



## ML Strategies Update

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## Africa Update

### Leading the News

#### ***West Africa Ebola Outbreak***

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, in response to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) met to consider how the IMF can better support low-income countries hit by public health disasters. The Board approved the establishment of a new Catastrophe Containment and Relief (CCR) Trust as a vehicle to provide support to countries facing fast-spreading epidemics, such as Ebola, as well as other humanitarian crises. Subject to Board approval of requests from individual countries, it is expected the CCR Trust will provide grants for debt relief of close to \$100 million for Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. Details can be seen [here](#).

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) issued its 19<sup>th</sup> fact sheet on the West Africa Ebola outbreak. The most recent fact sheet notes that weekly Ebola case incidence increased in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone for the first time in 2015 during the week of January 26<sup>th</sup>, with the United Nations (U.N.) World Health Organization (WHO) reporting 124 new confirmed cases across all three countries. In addition, the fact sheet highlights that Ebola vaccine trials will begin in all three countries in the coming weeks. The latest fact sheet can be accessed [here](#).

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, John Ging, Director of Operations for the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), said the global Ebola response has been impressive and effective. However, he warned there must be no complacency as efforts continue to reach zero cases. Director Ging's comments were captured [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that nearly all of the 16,000 children orphaned as a result of the Ebola outbreak had been taken in by families across West Africa. UNICEF said some families took in multiple children and only 500 had to be placed in mass care facilities. Furthermore, UNICEF noted that 80 percent of orphaned children have been found new homes with extended family. More information was provided [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, upon returning from a trip to West Africa, OCHA Director of Operations John Ging expressed confidence the Ebola outbreak will be completely eliminated and the humanitarian situation

will be resolved, leaving countries better able to handle future disease outbreaks. An interview with Director Ging on his recent visit to West Africa can be read [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, Fode Tass Sylla, a spokesman for Guinea's anti-Ebola task force, reported the number of Ebola cases in Guinea has doubled as a result of the discovery of previously unreported cases. The revelation brings the number of confirmed cases to 53. The new cases come as health officials gain access to more remote villages. While the number of new Ebola cases was thought to be on the decline, the number of new cases has now risen in all three hardest-hit West African countries. Additional analysis can be viewed [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the American Hospital Association (AHA) sent a letter to U.S. Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) for Preparedness and Response Nicole Lurie regarding the \$576 million in emergency appropriations designated for HHS for Ebola preparedness and response. The AHA noted the funds were earmarked for implementation of a regional strategy of Ebola treatment centers balancing geographic needs and different institutional capabilities and urged that a large portion of funds be prioritized to reimburse hospitals that stepped forward to raise their level of preparedness to care for patients infected with Ebola. The letter was posted [here](#).

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, *The New York Times* reported that doctors treating patients infected with Ebola are unable to use stethoscopes while wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). Although the number of new Ebola cases in West Africa is declining, stethoscopes could become more important as the remaining patients receive lifesaving intravenous (IV) hydration. As part of this aspect of treatment, stethoscopes are used to detect the sound of fluid in the lungs, which indicates a patient has been on an IV drip too long. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, Paquile Zoglelemou, head of the Red Cross in Lola, Guinea, reported that public mistrust is undermining aid efforts to contain the spread of Ebola. Zoglelemou said that misinformation and rumors have created an atmosphere of suspicion towards Ebola aid workers in West Africa and threats against aid workers' personal safety and property. For the full story, click [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, U.N. photographer Martine Perret shared the photos she took during her time with the U.N. Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER). Perret documented the effects of the Ebola outbreak in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, in addition to the international efforts to fight it. A slideshow of the photos can be viewed [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) announced that nearly all U.S. troops deployed to West Africa as part of Operation United Assistance will return to the U.S. by April 30<sup>th</sup>. All of those returning will undergo established controlled monitoring procedures. To support the 10,000 civilian responders that remain on the ground in West Africa, DOD will leave behind important assets that can help health works stem potential outbreaks in the future. In addition, DOD will identify 100 personnel who will maintain a continued presence in the region working to strength the disease preparedness and surveillance capacity of the national governments. A statement was issued [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Helen Clark started a one-week visit to West Africa to observe the Ebola response effort, with stops planned in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, where there have been almost 23,000 total Ebola cases and almost 9,000 reported deaths. Her visit is aimed at affirming the continued commitment of the U.N. to addressing the ongoing crisis, and support for the recovery process. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has tasked UNDP with leading the U.N. system on Ebola-related recovery. Administrator Clark's visit to West Africa was announced [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the Government of Sierra Leone said it had cleaned up a list thought to contain hundreds of ghost workers on its Ebola staff and would prosecute those who sought to swindle money from the government. In Sierra Leone, payments to Ebola staff have repeatedly been frozen because of the difficulty distinguishing between genuine workers and others who forged their identities to claim hazard bonuses or registering twice to double claim pay. According to a government spokesperson, more than 95 percent of the thousands of declared government Ebola workers have now been verified. An article on the situation can be read [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, U.S. President Barack Obama delivered remarks on America's leadership in the Ebola fight. He said the fight against the spread of Ebola in West Africa has become both a national security priority and an example of American leadership. In addition to thanking the troops and public health workers who traveled to the heart of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, President Obama also marked a transition in the Ebola response. While the U.S. is drawing down its military presence in West Africa, President Obama warned there must be continued vigilance in the fight against the virus. His remarks were transcribed [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, U.S. President Barack Obama met with 13 private sector and foundation leaders who have joined the international response to the Ebola epidemic by providing urgent assistance, mobilizing public interest and action, and setting the stage for recovery. The President thanked participants for contributing to the progress achieved thus far and encouraged them to sustain the momentum. President Obama also urged continued vigilance to end the Ebola epidemic and the group shared views about the next steps to achieve a resilient and Ebola-free West Africa. Details on the meeting were provided [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the White House issued a fact sheet highlighted how the surge of U.S. Government resources last year is driving the major slowdown of the spread of Ebola in West Africa. The fact sheet notes that Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea now experience only about 150 new cases of Ebola each week, down from about 1,000 in October. In addition, the fact sheet details the 3,500 U.S. personnel deployed to the region that helped train 1,500 health care workers and construct 15 Ebola treatment units (ETUs). The fact sheet can be downloaded [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) praised President Barack Obama for accepting his recommendations in announcing changes in the U.S. Ebola strategy. Following a four-day trip to Liberia in late December, Senator Coons urged the White House and DOD to focus on turning mobile military labs into permanent sustainable labs in Nigeria, converting temporary Ebola treatment units into lasting local clinics, and recalling the majority of U.S. military personnel and leaving behind a smaller force of engineers and trainers. Senator Coons' recommendations were outlined [here](#).

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the WHO reported the number of new Ebola cases in West Africa rose for the second week in a row, suggesting declines in the disease seen earlier this year have stalled. West Africa recorded 144 new confirmed cases of Ebola in the week to February 8<sup>th</sup>, compared with 124 the previous week. U.N. officials said the situation is particularly dire in Guinea, where resistance to international assistance is threatening the prospects for achieving President Alpha Conde's goal of zero Ebola cases by March. The latest figures were analyzed [here](#).

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, education officials in Liberia apologized for wrongly announcing a postponement of the reopening of schools in the country that were closed at the height of the Ebola crisis. Classrooms were shut six months ago, but lessons had been due to restart next week, prior to the announcement of a two-week delay on Wednesday. According to officials, schools are to ignore the announcement, which was wrongly released due to problems at the ministry. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the Red Cross reported that its teams responding to the Ebola crisis in Guinea have been attacked on average ten times a month over the past year. According to the aid organization, the violence is hampering efforts to stop the transmission of Ebola, as evidenced by the fact that the number of new cases in Guinea nearly doubled last week to 64, according to the WHO. In addition, officials reported that locals in Conakry continue to hide sick friends and relatives from authorities. Details on the challenges in Guinea can be viewed [here](#).

On February 13<sup>th</sup>, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) will host a briefing titled, "Ebola in Liberia: A Conversation with Tolbert Nyenswah." The discussion will focus on Assistant Minister of Health and Head of the Liberian Incident Management System (IMS) Nyenswah's role leading Liberia's Ebola response during the crisis period, challenges during the current phase of the response, and prospects for renewal of the Liberian health sector. The event will be streamed [here](#).

## **Nigeria**

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Security Council condemned the recent attacks carried out by Boko Haram along Nigeria's border with Cameroon that resulted in the deaths Chadian and Cameroonian troops and

civilians. The Security Council also called for immediate action by the Chadian army in the fight against the terrorist organization. A statement was released [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Security Council called on the West and Central African nations to enhance military coordination in their efforts to fight Boko Haram in Nigeria. The African Union (AU) has authorized 7,500 troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin to fight the extremist group. Feedback from the Security Council can be seen [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of State condemned the recent terrorist acts by Boko Haram in Cameroon and Niger, including unprovoked attacks on men, women, and children, in their homes, schools, places of worship, and businesses. The State Department observed these attacks show Boko Haram's total disregard for the sanctity of human life. U.S. officials said Boko Haram must not be allowed to continue brutally terrorizing innocent civilians in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger and pledged to continue to support governments in the region, including through intelligence-sharing. In addition, the State Department noted the U.S. is committed to supporting the efforts of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF). For details, click [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of State reiterated its support for peaceful, free, transparent, and credible electoral processes in Nigeria and renewed its calls on all candidates, their supporters, and Nigerian citizens to reject election-related violence. The U.S. also pressed for elections to be held on time and called on the national police, the Nigerian military, and all security force personnel to provide security in an impartial manner so that citizens across the country are able to exercise their civic duty safely and without undue delay. The U.S. Government has provided direct support to Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The U.S. position on the Nigerian elections was articulated [here](#).

On February 7<sup>th</sup>, Nigerian election commission chief Attahiru Jega announced the postponement of the presidential elections, initially scheduled for February 14<sup>th</sup>, to March 28<sup>th</sup>. According to Jega, the delay was necessary because of a lack of troops available to protector voters heading to the polls, particularly in the northeastern part of the country that has been targeted by Boko Haram. The announcement came as a tight race is expected between incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and former military ruler Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC). The opposition has described the delay as a setback for Nigerian democracy and a move to help the sitting president's campaign. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 7<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of State expressed deep disappointment by the decision to postpone Nigeria's presidential election. The State Department said political interference with the INEC is unacceptable, and it is critical that the government not use security concerns as a pretext for impeding the democratic process. In addition to underscoring the importance of ensuring no further delays, the State Department also reaffirmed the need for a free, transparent, and credible election and the rejection of election-related violence. A statement was issued [here](#).

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon acknowledged the decision by Nigeria's INEC to postpone the general elections, but also called on the Commission to act swiftly to ensure a free, fair, and transparent election. He also underscored the importance of security measures to safeguard a non-violent presidential election. For more details, click [here](#).

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, Niger's army repelled the second attack in three days by Boko Haram on the border town of Diffa. According to witnesses, several people were killed when Boko Haram gunmen attempted to advance toward the town, but were pushed back by the army. The attack came as Niger's parliament was soon expected to vote on whether to join the developing regional offensive to fight Boko Haram. The attack on Diffa was reported [here](#).

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, *Defense One* published an op-ed authored by Sarah Chayes of CSIS on the decision to delay the presidential election in Nigeria. Chayes argued U.S. officials need to get tough on ruling Nigerian leaders who appear to have delayed the vote as part of an effort to control the outcome of the election. In light of the postponement of the elections, the Nigerian Government has ramped up efforts to promote safety in the northeastern part of the country that has been most vulnerable to Boko Haram attacks, but is also thought to support the political opposition. The full editorial can be read [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, Nigerian opposition presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari urged the country to remain calm and avoid violence after the postponement of the election was announced. Nigeria's electoral commission postponed the elections until March 28<sup>th</sup>, citing security concerns and possible attacks by Boko Haram. Buhari's response to the postponement of the elections was noted [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, speaking at a U.N. Counterterrorism Committee (CTC) briefing, U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson urged member states to remain united in the fight against terrorism and dedicated to the protection of human rights. His call came as the attacks by Boko Haram escalated in Nigeria. Excerpts from Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson's speech can be read [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) emphasized the need for additional humanitarian aid in Niger's Diffa region along the border with Nigeria. According to the WFP, approximately 125,000 displaced people have crossed into the region and are spread out over 140 sites and villages. Over 50 percent of displaced people in the area are experiencing food insecurity. The WFP report was summarized [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, Boko Haram militants from Nigeria killed some of the passengers they seized as hostages from a bus in Cameroon on Monday. According to witnesses, the kidnappers killed seven of the 20 hostages and dumped their bodies along the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. Meanwhile, it is thought the Boko Haram militants freed three elderly women and are still holding 10 hostages, including eight girls ages 11 to 14. The situation was described [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, Niger's parliament unanimously approved a measure to send troops into Northern Nigeria as part of the regional offensive against Boko Haram. Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad, and Benin have all agreed to send a joint force of 8,700 soldiers to fight the Islamist militant group. For details on the offensive against Boko Haram, click [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan hosted a televised media chat intended to reassure the nation following the postponement of the presidential election. While President Jonathan acknowledged the war against Boko Haram will intensify in the weeks ahead, he said the new election date will hold. Excerpts from the media chat were highlighted [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, leading banks in Nigeria halted electronic trading after the naira dropped more than two percent. The decision to halt trading was made after the naira slid past the key level of 200 to the dollar on fears the postponement of the presidential election could trigger a constitutional crisis. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the Chadian army said it had killed 12 fighters from Boko Haram in a battle in the Nigerian town of Gambaru. The Chadian troops stationed in Gambaru are part of the regional offensive against Boko Haram, which has recently increased cross-border attacks, in addition to its attacks inside Nigeria. The news was shared [here](#).

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, a spokesman for Nigerien armed forces, Colonel Moustapha Michel Ledru, reported that security forces in Niger killed 260 Boko Haram militants since the group began cross-border attacks on the Diffa region on February 6<sup>th</sup>. Further, Colonel Ledru said a number of fighters had been arrested and some weapons were seized. He said the necessary steps have been taken to guarantee peace and security and he called on the public not to panic. Colonel Ledru's comments were captured [here](#).

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the International Rescue Committee, which has teams working in Diffa and Zinder, Niger, reported the humanitarian crisis in the region is worsening as thousands of civilians are fleeing their homes to escape Boko Haram attacks. The region is already hosting an estimated 150,000 Nigerian refugees, with another 7,000 refugees expected to arrive this week. A state of emergency has been declared in Diffa and most schools and administrative buildings are closed. Details were posted [here](#).

### **South Sudan**

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned that South Sudan is on the cusp of an extreme food security crisis. In a press release, FAO Country Representative Sue Lautze



attributed the dire situation to missed crop cycles in areas torn apart by conflict. It is predicted food supplies in the hardest-hit counties will run out as soon as March 2015. For more information on the food shortage in South Sudan, click [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the Governments of the U.S., the United Kingdom (U.K.), and Norway issued a joint statement expressing disappointment on South Sudan's leaders' failure to reach a comprehensive peace deal at recent talks. After the last round of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-led peace talks, the Troika expressed disappointment that negotiations ended in only a partial agreement. The leaders noted that since the conflict in South Sudan began over a year ago, millions have been displaced, thousands are dead, and the country is in ruins despite the commendable efforts of the IGAD. The governments called on all parties to return to negotiations on February 19<sup>th</sup> prepared to compromise to achieve a peace agreement by March 5<sup>th</sup> and to form a transitional government by July 1<sup>st</sup>. The statement was released [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. announced nearly \$273 million in new humanitarian assistance for those uprooted and imperiled by the conflict in South Sudan. The additional funding was announced by Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration at the High-Level Event on the Humanitarian Crisis in South Sudan and its Impact in the Region, held in Nairobi, Kenya. With this additional contribution, U.S. assistance to the people affected by the ongoing conflict in South Sudan is nearly \$1 billion. Meanwhile, the U.S. urged other donors to increase their contributions for humanitarian operations in South Sudan and the region. The new U.S. contribution was announced [here](#). Assistant Secretary Richard's remarks at the pledging event were transcribed [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, UNICEF applauded the release of 300 children by the South Sudan Democratic Army (SSDA) Cobra Faction in Jonglei state. This is the second such U.N.-backed demobilization of child soldiers in South Sudan in the past month. The release was marked by a ceremony overseen by UNICEF and the South Sudan National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission during which the child soldiers surrendered their weapons and uniforms. The full story is available [here](#).

## **Libya**

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, violence escalated in Benghazi, Libya, as government forces attempted to take control of the port district. Witnesses and military officials reported that seven soldiers were killed. The efforts are a part of the major offensive launched in mid-October of against Islamists of the Ansar al-Sharia group. The recent offensive was detailed [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the explosion of a car bomb killed two people and wounded 20 others in Benghazi, Libya. According to military officials, the car exploded while being driven to an army tank base and ammunitions store. An article on the attack can be read [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the U.K., and the U.S. strongly condemned all acts of violence within Libya, including the February 3<sup>rd</sup> attack carried out by forces operating under the Alshuruq Operation in the Oil Crescent area. According to the world leaders, the attacks undermine the efforts of Libyans who are working to bring peace and stability to the country through U.N.-led negotiations. They reiterated there can be no military solution to Libya's problems and called on all Libyans to participate constructively in the U.N.-led dialogue to reach a sustainable ceasefire and a national unity government. More generally, the governments expressed deep concern for the economic impact of the political and security crisis on Libya's future prosperity. Feedback on the situation in Libya was provided [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the U.N. Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) published a report on the current situation in Libya. The report illustrates an overall environment of lawlessness and turmoil. Spokesperson Rupert Colville said in addition to daily occurrences of violence, infrastructure is crumbling with closed hospitals, schools, and airports. Excerpts from the report were highlighted [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, Libyan Special Forces Commander Wanis Bukhamada announced his forces had recaptured the main military base in Benghazi from Islamist rebel fighters. Since the start of their offensive in October, forces led by General Khalifa Hiftar have regained control of central parts of

Benghazi, the airport and several military camps. Developments in Benghazi were outlined [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, UNSMIL announced that Libyan stakeholders had convened in Ghedames for the latest round of U.N.-facilitated dialogue aimed at resolving the political crisis in the country. UNSMIL noted the previous two rounds of talks, which were held at the U.N. Office in Geneva, brought all invited participants together for the first time and were conducted in a constructive and positive atmosphere. The new talks are intended to advance progress towards a political solution to prevent further security and political deterioration and to end the institutional division that threatens the country's unity. A press release was issued [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, Libya's state electricity firm warned that Libya's electricity grid is struggling to keep going as a shortage of power and gas for generation and its break up under two governments hit supply. The news comes as residents of Benghazi and Tripoli have been facing power outages longer than 10 hours in addition to breaks in mobile phone coverage due to a lack of electricity. Meanwhile, government officials reported that some power plants have been hit or made inaccessible in the wake of violent clashes. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, Libyan Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni suspended his interior ministry for criticizing General Khalifa Hiftar. Last year, Prime Minister Thinni and the Libyan parliament aligned with General Hiftar, who commands his own armed faction, to protect the internationally recognized government and to prevent gains by Libya Dawn fighters. While the alliance has managed to win back some territory from Islamists in Benghazi, General Hiftar has drawn criticism for calling for airstrikes on civilian ports in Tripoli. Details can be viewed [here](#).

### ***Democratic Republic of Congo***

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Said Djinnit called on the region to neutralize the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with a united front. His appeal comes after a surge in violence perpetrated by the armed group. Details on the conflict in the DRC can be found [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, it was reported that over 300 people remain in detention in the DRC. The detainees, including opposition leaders, were arrested after anti-government protests last month. While DRC President Joseph Kabila is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term next year, analysts suggest that the arrest of his political opponents could be a sign that President Kabila is seeking to prolong his time in power. The situation was described [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Special Envoy to Africa's Great Lakes Region Russ Feingold urged the DRC to set a date for a 2016 presidential election. Suggesting that technical excuses might be made to postpone the election, Special Envoy Feingold reiterated that the U.S. opposes any delay. DRC President Joseph Kabila, who is constitutionally term-limited, has yet to officially declare his intentions in regards to the upcoming presidential contest. The full story is available [here](#).

### ***Central African Republic***

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, U.N. spokesperson Farhan Haq announced the U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central African Republic (CAR) (MINUSCA) had retaken public property in Bria, formerly controlled by ex-Seleka rebels. The operation to retake the buildings was conducted in cooperation with French forces. Details on the operation were shared [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, suspected Christian anti-Balaka fighters released CAR Minister of Sports and Youth Armel Mingatoloum Sayo. Minister Sayo was abducted on January 25<sup>th</sup> from his car in Bangui. The circumstances of Minister Sayo's capture and release were not immediately clear, but his release was reported [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the head of the Africa bureau at UNDP, Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, concluded a five-day official visit to the CAR. In Bangui, Dieye addressed a group of 1,000 young people who will be involved in building a cultural and sports center in the capital. He also met with CAR President Catherine Samba-Panza, Prime Minister Mahamat Kamoun, and other government officials, in addition to the head of

MINUSCA Babacar Gaye. Dieye also met with Dieudonne Kombo Yaya, the President of the National Electoral Authority, the body responsible for organizing a constitutional referendum, as well as general and presidential elections this year. Dieye's visit to the CAR was detailed [here](#).

## ***Somalia***

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Security Council urged political leaders in Somalia to work together quickly to create an inclusive government. According to U.N. Special Representative for Somalia, Nicholas Kay, further delays in the formation of a representative government would significantly impact the country throughout 2015. For more details, click [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, Al Shabaab claimed responsibility for the death of a Somali lawmaker in Mogadishu. In the fatal attack, Al Shabaab gunmen peppered the lawmaker's car with bullets. This is the sixth incidence of such an attack since the start of the year. An article on the attack can be read [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, Somalia's parliament finally approved a 25-person cabinet. The event marks an important step towards a vote for a new constitution and presidential election in 2016, especially as the Somali parliament rejected Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke's two previous cabinet proposals. More information on the vote was posted [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, the U.N., AU, European Union (EU), IGAD, U.K., and U.S. issued a joint statement welcoming the approval of new cabinet by the Somali parliament. In addition, they reiterated their call for the President, Prime Minister, and the Federal Parliament to move expeditiously toward the implementation of the remaining Vision 2016 objectives through the new cabinet. In addition, the international partners condemned the murder of Member of Parliament Abdullahi Qayad Barre, who was killed by armed men in Mogadishu on his way to parliament. The joint statement was issued [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of State welcomed the parliamentary confirmation of Somalia's Council of Ministers. As the new Council of Ministers assumes office, U.S. officials urged the Government of Somalia to make swift progress in the important work that remains to realize its Vision 2016, including a constitutional referendum and national elections. In addition, the State Department noted that Somalia's progress toward realizing peacebuilding, governance, and security goals is of critical importance to the people of Somalia and the broader region. For details, click [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki addressed the issue of blocked Somali remittances. Spokesperson Psaki said the remittances play an important role in meeting the humanitarian and development needs of Somalia and the U.S. Government has engaged in ongoing communication with the Somali community in the U.S. and the financial institutions serving that community. The State Department will continue to work with the Government of Somalia and remittance companies to build an effective regulatory framework for remittances and to develop safeguards against abuse by money launderers and terrorist financiers. More information can be found [here](#).

## **United States – Africa Relations**

### ***White House***

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, President Barack Obama transmitted the New National Security Strategy of the U.S. to Congress. In particular, the new strategy outlines how the U.S. will pursue a stable Middle East and North Africa by countering terrorism. In addition, the strategy notes the U.S. will build upon the success of the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit by investing in Africa's economic, agricultural, health, governance, and security capacity. The full 2015 National Security Strategy can be downloaded [here](#). A fact sheet was posted [here](#).

### ***State Department***

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, the State Department expressed concern for reports implicating Burundian security forces in the extra-judicial killing of at least two dozen members of a rebel group after they surrendered in Cibitoke Province in early January. The State Department called on the Government of Burundi to fully and credibly investigate these allegations, prosecute any crimes that may have been committed, and



hold those responsible accountable. More generally, State Department officials expressed concern for the increase in regular detentions and prosecutions of media workers and members of political parties ahead of elections in May. A statement can be read [here](#).

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, State Department Deputy Spokesperson Mare Harf confirmed an official visit of senior Sudanese Government official Ibrahim Ghandour to the U.S. Over the past week, Ghandour was scheduled to meet with senior U.S. government officials. In addition, Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali Karti, who was also in the U.S., participated in a number of meetings with the U.S. Government on issues of longstanding bilateral concern. Deputy Spokesperson indicated there would also be frank discussion of human rights during these meetings. More information was provided [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, while on travel to Munich, Germany, for the Munich Security Conference, Secretary of State John Kerry held a bilateral meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. The meeting was listed [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Sheba Crocker met with U.N. Special Representative for Somalia Nicholas Kay at the Department of State. The meeting was included on the State Department's daily appointment schedule, which can be accessed [here](#).

On February 8<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Science Envoy Dr. Peter Hoetz is traveling to Morocco in support of President Barack Obama's initiative to strengthen U.S. science and education relationships overseas. Dr. Hoetz was scheduled to meet with representatives from the scientific, academic, and business communities to discuss ways to build and strengthen research collaboration networks between scientists and engineers in the U.S. and Morocco. Dr. Hoetz's visit to Morocco was outlined [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration Anne Richard was on foreign travel to Kenya. On February 9<sup>th</sup>, Assistant Secretary Richard attended the High-Level Event on the Humanitarian Crisis in South Sudan and its Impact in the Region, where concerned countries discussed ways the international humanitarian community can better assist the displaced and other vulnerable South Sudanese made victims of the conflict and pledge initial support for 2015. While in Kenya, Assistant Secretary Richard also reviewed regional humanitarian issues with a range of U.N. agencies, international and non-governmental organizations, and refugee representatives. Her travel was announced [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, 22 parliamentarians from 11 countries, the majority of them women, traveled to the U.S. to participate in a State Department-led Leadership in the Digital Economy exchange program. Over the next two weeks, participants will interact with current and former Members of Congress, government officials, and open government advocates and will travel to San Francisco and Silicon Valley, where they will have opportunities to meet with tech industry representatives, academic leaders, civic innovators, and entrepreneurs. Participants hailed from Ghana, Kenya, and Tunisia, among other countries. More information was shared [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the Departments of State, Justice, and the Interior unveiled the Implementation Plan for the U.S. National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking. The Implementation Plan builds on the Strategy's objectives to strengthen enforcement, reduce demand for illegally traded wildlife, and expand international cooperation. The Implementation Plan can be read [here](#).

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield participated in an African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Renewal Briefing for African Diplomatic Corps, at the Department of State. Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield's participation was noted [here](#).

### ***U.S. Agency for International Development***

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah delivered his final speech as Administrator at an event hosted by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Center for American Progress (CAP). During his presentation, Administrator Shah discussed his legacy at USAID, including key development initiatives such as Feed the Future, Power Africa, and the U.S. Global Development Lab, as well as efforts to end preventable child and maternal deaths. Administrator Shah's speech was highlighted [here](#).

## ***Department of Defense***

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, international military contingents from the U.S., Morocco, Germany, the U.K., Tunisia, Mauritania, and Senegal began the first phase of Exercise African Lion 2015 in Agadir, Morocco. While the main phase of the exercise is not scheduled to commence until mid-May, this first phase of the exercise includes an intelligence capacity building workshop. African Lion is the largest annual U.S. military exercise in Africa and is intended to strengthen cooperation and operation proficiency between the nations for future crisis and contingency response in the region. Details on African Lion 2015 were shared [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) reported on an event recently hosted by the Governments of the U.S. and Germany to present new field equipment to Tanzanian rangers at the Selous Game Reserve. In a broader effort to combat poaching and illegal trafficking, the U.S. and Germany transferred field equipment, including small and large tents, flashlights, binoculars, uniforms, and boots to the rangers patrolling the reserve. The donations were part of a U.S.-led anti-poaching effort worth \$40 million over the next four years. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 7<sup>th</sup>, 80 airmen from Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, and the U.S. gathered at Djibouti Air Base of the opening ceremonies of African Partnership Flight. Djibouti and the U.S. are co-hosting the event, which includes workshops on load planning, flight line security, crash and fire procedures, and aircraft maintenance. The first African Partnership Flight was hosted in Ghana in March 2012 and has since become the premier program for the U.S. Air Force to deliver aviation security and cooperation in Africa. The exercise was detailed [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, AFRICOM provided details on a recent U.S. Army Africa/U.S. Embassy Burundi joint Medical Readiness and Training Exercise held in partnership with Burundi National Defense Force doctors and medical support staff at the Kamenge Military Hospital. The concept behind the training was to give active-duty medical professionals the opportunity to provide medical care in an austere environment and share medical concepts, techniques, and strategies with Burundian counterparts. An article on the exercise can be read [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, eight journalists from Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda accredited with the AU visited AFRICOM headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, as participants of the command's public outreach and communications program. During their visit, AFRICOM staff presented briefs on the command's multiple and diverse programs in order to educate and inform African journalists about the command's mission and its role in working with African partners to support their efforts to build more secure environments. Details can be seen [here](#).

## ***Department of the Interior***

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, a coalition of wildlife groups including the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), The Human Society of the U.S. (HSUS), Humane Society International (HSI), and The Fund for Animals filed a petition with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to uplist African elephants from threatened to endangered under the Endangered Species Act. According to the coalition, since the African elephant was originally listed as threatened in 1978, the species' population has declined by about 60 percent, primarily due to poaching for the wildlife trade. More information was shared [here](#).

## ***Overseas Private Investment Corporation***

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) Blog's feature photo pictured a worker sorting through African bird's eye chili peppers grown by farmers in eastern Uganda for Sunshine Agro Products, a chili and space exporter, and one of the businesses supported by OPIC client Root Capital. Since 2010, OPIC has committed more than \$30 million in loans to the Massachusetts-based nonprofit social investment fund that lends to rural businesses in the developing world. In Uganda, Sunshine Agro products is generating income for hundreds of farmers and providing seasonal employment to 70 local women. More information can be seen [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, OPIC congratulated Root Capital for reaching \$100 million in active loans for the first time in its 15-year history. Root Capital is a nonprofit social investment fund that strengthens rural

livelihoods in poor, environmentally vulnerable regions, including in Africa, by providing a reliable source of financing for clients to make investments in agricultural inputs and training. OPIC's Root Capital project profile was posted [here](#).

## **Congress**

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Robert Menendez (D-NJ), and Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Chris Coons (D-DE), Johnny Isakson (R-GA), and John Boozman (R-AR) introduced a resolution calling on the Nigerian Government to demonstrate leadership in addressing the dual challenges of Boko Haram and ensuring peaceful, transparent, and credible presidential elections. The resolution condemns Boko Haram for its violence attacks, urges the Government of Nigeria to cooperate with regional and international partners to defeat Boko Haram and to conduct timely, credible, transparent, and peaceful elections, and calls on candidates, party officials, and adherents to refrain from any rhetoric or action that seeks to inflame tensions. The resolution can be downloaded [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, House Select Committee on Benghazi Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-SC) revealed the Committee will begin interviews with requested State Department personnel as early as next week. The interviews will run through April and be followed by another series of interviews with senior Executive Branch and Administration officials. Included on the witnesses list are former White House Press Secretary Jay Carney, General Martin Dempsey, former National Security Adviser Tom Donilon, current National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes, former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director David Petraeus, and former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta. The interviews were announced [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Al Franken (D-MN), and Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Representatives Keith Ellison (D-MN), Maxine Waters (D-CA), Erik Paulson (R-MN), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Juan Vargas (D-CA), Adam Smith (D-WA), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Gwen Moore (D-WI), and Barbara Lee (D-CA) sent a letter to the Obama Administration requesting an urgent interagency meeting to develop an emergency plan related to Somali remittances. The letter was drafted in response to the Merchants Bank of California, which is the largest financial institution handling the majority of money transfers from the U.S. to Somalia, notifying all Money Transfer Operators (MTO) that it was closing their accounts. The letter can be downloaded [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) praised the Administration's release of a plan to implement its National Strategy in Wildlife Trafficking. Senator Coons observed the implementation plan is based on marshaling federal resources for combatting wildlife trafficking, using resources strategically, improving the quality of available information, considering all links of the illegal trade chain, and strengthening relationships and partnerships. Senator Coons' response to the unveiling of the implementation plan was posted [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the House Appropriations State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee held a hearing on "Funding to Prevent, Prepare for, and Response to the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak." Witnesses included USAID Ebola Task Force Executive Coordinator Dirk Dijkerman, Director of USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance Jeremy Konyndyk, and Special Coordinator for Ebola Ambassador Steve Browning. A webcast of the hearing can be watched [here](#).

## **North Africa**

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the Executive Board of the IMF concluded the first review of Morocco's economic performance under a program supported by a 24-month Precautionary Liquidity Line (PLL) arrangement. Moroccan authorities have stated that they intend to treat the arrangement as precautionary, as they have done with the 2012 PLL, and do not intend to draw under the arrangement unless Morocco experiences actual balance of payment needs from a significant deterioration of external conditions. The Board observed that while significant external risks remain and sustained implementation of reforms is essential to consolidate gains in macroeconomic stability, the PLL is effectively providing an insurance against those risks. For more information, click [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, airstrikes carried out by Egypt's military killed 27 Islamic militants in the Northern Sinai. Those killed were from the Sinai Province group, a sect that has pledged loyalty to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Information on the security operation can be found [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi attempted to reassure leaders of Gulf Arab states after an alleged audio recording of the President and senior officials deriding the countries aired on television. Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb also denounced the recordings. The incident was detailed [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, approximately 22 people were killed outside a soccer stadium in Egypt. As fans tried to force their way into a match between two Cairo clubs, Zamalek and Enppi, police barred the entrances and used tear gas. Most of the dead suffocated when the crowd tried to stampede their way into the stadium. In response to the incident, Egyptian authorities suspended football league matches indefinitely. Details were shared [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, at least 25 migrants died of hypothermia aboard two Italian patrol boats after being rescued from an inflatable boat off the coast of Libya. A total of 105 migrants were picked up and were taken to the Italian island of Lampedusa. For more information, click [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, officials in Egypt reported that an air raid in the Sinai Peninsula killed at least 15 suspected Islamic extremists. It is currently unconfirmed as to whether or not these airstrikes were in response to the fires explosions in Alexandria that wounded 10 people. The success of the airstrikes was reported [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, the Health Ministry of Egypt announced it would offer \$3,280 to each of the families whose relatives died outside a soccer stadium on Sunday. While reports differ on the exact number of victims, between 19 and 28 people suffocated when soccer fans stampeded outside a stadium as a result of the tear gas police used to disperse fans forcing their way into a league match. An article on the Health Ministry's decision can be accessed [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, the two central airports in Egypt suspended landings due to a dust storm. According to head of the National Air Navigation Services Company, Captain Ehab Mohieldin, the weather caused two planes to make emergency landings in Cairo. Currently, Cairo Airport and Borg al-Arab Airport are only allowing departing flights. More information can be read [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, Russian President Vladimir Putin traveled to Egypt for meetings with Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi intended to deepen the bilateral relationship by strengthening economic and military ties. As part of President Putin's visit, Russia and Egypt announced the signed of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the construction of a nuclear power plant in Alexandria, as well as plans to increase Russian gas sales to Egypt and boost investment. President Putin's visit to Egypt was summarized [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the IMF held a conference call on the publication of the 2014 Article IV Consultation-Staff report on Egypt. IMF Chief of Mission for Egypt Chris Jarvis noted the most recent consultation represents the first IMF report on Egypt since the Arab Spring. In providing an overview of the report, Chief Jarvis highlighted that the most important economic priority for Egypt is job creation, while also reducing the budget deficit and maintaining foreign exchange reserves. In addition, he expressed support for policy solutions, including subsidy reforms and exchange rate flexibility. The press call was transcribed [here](#).

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, a court in Egypt ordered the release on bail of *Al Jazeera* journalists Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed. Fahmy and Mohamed were jailed in June with their Australian colleague, Peter Greste, on convictions of spreading false news to support the Muslim Brotherhood. Greste was freed last week and deported to Australia. An update on the situation was provided [here](#).

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, Tunisian Prime Minister Habib Essid said he would roll back a new \$20 tax on foreign travelers following protests that led to the torching of a police station and the death of a man who was killed when police opened fire and tear gas. While the democratically elected Tunisian government is seeking economic reforms that will increase employment opportunities, protests over economic policies

are still common following the Arab Spring. More information can be found [here](#).

### **East Africa**

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, Ethiopia highlighted its soon-to-be completed metro line in Addis Ababa. The metro line will be the first of its kind in Sub-Saharan Africa. The project, built by China Railway Engineering Corp, is one of a series of infrastructure projects that is intended to bring the country industrial growth. The project was outlined [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, it was reported that an increasing number of girls from northern Tanzania are fleeing to Kenya in order to avoid female genital mutilation, still a tradition in many remote villages. In the neighboring region of Mara, Kenya, the number of girls seeking refuge grew from 312 in 2013 to 634 at the end of 2014. Additional analysis was shared [here](#).

### **West Africa**

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau Miguel Trovoada briefed the U.N. Security Council on the situation in the country. Special Representative Trovoada reported that Guinea-Bissau remains fragile. Among many recommendations, Special Representative Trovoada said the country needs international support to strengthen democratic institutions, the judicial system, and its defense and security sector and to increase capacity to fight transnational crime. Highlights from the briefing were noted [here](#).

On February 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank Group and the Government of Guinea-Bissau convened a strategic retreat to prepare for an upcoming donor roundtable hosted by the EU in Brussels, Belgium, on March 25<sup>th</sup>. As part of the retreat, high ranking officials of the Bissau-Guinean government discussed the country's top development priorities with World Bank officials, as well as an accountability framework that will be critical to strengthening the implementation, coordination, and monitoring of development programs. The retreat was summarized [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Security Council called for an end to the violence in Mali and the immediate engagement of all parties to resume negotiations. In a statement, the Security Council urged the Government of Mali and the armed groups of Ouagadougou to restart dialogue for the formation of a comprehensive peace agreement in order to bring lasting stability and security. An article on the conflict in Mali can be read [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the press provided a detailed breakdown of the letter former Nigerian Central Bank Governor Lamido Sanusi sent to President Goodluck Jonathan at the end of 2013 regarding the billions of oil revenues the state oil company owed the Central Bank. An update on *Reuters'* investigation can be accessed [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, following a sudden death penalty shootout against Ghana, Ivory Coast was crowned the winner of the 2015 Africa Nations Cup (AFCON). The game ultimately ended with an Ivory Coast 9-8 win on penalties, giving the Ivorians their second title. Following the game, President Alassane Ouattara announced a public holiday, which was met with celebrations in the streets of Abidjan. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the killing of Thierno Aliou Diaoune, the National Coordinator for the U.N. Peacebuilding Fund, in Guinea last week. Secretary-General Ban offered his condolences and called for a full investigation of Coordinator Diaoune's death. Secretary-General Ban's statement was posted [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank Group issued a new working paper titled, "Towards an Integrated Market for Seeds and Fertilizers in West Africa." The paper examines how the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other regional bodies have been working together to harmonize trade rules and quality control procedures for farmers. The new regional regulations for seed and fertilizer are intended to increase farmer choice, improve buyer confidence, and otherwise make crop industry trade easier, faster, and cheaper. The paper can be downloaded [here](#).



On February 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank Group, ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) held their Second Tripartite Meeting in Accra, Ghana, to deliberate on issues pertinent to the socioeconomic development of the ECOWAS region. Meeting participants reviewed the status of implementation of the Abidjan Action Plan, which was agreed to during a previous meeting in July 2013. The meeting also addressed a number of key thematic areas, including Ebola, agricultural, regional infrastructure, and cross border management. More information was provided [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the Executive Board of the IMF completed the fifth review of Guinea's economic performance under the program supported by an Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement, allowing for an immediate disbursement of \$63.6 million. The Board also approved a request for an extension of the current ECF arrangement through the end of December and an augmentation of access under the ECF arrangement to help enhance international reserves, and cover the budget and urgent balance of payment needs resulting from the fight against Ebola. A press release was issued [here](#).

### **Sub-Saharan Africa**

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, the Executive Board of the IMF concluded the 2014 Article IV consultation with Comoros. The IMF observed the economic growth in Comoros was 3.5 percent in 2013, but is estimated to have eased to 3.3 percent in 2014, adversely affected by electricity disruptions and slower-than-expected implementation of the public investment programs. Additionally, the IMF forecast that economic growth would firm to 3.5 percent in 2015, despite continuing headwinds from the electricity sector and a tight fiscal situation, supported by acceleration in the pace of implementation of foreign-financed public investment and lower fuel prices. Additional analysis can be seen [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, OHCHR expressed concern over the detention of Burundian journalist Bob Rugurika. The director of *Radio publique africaine* (RPA) was arrested January 20<sup>th</sup> after a broadcast implicating senior intelligence officials in the killing of three Italian nuns aired. In response, OHCHR released a statement calling for due process after a Burundian court refused to hear a request for Rugurika's release by his lawyers. OHCHR's concern was articulated [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, *Inter Press Service News Agency* reported that Zimbabwe's rapid rate of deforestation is likely connected to efforts to clear land for tobacco cultivation. According to the Zimbabwean Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board, the country is home to 88,167 tobacco growers. Meanwhile independent conservations, who tout Zimbabwe's commitment to achieve the environmental sustainability Millennium Development Goal (MDG) by the end of this year, have expressed concern that a lack of government regulation could lead to forest depletion. The debate was highlighted [here](#).

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, experts attributed overall economic hardship as the main reason for Zimbabwe's inability to comprehensively cope with its weather-related disasters. Barnabas Chipindu, a meteorologist and lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe, said the country lacks the resources necessary to address the adverse impacts of climate variability. Chipindu's comments were recorded [here](#).

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, representatives of the World Bank, mining companies, electricity producers, and governments in sub-Saharan Africa gathered in Cape Town, South Africa, at a global mining event to discuss how to work together to bring energy to millions of people in the region. As part of the event, the World Bank issued a report finding that the demand from the mining industry in sub-Saharan Africa could reach over 23,000 megawatts (MW) by 2020, the equivalent of three times the level it was in 2000. Information on the discussion was shared [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the meetings between Mozambique President Filipe Nyusi and the head of the opposition Renamo party, Afonso Dhlakama. Secretary-General Ban approved of the progress being made in the talks between the two leaders and congratulated them both for their commitment to dialogue. The talks represent the first face-to-face encounters between the two leaders since Renamo initiated a boycott of parliament beginning with the opening session of the National Assembly. The situation in Mozambique was detailed [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, South Africa's Ministry of Environmental Affairs appointed a 21-member panel to examine the viability of a legal rhino horn trade. The panel, which is comprised of conservationists, scientists, and immigration authorities, was formed in response to record-setting levels of poaching in

South Africa last year. By the end of the year, the panel will issue a report on how to combat illegal trafficking and to outline a pathway to legalization. The launch of the panel was noted [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, *This Is Africa* reported on the upcoming elections in Lesotho, scheduled for February 28<sup>th</sup>. The elections have been moved up by two years following the August 30<sup>th</sup> coup attempt led by an elite group within the country's military. The race is largely thought to be a contest between Prime Minister Tom Thabane of the All Basotho Convention (ABC) party, who is backed by the police, and Deputy Prime Minister Mothetjoa Metsing of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) party, who has the support of the armed forces. More information on the elections was reported [here](#).

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, American multinational technology and consulting corporation IBM pledged to invest \$61 million over ten years in a new laboratory at the University of Witwatersrand's Tshimogolong Precinct tech hub in Braamfotein, South Africa. The new research facility, which will open in April, is IBM's second research hub in Africa. IBM's first African tech lab is located in Nairobi, Kenya. IBM's investment in South Africa was discussed [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the WHO reported the outbreak of the plague in Madagascar has slowed, but 71 people among the 263 known to have caught the disease since September have died. Madagascar has suffered from the plague since 1980, but cases have increased in the past three years, making it the country in the world most affected by the disease. The latest outbreak peaked late last year, but is likely to continue through the end of the rainy season in April. More information can be seen [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, health officials in Mozambique reported that a cholera outbreak in parts of Mozambique hit by flooding has killed 19 people. Health Minister Mouzinho Saide said another 158 people in Mozambique had died as a result of the heavy rains. Meanwhile, Malawi, which was also impacted by flooding, has reported that 276 people were killed or remain missing. An update on the situation was provided [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, Gigawatt Global completed the construction of the 8.5 megawatt (MW) solar field at the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village (ASYV) in Rwanda. The \$23.7 million project is the first of its kind in East Africa. Financing for the project, which was constructed in the shape of the African continent, was provided by the Netherlands Development Finance Company (FMO), the Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund (EAIF), the Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing countries, OPIC, and the Energy and Environment Partnership (EEP). The project is anticipated to connect 15,000 homes to the grid. Details were posted [here](#).

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, South African President Jacob Zuma received a hostile reception to his State of the Nation speech delivered upon the opening of parliament. While President Zuma sought to use the opportunity to highlight the achievements of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party and its agenda for the year ahead, members of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) questioned President Zuma on downward economic trends and the allegations that President Zuma used federal funding for security upgrades to his home. The situation was described [here](#).

### **General Africa News**

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank highlighted workshops hosted in Tanzania and Burkina Faso over the past year to help build the capabilities of government representatives in conducting mineral contract negotiations in a way that fosters sustainable development. The workshops brought together government representatives from 18 countries, including Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Liberia, Uganda, Malawi, Rwanda, Senegal, the Republic of Congo (ROC), Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Togo, Madagascar, and Mauritania. More information can be viewed [here](#).

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, *Forbes* published a list of the 30 most promising young entrepreneurs in Africa. While noting that there are only a handful of under-30 entrepreneurs who have succeeded in building million-dollar businesses, it was noted there is a rising number of young Africans who are building fast-growing companies in food manufacturing, engineering, technology, and hospitality. The full list, culled from close to 800 nominations, can be seen [here](#).

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. launched “The African Report on Violence Against Children.” Presented by the Permanent Mission of Zambia to the U.N., the AU, the Office of the Special Representative on Violence Against Children, and the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), the report finds African boys and girls continue to be subjected to distressing levels of physical, sexual, and emotional violence despite the significant legal and policy measures adopted throughout the region. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

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