud of these funds which are arriving at a moment when the people of Cabo Delgado have most need of them to survive and to rebuild".

WFP national director in Mozambique, Antonella d'Aprile declared that without the German support "thousands of people would suffer from food insecurity in northern Mozambique. The German contribution allows us to help 298,000 people affected by the conflict".

She added that "as the need for humanitarian assistance increases to record levels, driven by conflicts, climate change, and Covid-19, WFP will continue to support the most vulnerable people, and provide assistance for recovery and resilience, working in close collaboration with the national institutions".

## **Mphanda Nkuwa to begin generating power in 2030**

The proposed new dam at Mphanda Nkuwa, on the Zambezi River, 60 kilometres downstream from the existing dam at Cahora Bassa, in the western province of Tete, could start generating electricity in 2030, according to the official government spokesperson, Deputy Justice Minister Filimao Suaze.

Speaking to reporters on 20 July, after the weekly meeting of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), Suaze said building the new dam will cost about US\$4 billion. It will produce 1,500 megawatts of power and much of that electricity will be sent southwards on a 1,600-kilometre transmission line from Tete to Maputo.

“It is expected that 2030 will see the effective take-off of this project”, declared Suaze. He expected construction to take six years.

The project has been on the table for decades but was relaunched in August 2018 by President Filipe Nyusi who announced that the public electricity company EDM, and the company that operates the Cahora Bassa dam, HCB, will be in charge of reviving the initiative.

The problem remains to find a definitive buyer for the power generated at Mphanda Nkuwa. The obvious buyer is the South African electricity company, Eskom, which already purchases the bulk of the power generated at Cahora Bassa. But so far Eskom has not committed to buying more hydropower from Mozambique, despite the rolling blackouts (known euphemistically as “load shedding”) that it imposes on South African consumers.

The Council of Ministers discussed the development of other water resource storage and management projects, among which Suaze stressed the dam at Mapai, in the southern province of Gaza, regarded as crucial for controlling flooding in the Limpopo Valley. Suaze was confident that this dam will be built by 2025. He said the selection of a contractor is underway, following the rules of the law on public-private partnerships. Construction of this dam is budgeted at one billion dollars. The reservoir behind the dam will store six billion cubic metres of water. A power station at this dam will generate 75 megawatts, and the dam will also enable the irrigation of 250,000 hectares of land in this semi-arid part of the country.

Further south is the projected Moamba-Major dam, on the Incomati River, the first stone for which was laid in 2014. The work was interrupted due to a cut in the financing by the Brazilian National Economic and Social Development Bank (BNDES), following corruption scandals in Brazil involving the construction company Andrade Gutierrez.

About US\$700 million is needed for this dam, and Suaze said that negotiations are underway with the Exim Bank of China to secure the funds. The dam will have the capacity to store 760 million cubic metres of water, to be partly used for irrigation in the river valley and partly for drinking water, including for the Greater Maputo Metropolitan Area. It will also generate 15 megawatts of electricity.

## **EDM replacing electricity network in Maputo**

Mozambique’s publicly owned Electricity Company, EDM, on 23 July started to replace obsolete cables and pylons over about seven kilometres in the inner Maputo neighbourhood of Malhangalene, in a bid to improve the quality of power reaching consumers.

The director of EDM Customer Service in the KaMpfumo municipal district, Eduardo Magaia, said the drive is budgeted at eight million meticais (US\$126,000) and will consist of a complete replacement of low voltage cables and metallic pylons, by insulated cables and concrete pylons.

He added that after the intervention, scheduled to last two months, 3,700 consumers will enjoy a better quality of electricity without the current frequent power cuts.

EDM was forced to make constant interventions in Malhangalene whenever there was a power cut, but Magaia was convinced that after the ongoing work has been concluded the situation will improve. Similar work will be undertaken in other areas of the municipal district.

Magaia also declared that EDM is replacing the current electricity meters with more modern equipment to monitor consumers’ use of electricity, in a bid to reduce the frequent theft of electricity that causes the company huge losses.

## **President Nyusi inaugurates solar power station**

President Filipe Nyusi on 30 July inaugurated the Matchedje solar power station, in the northern province of Niassa, which will supply power to around 400 households. The plant has a peak capacity of 200 kilowatts and President Nyusi stressed that it is part of the government’s plans to ensure that electricity reaches ten million more consumers by 2024.

President Nyusi pointed out that electricity is an important catalyst for the country’s social and economic development, noting that “electrical power contributes to the flourishing of industry, increased production, and improved living conditions”.

The President added that, through the “Energy for All” project, the government will step up its efforts to boost access to electricity in the rural areas, focusing particularly on renewable sources of power.

He said that currently about 39 per cent of the Mozambican population has access to electricity in their homes – 35 per cent from the national grid, and four per cent from isolated systems, usually based on solar panels, outside the grid.

For his part, the Secretary of State for Niassa, Diniz Vilanculos, said that the establishment of the solar power station will drive the creation of small industries and self-employment, and will encourage tourism.

Matchedje holds a special place in Mozambican history since it was here that the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) held its second congress, in 1968, during the independence war.

## **Mozambique making progress in women's empowerment**

The Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, Nyeleti Mondlane, on 31 July declared that the country is continuing to make progress in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

In a message to mark Pan-African Women's Day, Mondlane cited the increased entry of girls into all the country's sub-systems of education, due to the expansion of the school network, and other initiatives to keep girls at school rather than dropping out.

"The proportion of girls in all the sub-systems is ever larger. It has reached 48 per cent in primary education", said Mondlane. Contributing to this success was the abolition of primary school entrance fees, and the free distribution of school textbooks.

Mondlane stressed that the government is continuing to expand access to sexual and reproductive health programmes and is promoting screening for breast and cervical cancer, among other initiatives centred on improving the quality of life of communities.

She added that despite the progress Mozambican women have made, gender inequality remains a reality, as does violence against women and girls. "The path is long and complex", said Mondlane, "but we are sure that, with the determination and commitment of all, we can attain our goal of building an Africa free of violence, discrimination and child marriages, where women and men can enjoy the same rights and the same opportunities".

In the economic area, the Minister stressed the increasing number of women with access to formal employment, to professions previously regarded as masculine domains, and to productive resources, thus allowing the creation of income to sustain their families.

She encouraged all strata of Mozambican society to work together for the empowerment of women and girls, and solidarity with women victims of violence, as well as those affected by natural disasters.

## **Maputo Port handled over 18 million tonnes of cargo in 2020**

The Port of Maputo Port handled over 18 million tonnes of cargo in 2020, Transport Minister Janfar Abdulai said on 22 July. This was a decline of around 14 per cent when compared with the 21 million tonnes handled in 2019. Nonetheless, Abdulai thought the port had performed well, considering the challenges and restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Addressing the opening of the "Transport Evolution Mozambique Forum", held virtually, and bringing together over 300 participants from 20 countries, Abdulai reaffirmed the government's commitment to creating the necessary conditions for the evolution of transport to answer the needs of domestic and regional development.

"The large investments we have been making in the Maputo, Beira and Nacala corridors in areas such as dredging, expanding port handling, the rehabilitation and modernisation of the existing infrastructures as well as the acquisition of cranes, wagons and locomotives, confirm this commitment to fulfilling Mozambique's role in regional logistics," he said.

The Minister highlighted the construction of the new rail customs terminal at Ressano Garcia, on the border with South Africa, which will be inaugurated within the next few days. He believed this will lead to a growth in the amount of cargo handled by the Port of Maputo and will encourage a shift from road to rail.

As a member state and holding the rotating presidency of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Mozambique, he added, has been leading efforts to improve regional connectivity, mobilising large investments to expand and modernise transport infrastructures.

Recently, Mozambique hosted and chaired the meeting of the Ministers of Transport, Information and Communication Technologies and Meteorology which enabled the participants to harmonise strategies for integrated development at a regional level.