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**ZAMBIA**

## **FROM RESILIENCE TO GROWTH : THE FRUITS OF PRESIDENT HAKAINDE HICHILEMA'S REFORM**



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**FORMER MINISTER**  
**AND INDEPENDENT**  
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## EDUCATION; CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF A DEVELOPMENT LEVER FOR AFRICA

**O**n January 24, the world celebrated “International Education Day” 2024. During it, there was unanimous discussion of transforming education to promote peace in Africa. In the same vein, observers from all sides agree on the need for our countries to ensure universal access to quality education for every child as education is a fundamental pillar for peaceful societies. It is a lever for promoting inclusive, participatory and democratic governance.

**For our part, we welcome the initiative** of African governments for showing leadership at the Education Transformation Summit in discussing solutions to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030. They even reiterated their commitments to education as a fundamental human right.

**This important issue is at the heart of** the concerns of the African Union which has made 2024 the year of education. Its 37th Ordinary Session (Assembly of Heads of State and Government), which takes place from February 14 to 18, is appropriately placed under a rather evocative theme: “Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa”.

**Education therefore appears to be the** key to achieving many other sustainable development goals. It works to reduce inequalities and achieve gender equality. It also allows people, no matter where they are on the African continent, to lead healthier and more sustainable lives. Essential for promoting tolerance between people, it allows those who can benefit from it to escape the cycle of

poverty.

**However, despite all the good things** that can be said about education today, it remains true that it still has a long way to go to become a real matrix of change. With the outbreak, in 2020, of the Covid-19 pandemic, we note, with great regret, that in most African countries, progress towards quality education has suffered a big blow; the effects of this global disease having caused learning losses for millions of children and young people. By way of illustration, the UN even estimates that, without additional measures, around 84 million children and young people will not be in school by 2030 and that around 300 million students will not have the skills of basic numeracy and literacy needed to succeed in life.

**What to do in the face of such challenges?** Some actors suggest that financing education should become a national investment priority. Additionally, measures such as improving school infrastructure and adopting digital transformation are essential.

**Also fill the skills gap, in terms of information** and communications technologies which also constitutes a major obstacle to the achievement of universal and true connectivity, break with the vicious circle of inequalities in education which also results by a lack of access to skills and by limited opportunities on the labor market for young women or making education a priority, both at the level of policy and practice, or even promoting fair public funding for education are necessary avenues for transforming education to make it a lever for sustainable development in Africa, making it inclusive, oriented towards peace and resilient in the face of current challenges.

# ZAMBIA / FROM RESILIENCE TO GROWTH: THE FRUITS OF PRESIDENT HAKAINDE HICHILEMA'S REFORM

In a ranking based on various social, economic and environmental criteria, made public in the last quarter of 2023 by the U.S. News and World Report, it appears that in Africa, only nine countries (out of the 54 states on the continent) manage to achieve provide well-being to their population. In this very select table, Zambia appears in eighth position. With a gross domestic product (GDP) estimated at around \$30 billion at the end of 2023, this southern African nation is a medium-sized economy with promising prospects.

Led by President Hakainde Hichilema, after his election in August 2021, the country confirms, so to speak, the fruits of the new governance driven by the government of this farmer who was elected on electoral promises to revive the economy and provide work for the many unemployed.

Before he came to power, the Zambian economy was suffering from falling commodity prices. Under pressure from the IMF, it was undermined by iterative crises, the Covid-19 pandemic (2020) and depending only on mining and quarrying.

According to the African Economic Outlook 2023 Report of the African Development Bank (AfDB), the growth rate of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of this southern African country, which was 2.8% in 2020, increased at 3.0% in 2022 (one after Hichilema takes office), at 4.0% in 2023. And ADB projections place it at 4.2% in 2024.

In addition to the improvement observed in trade in raw materials - notably copper - this recovery is also dependent on the development of wholesale and retail trade driven by the current government and of agriculture. Inflation in this sector fell from 22.1% in 2021 to 10.1% in 2022, mainly due to the reduction in food price shocks.

Furthermore, there is conti-

nued recovery in the mining, services and manufacturing sectors, rising global copper prices and market confidence associated with consolidation measures of the current budget. Just like a slight recovery in the growth of real GDP per capita which, in 2023, was 1.2% and which could increase to 1.4% in 2024.

### The ongoing recovery

***Zambia has indeed committed to playing a significant role in the fight against global food insecurity.***

Two and a half years after coming to power in what appeared to be one of the most indebted countries in Africa, Hichilema is making significant progress in the recovery of his country's economy, its credibility and its solvency.

With borrowings estimated at \$13.8 billion, a third of which is owed to Chinese creditors, the country became, upon its election in 2021, the first in Africa to have defaulted on its debt, since the beginning

of the Covid-19 pandemic, due to lack of agreements reached between previous governments and creditors.

However, during the first months in power, intense negotiations, the new president enabled Zambia to obtain, at the end of 2022, a promise of aid amounting to 1.35 billion dollars from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A boon for the country strangled by a colossal debt to get its head above water; which aspires to become a prosperous middle-income country by 2030.

Also, the debt problem "could have plunged the new government into crisis" but "we managed to manage this default quickly", Hichilema then affirmed, insisting on the fact that previous governments "had tried to find an agreement with the IMF, for seven, ten years, without achieving it. And to add that the result obtained [by his government] is a sign of credibility, of seriousness. "We walked our talk. There is no doubt about it," said the president, who recognizes that the agreement in principle over three years was granted on the government's commitment to undertake profound economic reforms.

However, the road to recovery is not an easy task. According to sources close to certain bilateral institutions, the Zambian government must look at the local currency which, in 2022,



Led by President Hakainde Hichilema



has appreciated, for the first time, in almost two decades. Race results. Inflation is falling due to the increase in the key rate which was 9.5% in 2023. In fact, to curb the surge in inflation, the central bank of Zambia then decided to raise its key rate by 25% basis points at 9.5%. This allowed inflation to remain above the target range of between 6 and 8%, until the last quarter of 2023.

### **Agriculture: a sector to develop**

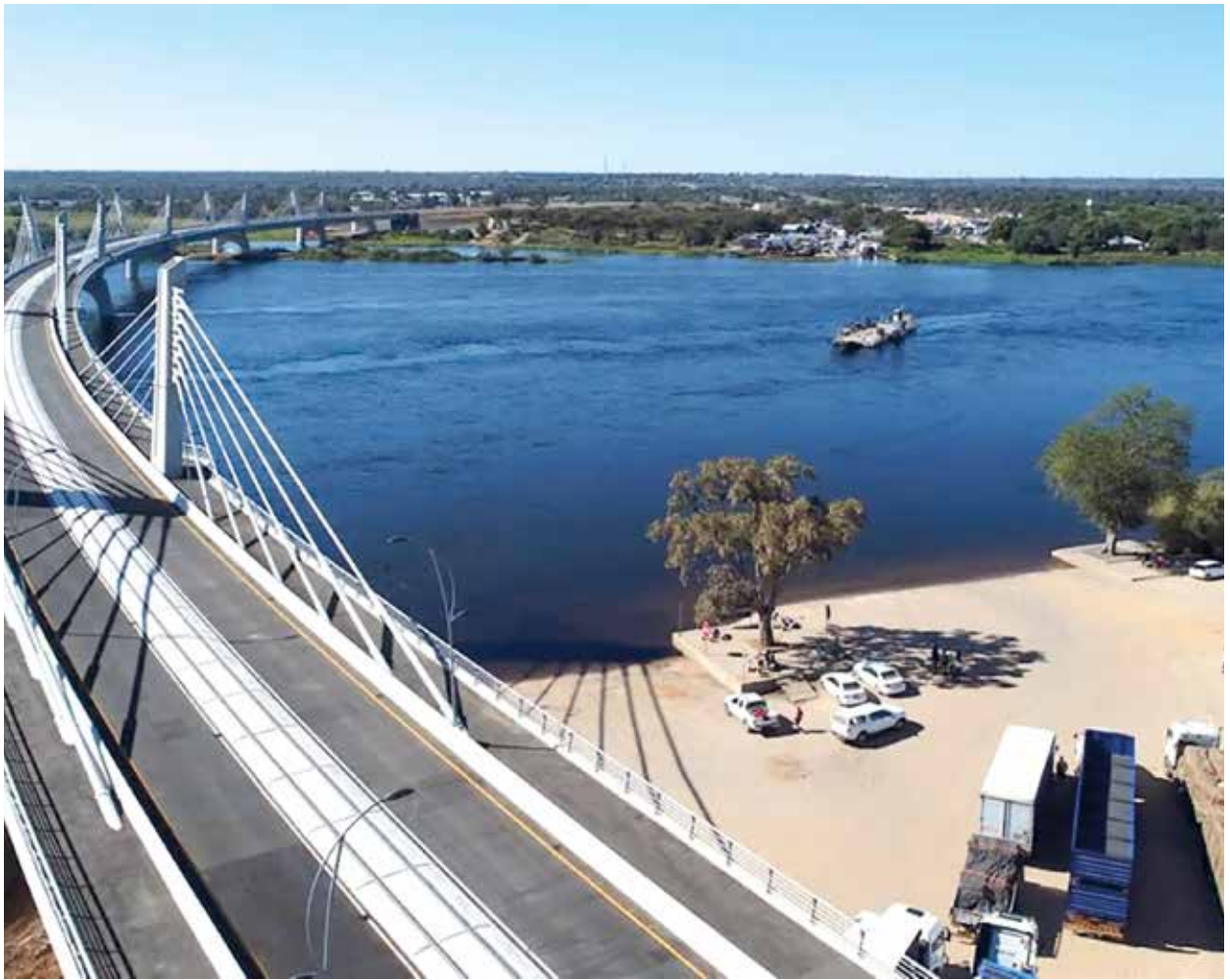
Eager to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2, the government has extended the coverage of safety net programs for almost a year. The objective is to improve access to food for more than 3 million extremely poor people. In 2023, the population of this country was estimated at around 20.46 million. Zambia therefore wants to develop its agricultural sector which is the backbone of its economy: although the sector only represents 3.4% of the country's GDP, it employs 49.6% of the workforce, according to the World Bank. Encouraged by a potential global food crisis due to various sources of tension across the world, the country wants to play the resilience card to the fullest. This is how in June 2022, the president underlined at the podium of the EU-Africa Business Summit, in Brussels,



the capacity of his country to overcome this ordeal.

***Eager to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2, the government has extended the coverage of safety net programs for almost a year.***

Hichelima had asserted: “As the world faces critical shortages of key agricultural products. And as we witness the devastating effects of food insecurity across all our parts of Africa and beyond.” “Zambia is well placed, may I remind the Assembly, Zambia is well placed and adapted, and aims to be a major contributor to addressing this food insecurity throughout the world”, rejoiced the head of the Zambian state. According to certain sources,



he is certainly banking on the agricultural production of his country, of which corn seems to be the spearhead. In 2021, the harvest of this cereal in Zambia was around 3.6 million tonnes. But, this country experienced a drop in its corn harvest to 2.7 million tonnes in 2022/2023, or 25% less than the historic record of 2021.

In addition, since Hichelima came to power, Lusaka has also strengthened its ties with multilateral partners, in particular the World Bank. They want to support the

implementation of the IMF program. There is also the European Union. She

***Elected on the promise of eradicating rampant corruption, reviving the economy, and attracting investors back, the current awakening of the country proves that Zambia's new government has delivered on its promise.***

pledged an additional \$630 million to help African nations and other vulnerable states address grain shortages and boost sustainable food production.

Also the new regime had inherited a debt of 17 billion dollars. Faced with this, it is striving to improve its relations with international partners. Hence its eligibility for the most concessional financing from multilateral development banks. As of today, the World Bank's portfolio has around twenty active financings, for a total amount

of USD 1.4 billion for various sectors: education, gender, health, post-Covid response and agriculture. While the ADB portfolio has just under twenty active projects, for an amount of USD 730 million.

### **A resilient economy and promising prospects**

Next August, President Hichelima will have spent three years in power. Elected on the promise of eradicating rampant corruption, resuscitating the economy and bringing back investors, the country's current awakening proves that Zambia's new government has met the challenge. The president has made significant progress in restoring the country's economy, credibility and solvency. Hence this return of multi-lateral financial institutions. Their support for growth is welcomed in Lusaka. Illustration: under the IMF's Extended Credit Facility (ECF), Zambia obtained, a little over a year and a half ago, an envelope of 1.3 billion intended to support the authorities' efforts to restore stability macroeconomic and debt sustainability and promote stronger, more resilient and more inclusive growth in the country which, in 2023, has managed to attract nearly \$40 billion in foreign direct investment.

For the Fund, the Zambian economy is showing resilience despite a difficult environ-



ment. And to encourage the authorities to ensure macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability in this uncertain environment, by working for the active implementation of structural reforms.

Also, the Zambian government continues to take action to restructure its public debt. At the end of 2023, it concluded an agreement with its public creditors for \$6.3 billion out of a total exter-

nal debt of around 18 billion. Zambia has been waiting for this since October 2020; date on which it defaulted on its external debt. There is no doubt that at mid-term, Hichelima can legitimately boast of the good implementation, by his government, of "Vision 2030" which aims to make Zambia a prosperous middle-income nation by 2030.

**By Sylvestre TETCHIADA**



**ALAN JOHN KYEREMATEN, FORMER MINISTER  
AND INDEPENDENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE**

# **“MY VALUE PROPOSITION FOR GHANA IS BASED ON FOUR DOMINANT THEMES”**

**In less than five months, you have just created several shocks in the Ghanaian political world. For our readers and Ghanaians who were surprised September 2023, what really happened for you to withdraw from the NPP presidential primary race?**

On the 5th of January 2023, I resigned from my position as Cabinet Minister responsible for Trade and Industry and declared my intention to contest the Presidential primaries of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), of which I was a founding member since 1992. According to the Party's Constitution, when more than five contestants file to run for the position of flag-bearer there should be a Super Delegates Conference to prune the number of contestants to five. Hence on the 26th of August 2023, I participated in the Super Delegates Conference aimed at shortlisting the ten aspirants who had filed their nominations to contest in the primaries to five. I was selected as one of the five Candidates to contest for the main Presidential primaries scheduled for 4th November 2023.

A careful analysis of the results of the Super Delegates Conference clearly indicated that the whole election process had been designed to ensure a certain predetermined outcome. In the run up to the Super Delegates Conference, the National Council of the Party made some of the most controversial and contentious decisions in the history of the Party. They rejected a petition signed by nine out of the ten aspirants, requesting for the Super Delegates Conference to be held in one location, as well as allowing

each Delegate to the Conference to nominate five persons, instead of one, in line with the provisions in the Party's Constitution. In my humble and considered opinion, the decision of the National Council to reject the petition of the majority of the aspirants, were both unconstitutional and without merit.

**The Movement for Change proposes to establish a government of national unity that will include representatives from all political parties, stakeholder groups, including the business community, civil society organizations, trade unions, universities, religious and denominational organizations, traditional authorities, youth, and women's associations.**

To make matters worse, it was absolutely clear as indicated in a Press Statement that I issued on September 6th, 2023 that the Super Delegates Conference was strategically and tactically skewed in favour of one of the aspirants. In addition, the level of intimidation at various Voting centers led by Regional Executives and some Government officials, as well as the monetary inducement of delegates that characterised the Super Delegates Conference, was unprecedented in the

history of internal elections of our Party.

In addition to all of the above, the subsequent decision made by the National Council to vary the rules of procedure for the run-off arising from the Super Delegates Conference, in direct contravention of both the Constitution of the Party and the Guidelines issued by the Presidential Elections Committee, will go down in history as a travesty of justice, and a demonstration of high handedness by the National Council, which is the highest decision-making body of the Party, second only to the Annual Delegates Conference.

It is important to also state that I joined the New Patriotic Party at the very beginning of its establishment as a Founding Member, believing in its core values and the long-standing traditions of its antecedents, predicated on fairness, equity, probity, accountability, and transparency. I have devoted the best part of my political career to serving the Party, and I still believe in the vision of the founding fathers of the Party. However, the NPP as it exists now has very little resemblance to the Party that I joined in 1992 and helped to nurture. The Party has been hijacked by a selected group of Party leaders and elders, government appointees, “behind the curtain power brokers” and some unscrupulous Party apparatchiks.

It is in the light of the foregoing that I withdrew from the NPP presidential primary race.

**Today, you took the risk of running as an independent candidate against your former party. How did you set up a new political formation so**

## quickly?

I have been a grassroots political mobilizer since 2005, when I first took the decision to contest for the flagbearership of my former party, NPP in 2007, upon the expiration of the term of office of the former President, His Excellency J. A. Kufour. After my first presidential primaries in 2007, I subsequently contested two other primaries of the party in 2010 and 2014. In all the three aforementioned presidential primaries, I was the run-up. I have therefore over the years established a strong network of grassroots political activists and campaigners across the country, who believe in my leadership and vision for our great country, Ghana. Most of the activists who have been part of my previous campaigns were ready to move out of the NPP to support my new political agenda.

Secondly, there has been an overwhelming demand from majority of Ghanaians for change in the political landscape of the country due to the challenges associated with previous governments over the last three decades. There has therefore been a natural groundswell of support for my Movement.

Thirdly, I have been able to mobilize the youth across the country to be in the forefront of my political Movement. The brand logo for the MOVEMENT which is the Monarch Butterfly, as well as the brand slogan "Ghana will arise again", symbolizing change, transformation, hope, and positivity has been a source of inspiration for the young people of Ghana.

## With what financial means and with what men do you intend to take state power in Ghana with your former party as your opponent?

As in many other democracies around the world, my campaign is being financed by a network of individual donors who believe in my political agenda. In this regard, I have also launched a fundraising platform for crowd funding to which people from all walks of life are making financial contributions.

With regards to the human resource backing for my campaign, I am privileged to have a strong team of Professionals, Community Organizers, as well as young Political Activists spread across the country who are currently prosecuting my campaign

agenda.

The statistics show that out of the over 17 million registered voters in the 2020 general election, the youth aged 18-35 years constituted over 9.4 million voters representing 55% (Fifty five percent) of the total voters. It is against this background that the youth led Movement has been able to mobilize a critical mass of young people to support my campaign.

## Concretely, what is your political offer? Can you develop for us some political arguments why Ghanaians should give you, their vote?

I am offering myself to be the trans-

## To address these economic challenges, I have proposed in my Grand Transformation Plan (GTP) a paradigm shift that will transition Ghana from growth and stability to economic transformation.

formational leader for Ghana based on four cardinal features which I represent, namely:

- Vision
- 2. Competence
- 3. Integrity
- 4. Character

I have had an extensive and distinguished record in international trade, public policy, enterprise development, politics, diplomacy and law spanning a period of over 40 years. My achievements in policy making in government as a Cabinet Minister, experience in public sector administration as the head of Public Systems Management in one of Ghana's leading Management Development Institutes, my track record in the development of Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) at the international level, and my corporate sector management experience, provide a unique blend of knowledge, experience and expertise which puts me in a strong competitive position

to lead Ghana as President of the Republic.

In addition to the above, my value proposition for Ghana is based on the following four dominant themes:

- Moving Ghana beyond the duopoly of the two dominant Parties, the NDC and NPP: The phenomenon of a political duopoly has had serious negative effects on the socioeconomic development of Ghana in respect of the following:

- "Winner Takes all syndrome"; - Reserving political appointments only for party officials and sympathizers.
- Over politicization of issues between the two dominant parties, NDC and NPP, leading to political divisiveness.
- Lack of continuity of projects initiated by either of the two parties once there is a change of Government.
- The arrogance of power of political appointees due to the lack of a broad base, competitive political environment.

The Movement for Change will respond to the challenges outlined above by introducing a 'Third Force' in Ghanaian politics and thereby ending the duopoly of NDC and NPP.

- The need for political inclusion in governance: The majority of Ghanaians feel excluded from the architecture of government. The Movement for Change proposes to establish a Government of National Unity which will have representations from all political parties as well as various stakeholder groups including the Business Community, Civil Society Organizations, Labour Unions, Academia, Religious and Faith based Organizations, Traditional Authorities, Youth and Women based groups.

- Going beyond Party Manifestos to a National Development Plan: The two political parties in Ghana have over the past thirty-two years captured power on the basis of Manifestos which are full of promises not backed by any plan. What the people of Ghana are looking for are not mere promises but a comprehensive plan that will transform Ghana. The Movement for Change has already launched the "Great Transformational Plan" to be implemented over a period of ten years, designed to develop Ghana into a modern, industrialized and prosperous nation which offers equal opportunity for all citizens, particularly the youth and women.



• Inspiring attitudinal and behavioural change in Ghanaians: the Movement for Change will actively pursue measures that will lead to positive change in the attitude and behaviour of Ghanaians including;

- maintaining discipline in all spheres of life
- Respect for the rule of law
- Fighting against corruption
- Changing attitude to work
- Maintaining a sense of pride in being Ghanaian and having national consciousness
- Developing a passion for excellence and meritocracy
- Enhancing efficiency and accountability in public service delivery

On the economic level “Real GDP growth slowed, going from 5.4% in 2021 to 3.3% in 2022. Inflation was estimated at 31.5% in 2022, compared to 10% in 2021, driven by the surge in food and energy prices and the depreciation of the local currency; the budget deficit widened slightly, from 9.2% of GDP in 2021 to 9.3%, due to increased spending. Public debt reached 93.5% of GDP in 2022, compared to 82.0% in 2021,” estimates by the ADB. What are you going to do to change the situation to restore the economy and act on

#### the social aspects of Ghanaians?

Obviously, these statistics paint a very gloomy picture of the Ghanaian economy. The economy of Ghana has over the last sixty years been characterized by severe fluctuations in economic performance, reflecting structural vulnerabilities in the economy. This has denied the country of the much-needed stability and growth, critical for transforming the country from poverty to prosperity.

To address these economic chal-

**I have had an extensive and distinguished career in the fields of international trade, public policy, business development, politics, diplomacy, and law, spanning over 40 years.**

lenges, I have proposed in my Great Transformational Plan (GTP) a paradigm shift that will move Ghana from growth and stability to economic transformation. The GTP is anchored on fifteen (15) Pillars, including:

- Building a strong macroeconomic environment which will be characterized by a stable currency, low inflation, sustainable debt levels, revenue optimization, tight expenditure control, low competitive interest rates, strong external reserves, backed by high levels of liquidity to support the financial sector.

- Introduce a New Agricultural Revolution (NAR) for Ghana, which will first, ensure that Agriculture takes advantage of local, regional and global markets; Secondly, ensure that Agriculture is driven by technology, innovation and cutting-edge research; Thirdly, optimize value for farmers through participation in value chains; and fourthly promote economies of scale in Agriculture through large scale commercial farming.

- Promoting Industrial Transformation through value addition and the establishment of strategic anchor industries to diversify the Ghanaian economy. This will include developing the Petrochemical Industry, Bauxite and Aluminum Industry, Iron and Steel



Industry, the Automotive Assembly and Components Manufacturing Industry, the Pharmaceutical Industry, Garment and Textiles Industry, Oil Palm Industry, and the Manufacture of Industrial Machinery, Plant and Equipment.

In addition to the above, the Industrial Transformation Programme will also involve the establishment of Industrial Parks and Special Economic Zones, as well as the aggressive promotion of Small and Medium Scale enterprises.

All the above listed interventions in the Industrial sector will usher in Ghana's decade of industrial transformation, spanning the period 2025 to 2035.

- **Accelerated Infrastructure Development:** Promoting Private sector financing for public infrastructure such as Roads, Railways, Ports and Harbours, Water Supply Systems, Public Housing etc. This will reduce Government's exposure to the financing of such infrastructure projects.

- **Digital Mainstreaming:** Mainstreaming digitalization in all Government and Public sector activities and bringing digital technologies to the doorstep of the ordinary Ghanaian.

- **Energy Security and Diversification:** placing greater emphasis on the development of renewable sources of energy, including but not limited to nuclear and hydrogen energy. This will require fast-tracking the execution of Government's energy transition strategy.

- **Tourism:** Encouraging private sec-

tor investments in the development of world class tourism infrastructure, and also taking steps to leverage the tourism potential in each district and region of Ghana. In addition, Government will facilitate air travel for tourists coming into the country by providing free visas including Visas on arrival. Furthermore, the development of the creative industry in Ghana will be the backbone of the new reforms in the tourism industry. This will include but not be limited to impactful reforms in the following creative industries; Film, Dance, Theatre, Music, Literature and Multimedia Arts.

- **Natural Resource Management:** Developing and implementing a comprehensive programme for the management of Ghana's Natural resources. This will include but not be limited to Oil & Gas; Solid Minerals; Water & Marine resources; and Land and Forest resources. As a target, there shall be no export of raw materials from Ghana in any form or nature, without a minimum of 60% value addition by the year 2030.

- **Decarbonisation and Climate Resilience:** Scaling up Government's current efforts at reducing Ghana's carbon footprints and facilitating access to the carbon trading markets, as well as establishing mechanisms to strengthen the country's preparedness against the negative effects of climate change and climate variability.

A robust and resilient Ghanaian economy as envisaged under the Great Transformational Plan, will help

finance some critical social aspects of Ghana's development including the Health and Education sectors.

In the Health sector, the GTP will expand Health infrastructure and services by enhancing private sector participation in health service delivery across the country, as well improving the viability of the National Health Insurance Scheme.

In the Educational sector, the GTP will undertake a comprehensive review of existing reforms in the educational sector, particularly the Free Senior High School (SHS) programme to ensure optimum efficiency and effectiveness in its implementation. Government will pay special attention to institutionalizing the link between industry, academia and educational institutions, and reinforce the importance of apprenticeship and internship. Considering the critical importance of early childhood development, a major thrust of Government's new interventions in the educational sector, will be to improve basic education in all its form and nature, including but not limited to physical infrastructure, learning facilities, teacher training and curriculum development.

### What can young people and women expect if you are elected president of Ghana?

As I indicated earlier, the new political Movement that I lead, is powered by the youth of Ghana. I have made public declarations that my Government of National Unity will be dominated by



the youth and women. Specifically, I have made a commitment that 60% of all public sector appointments will be occupied by young people up to the age of 45 years, with the right knowledge and experience. In addition, 50% of such appointments will be offered to women, with the right knowledge and experience.

The most critical challenge confronting the youth is access to job opportunities. In this regard, the focus of the GTP in aggressively supporting the development of the private sector, is primarily designed to enhance employment opportunities for young people. Furthermore, the interventions proposed to develop the Small and Medium scale Enterprises sector will also offer entrepreneurial opportunities for young people and women.

Two other components under the GTP which provide significant opportunities for youth employment, are the Digital industry and the Creative Arts industry. It is envisaged that over half a million jobs would be created for the youth and women in these two sectors of the economy.

**As a man of network and influence for years, you have experience of diplomacy. In a nutshell, what will Ghana's diplomatic direction be in Africa and with the world if you become president?**

For Africa, my policy will be to leverage the strategic importance of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by investing significant resources in its effective and practical operationalization. Having been one of the key architects of the AfCFTA, I am in a privileged position to ensure that trade flows between Ghana and the rest of Africa is significantly enhanced. In addition to the pursuit of economic diplomacy in Africa anchored on the implementation of the AfCFTA, I intend to promote greater collaboration between African states in the areas of defence and security optimization, and the promotion of peace within Africa.

Ghana's diplomatic relations with the international community and the rest of the world, will be based on the principle of 'positive neutrality', with a focus on promoting the strategic interests of Ghana, as well as our shared commitment to humanity and the preservation of peace around the world.



**Thinking about it, don't you think you took a huge political risk by becoming an independent candidate? What will be your future after the presidential election in Ghana, in case the results do not go in your favor?**

The 2024 General Election in Ghana is going to be based on the desire of Ghanaians for new leadership that will transform Ghana from poverty to prosperity. The focus therefore will be on individual candidates and not on parties. As indicated earlier on, the majority of Ghanaians want to move beyond the two dominant parties, NDC and NPP and are looking for a leader who will focus on the national interest and not on the interest of the political party that brings them into power. Therefore, if there was ever a time in Ghanaian history, that a

***The industrial transformation program will also involve the establishment of industrial parks and special economic zones, as well as the aggressive promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises.***

compelling case has been made for an Independent Presidential Candidate, that time is now.

In addition, the desire of Ghanaians to have a Government of National Unity which will bring political inclusion in governance and end the "Winner Takes All" syndrome in Ghanaian politics, also provides validity for the case of an Independent Presidential Candidate in Ghana.

The people of Ghana are keenly aware that the great nations of the world were built by great leaders and not on the strengths of political parties. The examples include George Washington and Abraham Lincoln of the United States of America, Winston Churchill of Great Britain, Mahatma Gandhi of India, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, Deng Xiaoping of China, and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. In any case, this will not be the first time that an Independent Presidential Candidate would win a General Election in Africa. The case of the Republic of Benin is a classic one.

The ideals and philosophy underpinning the establishment of the Movement for Change go beyond the presidential election. Therefore, regardless of the result in the General Election, the Movement for Change together with its leadership, will still remain a dominant force in Ghanaian politics for many years to come.

**Interview done with Samirat Ntiase & Valery Foungré**



# PORTRAIT

## **The Honorable Alan Kyerematen is running for president for the 2024 general elections in Ghana, and former minister of Commerce and Industry. He is the founder and leader of Movement for Change, a political organization created to inspire and lead the process of Change and transform the Ghana into a prosperous, united and peaceful nation.**

He was appointed in January 2017 by the President Akufo-Addo as Minister of Commerce and of the industry and resigned honorably in January 2023, after six years of service to continue his presidential ambition. Mr Kyerematen had previously held a position similar to that of Minister of Commerce, Industry and Presidential Special Initiatives (PSI) under the former President John Agyekum Kufour, between 2003 and 2007. Before that, he served as Ambassador of Ghana in the United States of America from 2001 to 2003.

Alan John Kyerematen has an extensive career and distinguished in the fields of international trade, public policies, development business, politics, diplomacy and law. Hewas a senior trade policy official.

Advisor to the Economic Commission of the United Nations for Africa. He was also Regional Director of UNDP Flagship Program for business development in Africa, Enterprise Africa, establishing programs of support for businesses in 13 African countries.

As Minister of Trade and Industry, he led the implementation of the program of industrial processing of Ghana, anchored in a ten-point plan, including the initiative

One District One Factory (1D1F), setting up strategies and anchor industries, including the industry automobile, the development of small and Medium-sized businesses (SMEs), creation of industrial parks and SEZs, including industrial city of Greater Kumasi, and the strengthening of development of Ghana's exports.

Mr. Kyerematen was the principal architect of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) between 2011 and 2012, and successfully conducted Ghana's bid in 2018 to host the AfCFTA Headquarters Secretariat in Accra.

Before his role in politics, Alan Kyerematen was responsible for the creation and management of the program EMPRETEC in Ghana, a leader in

business development sponsored institution by the United Nations. He led the transformation of EMPRETEC, a United Nations project independent foundation, recognized as a foundation world-class institutional and model best practices for the development of entrepreneurship in Africa.

Between 1984 and 1990, he managed several large private and public sector companies, in addition to consulting missions in Ghana, as a Consultant Principal and Head of Public Systems Management with Management Development and Productivity Institute (MDPI), a leading institution management development in Ghana.

Before that, he was a senior business manager at UAC Ghana Ltd, a subsidiary of Unilever International, where he held various leadership positions with distinction between 1977 and 1984.

Alan Kyerematen has a degree in economics from the University of Ghana and is also a qualified Lawyer from the Ghana Law School. Furthermore, it is a Hubert Humphrey Fellow of the School of Business public and the University School of Management of Minnesota, United States, under the program of Fulbright scholarships from the United States.

In 1994, Mr. Kyerematen was among the top 100 world leaders of the new Millennium by Time International Magazine with other personalities such as Bill Gates and John F. Kennedy Jr. of the United States of America.

In 2013, he was appointed by the heads of state of the African Union to present itself as a candidate of Africa for the position of Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Alan John Kyerematen was born on October 3, 1955 in Kumasi in the Ashanti region of Ghana. He is married to Patricia Christabel Kyerematen and has the lucky to have two sons, Alexander and Victor.

By Valery Founbé



## DR CONGO

# FELIX TSHISEKEDI, VICTORY AND NEW CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED

**Praised for a new mandate, with 73% of the votes obtained during the presidential election of December 20 last, Félix Antoine Tshisekedi that his sympathizers call**

"Fatshi", must face a mountain of challenges, including among others most important, the fight against corruption, the reconciliation of country, sine qua non conditions for a real fight against poverty and for unity. But also, the reconstruction and pacification of a country constantly attacked, and object of recent secession attempts decades. Fourth most populous country in Africa and key player in the global markets of rare minerals, gold, diamonds, coltan and especially cobalt, the Democratic Republic of Congo, has managed to preserve its calm, the day after an election that the opposition was quick to contest, and for which many observers anticipated a difficult outcome.

Credited with 73% of the votes, the president outgoing, Félix Tshisekedi was re-elected largely according to the score announced at Kinshasa by the Electoral Commission (Ceni), which must be confirmed by the Constitutional Court. Felix Tshisekedi, 60 years old, in power since January 2019 following the first peaceful, negotiated alternation of history of the country, far ahead of its main challenger, Moïse Katumbi, credited with 18.08% of the votes.

In this key country in the global

cobalt market with a population of 105 million, this single-round election saw the alignment behind the two leading candidates, Martin Fayulu, an unsuccessful candidate in the 2018 presidential election (5.33%), followed by former Prime Minister (2008-2012) Adolphe Muzito (1.12%). The remaining twenty or so candidates, including Dr. Denis Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize laureate for his work with

***Félix Antoine Tshisekedi has solidified his political experience with a first five-year term during which several accomplishments can be attributed to him, even though not all expectations have been met.***

women victims of war rape, did not reach 1% of the vote. The voter turnout reached 43% of registered voters. Félix Tshisekedi's performance is "beyond all predictions," notes Trésor Kibangula, a political analyst at the Ebuteli research institute in Kinshasa. The election was also supposed to designate national and provincial deputies, he points out.

### **Any possible disputes?**

In a joint statement, nine candidates have described the election held on December 20 as a "sham election." This raises concerns about potential challenges or unrest. Opponents criticize the lengthy ballot counting process due to logistical issues. They also express no confidence in the Ceni and the Constitutional Council, where representatives of the ruling party hold the majority of seats. Meanwhile, observers from the Catholic and Protestant Churches, highly respected in this predominantly Christian country, have noted "numerous irregularities that could affect the integrity of the results of various polls in some places," but they have not concluded that the overall election is dishonest.

To prevent public disorder, the police have announced that they will not tolerate any disturbances and have already banned protests against fraud in recent days. At this stage, there is no indication of a widespread challenge looming.

### **Huge Challenges Ahead**

Félix Tshisekedi faces numerous challenges in the economic, social, poverty alleviation, corruption, and security realms. Nonetheless, during his first term, Fatshi made significant strides by engaging in several equally important initiatives.

While the implementation of seven-



ral social measures, such as the free primary education system, has earned him great esteem from the Congolese population, it should be noted that on the international stage, President Tshisekedi assumed the presidency of the African Union in February 2021 for one year. Subsequently, he took over the presidency of the Southern African Development Community for a year until August 2023. He resolutely engaged in security matters by launching a program for the demobilization and disarmament of rebel groups. He declared a state of emergency in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, which have been plagued by decades of insecurity. He gave his approval for a regional military force from the East African Community. However, at this level, the objectives aimed at are not fully achieved. The East African Force withdrew, deemed ineffective. A new regional force from Southern Africa is starting to establish itself.

Meanwhile, the M23 rebellion, defeated in 2012, has resurfaced and now occupies part of the territory. Félix Tshisekedi accuses Rwanda of supporting the M23 and of armed aggression in the eastern part of the country, which Kigali denies. The UN and several Western embassies denounce Rwanda's support for the M23

***Tshisekedi  
accuses  
Rwanda of  
supporting the  
M23 rebellion.***

rebellion. Tensions between Félix Tshisekedi and Rwanda are still clearly visible.

### **A Mining Giant Labeled a "Geological Scandal"**

The wealth of its subsoil, which earns it the nickname of a "geological scandal," and its mines, where children often work, make the DRC a major player in global mineral markets, particularly in copper, of which it holds the eighth proven reserves on the planet, and diamonds (the fourth largest producer globally), but especially in cobalt, with 95% of the world's production and reserves 2.5 times higher than its only notable competitor, Australia. Cobalt is crucial in automotive batteries and superalloys. The DRC also holds three-quarters of the world's proven reserves of coltan, a rare metal used in electronics.

By Cyr-Raoul Hounghédji



## WHO IS FÉLIX ANTOINE TSHISEKEDI?

**At the age of 60, Félix Antoine Tshisekedi has consolidated his political experience with a first five-year term during which several achievements are to his credit, even if all the expectations were not fulfilled.**

Benefiting from the trust of the Congolese people, Fatshi secured a significant victory over his opponents, winning 73% of the votes according to the results of the December 20 elections. Before assuming power, his political career unfolded in the shadow of his father, Étienne Tshisekedi, also known as the "Sphinx," who passed away in 2017. His father was a historical figure of the opposition since the Mobutu era. Félix Tshisekedi spent a considerable portion of his life in exile in Brussels, far from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

As the third child in a family of five, he inherited his father's party, the UDPS (Union for Democracy and Social Progress), of which he assumed the presidency in 2018. In November 2011, he was elected as a deputy from Mbuji-Mayi in Kasai, where the family settled after leaving Kinshasa. However, he refused to take his seat in the National Assembly to protest against the electoral fraud, a stance similar to his father's, who believed he had won the 2011 presidential election against Joseph Kabila, the declared winner. During the presidential election of December 2018, Félix Tshisekedi broke away from the opposition alliance to present himself as the candidate leading a coalition called "Heading for Change,"

alongside Vital Kamerhe, another heavyweight in the opposition. Félix Tshisekedi was declared the winner of the presidential election with 38% of the votes. However, this victory was contested by the runner-up, Martin Fayulu, who claimed to have won based on the results compiled by the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (Cenco). Cenco asserted that the official results did not correspond to the truth observed at the ballot boxes.

Félix Tshisekedi assumed the presidency, and his tenure was marked by a reconciliation with the camp of Joseph Kabila, who retained the majority in the National Assembly. However, the agreement with the Kabila camp collapsed two years later, leading Félix Tshisekedi to form a new majority known as the "Sacred Union." This allowed him to implement his emergency program, known as the "100 days," focusing on major infrastructure projects. However, his presidency was marred by a corruption scandal involving his ally, Vital Kamerhe, who served as chief of staff. Kamerhe was sentenced to 20 years in prison for embezzlement of public funds in June 2020 but was later acquitted and appointed as deputy prime minister in charge of the economy in 2023.

Breaking away from the Kabila era, President Tshisekedi promoted political relaxation and implemented emblematic measures such as free basic education. After five years in office, which yielded generally promising results despite many ongoing projects, Félix Tshisekedi faces numerous new challenges in his second term as president.

ECOWAS /

# Niger, Mali and Burkina Say: "Enough"



**A real thunderbolt at the level of the sub regional organization West Africa. Three countries under sanction since changes unconstitutional regimes no longer want to be part of the organization. After months of disagreement, Mali, Burkina and Niger have made the decision to leave of ECOWAS of which they were members since the creation.**

Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger announced on Sunday, January 28, their "immediate withdrawal" from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

This decision comes amid escalating tensions between these three countries and the governing bodies of the subregional organization. The press release, delivered by Colonel Maiga for Mali, is explicit about the reasons for this unilateral withdrawal. Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger no longer wish to be part of an organization that no longer aligns with their aspirations. According to the press release, ECOWAS is perceived as an organization that has not effectively assisted these countries in combating terrorism and ensuring stability in the Sahel.

The intolerable situation, coupled with perceived inaction from ECOWAS, has led to this decisive move. The press release denounces, "(...) Furthermore, ECOWAS, under the influence of foreign powers, betraying its founding principles, has become a threat to its Member States and its populations whose happiness it is supposed to ensure (...)". In light of these grievances, the leaders of Mali (Assimi Goita), Niger (Tchiani), and Burkina Faso (Traoré) have concluded that they no longer belong in ECOWAS. After 50 years of existence, the three heads of state





believe that ECOWAS is no longer capable of bringing happiness to its peoples. Consequently, drawing consequences from this state of affairs, the three states are withdrawing, effective immediately. What are the political and economic implications of this unilateral withdrawal? How will cooperation between the ECOWAS states and those of the Alliance of Sahel States unfold? These are questions fueling current discussions.

Already, in the reactions from ECOWAS and the African Union, there is a sense that an extremely grave situation is unfolding. Indeed, the day after the joint decision of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, ECOWAS, typically assertive, has taken a more conciliatory tone. In fact, ECOWAS has stated that it seeks "a negotiated solution to the political impasse," while the African Union (AU) expressed its "deep regret" after this decision through its president on January 30.

ECOWAS may be entering a precarious spiral, as this withdrawal could inspire other countries,

particularly considering the fact that the three countries in question are currently under sanctions. Their resilience against these sanctions could serve as motivation for other states to exit an organization that is now a mere shadow of itself. Analyzing the situation in an interview, Dr. Niagalé Bagayoko, a political science doctor and president of the African Security Sector Network, expressed that, "Given the current relationships between ECOWAS and these three countries, which are sus-

***"After 50 years of existence, the three heads of state believe that ECOWAS is no longer able to..."***

pending from the organization, not participating in its meetings and are under sanctions or the threat of sanctions, this one-year period will not have any effect on a daily basis in how they interact with the organization. In reality, this delay is not extremely restrictive."

To the question of whether this withdrawal poses a danger to ECOWAS, Dr. Bagayoko says, "Yes, ECOWAS feels that its future is in jeopardy. It has been so since the start of the Sahelian crisis. In reality, over the last 15 or so years, the organization has lost a lot of credibility. Firstly, because it was not able to deploy its standby force in the context of the conflict in northern Mali in 2012." ECOWAS has faced challenges in various aspects, including military deployments, political legitimacy, and the implementation of its strategic vision. The withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger signals a critical moment in the organization's history.

By Valery Foungré



## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

# Morocco Offers a Strategic Bridge to Sahel Countries

Under the leadership of His Majesty, King Mohammed VI, Morocco is increasing major development projects for several African countries. This is evidenced by this new initiative which aims to facilitate access to the Atlantic Ocean for four Sahel states. On December 23, the latter participated in the ministerial coordination meeting in Marrakech for the access of Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean. A meeting which allowed us to review the multiple facets of this transformative project.

23 دجنبر 2023  
مراكش

المبادرة الدولية لصاحب الجلالة الملك محمد السادس  
MED VI - QUE DIEU L'ASSISTE -  
À L'ATLANTIQUE

اجتماع وزاري



At this historic meeting, the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs was surrounded by his counterparts from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad. Nasser Bourita stressed that the initiative stems from a royal wish expressed in his last speech delivered on November 6 during the 48th anniversary of the Green March. On this occasion, the sovereign proposed the launch of an international initiative promoting access of the Sahel States to the Atlantic Ocean.

Nasser Bourita estimated that the Sahel region is “not a burden but an area of opportunity for the sustainable development of the area”. For

its counterparts, the Kingdom is “a reliable partner to succeed in the royal initiative” which aims to open up the countries of the Sahel. A position shared by the foreign ministers of Mali, Abdoulaye Diop, of Niger, Bakary Yaou Sangaré, from Burkina Faso, Karamoko Jean Marie Traoré and by Abakar Kourma, director of Africa and African integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chadians Abroad and International Cooperation, representing Chad.

According to the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Sahel has always played “a historic role” in Africa, which is why the links of Morocco

and its sovereigns with the region have been “close at all times”. The minister estimated that the fight for security in the region “is an important approach but not sufficient, because a development approach is needed, and His Majesty the King has always promoted inter-African development”. For Nasser Bourita, “the time has come for the countries of the Sahel to favor the path of progress and development”.

His Malian counterpart, Abdoulaye Diop, affirmed his country's total support for this initiative, insisting that the region needs to be opened up because it has significant natural



resources.

“We are looking for Eldorado elsewhere, while we have Eldorado here. We encourage co-development, in particular to achieve access (roads, infrastructure, etc.) to the sea,” insisted the head of Malian diplomacy, advocating “the development of economic means to ensure peace and security in the region.” And to conclude that: “The initiative of King Mohammed VI is an excellent idea and Morocco is known for its reliability in making it a success.”

Welcoming the royal initiative while recalling that his country maintains centuries-old and rich relations with the Kingdom, the Nigerien Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed the hope that access to the Atlantic will allow the region to see a prosperous future. “The sea will open up international markets for us to sell our products,” rejoices Bakary Yaou Sangaré, supported by the head of Burkinabe diplo-

macy and the Chadian ambassador accredited to Rabat, Hassan Adoum Bakhit Hagggar. The latter also noted the reliability of Morocco to succeed in the challenge of opening up the Sahel.

To return to the speech of the 48th anniversary of the Green March, herald of the international initiative for the access of the Sahel States to the Atlantic Ocean, King Mohammed VI affirmed that “To resolve the difficulties and problems facing faced by the sister States of the Sahel, the solution cannot be exclusively security or military, but it must be based on an approach of cooperation and common development.

The royal initiative thus opens the field to allow landlocked Sahelian countries to access the Kingdom's road and port infrastructure.

This opening was the subject of an explicit affirmation by the King, who indicated that “Morocco is ready to

make its road, port and rail infrastructure available to them to support this initiative”.

### **An initiative highly appreciated around the world**

As an extension of the constant efforts deployed by the Kingdom of Morocco, under the enlightened leadership of the King, for a prosperous Africa, this initiative offers unprecedented potential capable of providing adapted solutions to strengthen integration and regional cooperation, the structural transformation of the economies of these sister countries and the improvement of the living conditions of the Sahelo-Saharan population, as part of an innovative and integrated approach promoting stability and security in the region.

According to Omar Hilale, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the UN, the Atlantic initiative of King

Mohammed VI is a vision of the future for Africa.

It is proving to be a catalyst for development and solidarity for Africa, particularly for landlocked and coastal countries in the Atlantic. It is an initiative that stands out for its global approach, aimed at strengthening solidarity between African countries and promoting sustainable development on the continent, that advocated by King Mohammed VI to create an inclusive and transformative dynamic through Africa.

This vision centers around economic cooperation, regional security and infrastructural integration, with particular emphasis on opening new avenues of trade and development for landlocked countries.

For the diplomat, it is an ambitious initiative by a king who has always attached particular importance to his continent, Africa. It is also a solidarity initiative that will enable the countries on the Atlantic coast of the continent to be involved in a dynamic of development, prosperity, and freedom of movement of people and goods. The uniqueness of this initiative advances, and it lies in its capacity to open up crucial regions of Africa, notably the Sahel and Central Africa.

"There are dozens of countries that do not have access to the sea, and for them, transportation from ports to their capitals is very costly," points out Omar Hilale, who believes that this initiative also aims to reduce transportation costs and increase security, especially in countries facing terrorism-related challenges.

Another crucial aspect of this initiative is the promotion of the blue economy, which envisions a more equitable and inclusive use of Atlantic resources. "The Atlantic does not belong only to the countries on the coast. In a spirit of solidarity and association, we must also open it up and involve landlocked countries," adds Omar Hilale, indicating that the Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline project perfectly illustrates this vision. "It will serve all the riches because, as you know, coastal countries like Senegal,

Mauritania, and Ghana have found natural gas off their coast. This pipeline will reduce transportation costs for natural gas, thus facilitating trade and strengthening ties with Europe." Omar Hilale concludes that King Mohammed VI's Atlantic initiative stands as a pillar of prosperity, peace, and stability for Africa. "That is the essence and spirit of His Majesty the King's initiative. It is an initiative that

## ***Economic stability is often a key factor in preventing conflicts...***

will bring prosperity, peace, and stability to this part of the continent, which is very dear to us."

Abdelhak Bassou, Senior Fellow at the Policy Center for the New South (PCNS), observes that King Mohammed VI's Atlantic initiative will strengthen Africa's position. It opens promising prospects for a broader Atlantic while reinforcing Africa's position. "By bringing together the 23 countries of Atlantic Africa within a solid and unified institutional framework, they will be able to debate, negotiate, and discuss with other actors in the region."

In a statement to the press, Abdelhak Bassou, who is also a professor at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Ben Guerir, emphasized that King Mohammed VI's Atlantic initiative represents a strategic turning point for the region. A vision that will enhance Africa's position in this vast geopolitical space. Moreover, he noted, it

aims to redefine the Atlantic, not only in geographical terms but also as a space for cooperation and dialogue. It acknowledges the crucial role of Atlantic Africa, often marginalized in security and economic discussions. By bringing these countries under a single institutional umbrella, the initiative aims to give them a unified and stronger voice in Atlantic affairs.

"The royal initiative aims to strengthen the position of Atlantic Africa by fostering the creation of a strong institutional framework encompassing the 23 countries in the region. This unity will enable them to effectively debate, negotiate, and dialogue with other actors in the Atlantic region, such as Atlantic South America, the United States, and Atlantic Europe. If this Atlantic Africa constitutes a united front, it will be stronger, more solid, and will not repeat the mistakes, for example, of the Mediterranean," analyzes the expert, who adds that to achieve this, it is essential to develop a common vision.

"These 23 countries must be aware of the importance of sharing a common perception of interests to protect, promote, and defend, as well as threats to repel. For example, security issues, such as those related to the Gulf of Guinea, require a regional approach as they cannot be resolved locally."

According to several observers and experts in economic matters, "economic stability is often a key factor in preventing conflicts, and this initiative provides a platform to strengthen peace ties between the countries" of the region. In essence, the support garnered by the Royal Initiative at the regional and international levels, notably from the concerned countries gathered in Marrakech (Mali, Niger, Chad, and Burkina Faso), who "recognized the positive impact on their economies and saw in this opening to the Atlantic an opportunity for economic diversification, increased trade, and job creation. All of which offer promising prospects for the future.

**By Cyr-Raoul HOUNGLEDJI**

ACCESS FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE SAHEL COUNTRIES

## How His Majesty the King operated



The international initiative of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God assist him, to promote the access of the Sahel States to the Atlantic Ocean, comes as an extension of the constant efforts deployed by the Kingdom of Morocco, under the leadership enlightened guidance from the Sovereign, to establish

**Africa as a continent of prosperity, within the framework of South-South cooperation based on a win-win partnership.**

This new Royal initiative with regional and international scope shows that the Kingdom continues to place great importance to the humanitarian dimension and

sustainable development of Sahel countries, always working to promote cooperation bold, innovative and in line with the expectations of the African continent. This enlightened initiative of the Sovereign, announced on the occasion of the 8th anniversary of the glorious Green March, is part of the continuity of Morocco's

active and united commitment alongside brotherly African countries which is exercised in several directions.

Furthermore, Royal Visits to certain Sahel countries have been successful in light of the impressive number of agreements and cooperation protocols concluded on this occasion, as well as the various actions undertaken by the Sovereign in favor of the disadvantaged populations of the visited countries.

In materialization of the values of solidarity perpetuated by His Majesty the King, between the Kingdom of Morocco and its African brother countries, the Sovereign has graciously established the Mohammed VI Foundation for Sustainable Development, which conducts humanitarian missions on the African continent.

Several actions have been launched, within this framework, in Mali. These include Royal projects such as the construction of the Mohammed VI Prenatal Clinic in Bamako, inaugurated and handed over to the Malian authorities on July 7, 2022, as well as the Professional Training Center in the fields of Construction, Tourism, and Catering. It is also worth mentioning, in the context of this active solidarity of the Kingdom towards African countries, His Majesty the King's decision in 2000 to cancel the debt of the least developed African countries by exempting their products from customs duties upon entry into the Moroccan market. In the same vein, the commercial relations between Morocco and the Sahel countries are characterized by significant direct investments from Morocco in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad, notably through national companies and banks present in the economic landscape of several countries.

Furthermore, several initiatives

have been taken by HM King Mohammed VI, Commander of the Faithful, to support the Sahel countries in the field of religious cooperation. These countries were the first beneficiaries of training to meet their demand for religious matters. The agreements signed in this context have enabled the training, at the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidines, and Morchidates, of 500 Malian imams, 200 Nigerien imams, and 199 Chadian imams.

It is worth recalling that in September 2016, His Majesty the King gave His very High

## ***The Royal visits to certain Sahelian countries have been successful..***

Instructions for the dispatch of several tons of humanitarian aid (foodstuffs, medicines, blankets, tents, etc.) following the floods that devastated the Burkinabe Capital. Morocco also made numerous donations of medical equipment and medicines to Sahel countries to support the authorities of these brotherly countries in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

In terms of combating climate change, under the visionary leadership of His Majesty the King, the Kingdom has attached great importance to environmental issues in Africa in general, and in

the Sahel in particular.

The African Action Summit, held on the sidelines of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-22) held in Marrakech in 2016, perfectly illustrates Morocco's commitment to environmental preservation and the fight against climate change. Among the priorities set by this Summit is the establishment of the Climate Commission for the Sahel region. Training of professionals, both at the university and technical and professional levels, has been the most prominent activity, but also the one that has yielded the most tangible results with Sahel countries and the most sustainable cooperation of Morocco towards its African partners.

Thus, the total number of students from the Sahel region pursuing their studies with scholarships in Moroccan public higher education institutions for the academic year 2022-2023 amounts to 741 students from Mali, 478 from Niger, 493 from Burkina Faso, and 374 from Chad.

On another note, the technical assistance provided by Morocco to African countries mainly involves sharing experiences in sectors such as agriculture, maritime fisheries, merchant marine, small and large hydraulics, health, rural development, craftsmanship, tourism, and infrastructure. This cooperation is concretely manifested by the dispatch of Moroccan experts to the field and the hosting of African technicians and experts in Morocco. Tripartite cooperation initiated by Morocco has placed particular emphasis on human resource development through numerous multisectoral actions, in collaboration with regional and international donors and funders, in favour of professionals from Sahel countries, such as Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad.





**NASSER BOURITA, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AFRICAN COOPERATION, AND MOROCCANS RESIDING ABROAD**

## **"His Majesty the King's Initiative for Sahel Countries' Access to the Atlantic: "The Promise of a Strategic Turning Point"**

"The international initiative of His Majesty King Mohammed VI to facilitate access to the Atlantic Ocean for Sahel countries is 'the promise of a strategic turning point for our countries,'" emphasized Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccans Residing Abroad, in Marrakech.

"There are so many substantial and pragmatic reasons that make this Royal Initiative the promise of a strategic turning point for our countries," Mr. Bourita stated at the opening of the Ministerial Coordination Meeting on His Majesty King Mohammed VI's Initiative to facilitate access for Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean, which includes the participation of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad.

The first of these reasons, the minister emphasized, is "the tradition of cooperation, mutual assistance, and solidarity that has always existed between Morocco, the Sovereigns of Morocco, and the brotherly countries of the Sahel."

King Mohammed VI has always valued and promoted these links, noting that the Royal Initiative is a continuation of the Kingdom's active and supportive engagement, with the Sovereign personally alongside the brotherly countries of the Sahel.

"The purpose here is, simply and humbly, to capitalize on a tradition of cooperative solidarity, to demonstrate a triple conviction underlying the Royal Approach," Mr. Bourita stated.

The first conviction, he explained, is that for the Sovereign, the Sahel is not – and has never been – just another region, much less a simple transitional area between North and Sub-Saharan Africa. The second conviction of this triptych is that His Majesty the King has always believed in the potential of the Sahel countries. "Where many see problems, His Majesty the King sees opportunities. Where some speak of despair, His Majesty the King detects potential, and where some opt for easy solutions, His Majesty the King advocates for fundamental

treatments to develop real solutions," Mr. Bourita indicated.

It is for this reason, and this is the third conviction, that His Majesty the King advocates that development is the key to the Sahel's problems, emphasized the minister.

In this line, the Royal Initiative promises that Morocco will bring all its energy, mobilize all its efforts, and share all its know-how, he noted, stressing that it is about supporting Sahel partners to unleash the enormous potential of the region and thus accelerate the growth and sustainable and inclusive development of the region's economies.

This Initiative reflects the philosophy of the Royal Vision, expressed at the 29th AU Summit, for "the emergence of a new Africa: a strong Africa, a bold Africa that takes charge of defending its interests, an influential Africa in the concert of Nations."

Mr. Bourita observed, in the same context, that if the forces of evil, terrorists, separatists, and other spoilers manage to regionalize their threat, there is no reason why the forces of good cannot regionalize the growth and development of populations.

"This is the entire objective that His Majesty King Mohammed VI's Initiative, may God assist Him, aims to achieve to facilitate the access of the brotherly countries of the Sahel to the Atlantic Ocean. Because it would be inconceivable, today, that such a fertile land as the Sahel could remain isolated, for lack of solidarity or audacity," he argued. In summary, Mr. Bourita concluded, the Royal Initiative proposes to rethink the paradigm and to build, together, creative and courageous solutions.

"Instead of mercantile trade, the Sovereign prefers genuinely creating shared and sustainable wealth. Instead of anesthetizing assistance, the Sovereign prefers structuring and 'win-win' projects; and instead of the relentless force of all-security, the Sovereign relies on the unsuspected power of shaping minds through education," he concluded.



## **JEAN-MARIE TRAORÉ KARAMOKO IS THE BURKINABE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

# **"The Atlantic Initiative of His Majesty the King, a powerful lever for transforming the economies of the Sahel and integrating them into the global economy"**

Speaking at the Ministerial Coordination Meeting on His Majesty King Mohammed VI's Initiative to facilitate access for Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean, the Burkinabe Foreign Minister emphasized that "beyond the expression of active solidarity, this initiative is a call for the recognition of the rights and values of landlocked countries in the global economy".

"Burkina Faso welcomes any initiative aimed at transforming its landlocked status into an asset, as it is clear that our countries have long been impoverished due to inappropriate policies," he continued, noting that His Majesty the King's initiative perfectly aligns with the ambition of Sahel states to capitalize on their enormous potentialities by minimizing the burden of land lockiness through an effective and growth-oriented infrastructural integration policy.

Highlighting the significance of this Royal Initiative, the Burkinabe minister indicated that Sahel countries will "work towards its appropriation and success in this immense endeavour".

Organized at the initiative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccans Residing Abroad, Nasser Bourita, this meeting sees the participation, besides

the Burkinabe Foreign Minister, of the Malian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Abdoulaye Diop, the Nigerien Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Nigeriens Abroad, Bakary Yaou Sangaré, the Chadian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Abakar Kourma, as well as the Director-General for Africa and African Integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With regional and international implications, the Royal Initiative aimed at facilitating access for Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean was announced in the Royal Speech to the Nation on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the Green March. This initiative is in line with the ongoing efforts made by the Kingdom of Morocco, under the enlightened leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, for a prosperous Africa.

It offers unprecedented potential to provide tailored solutions to strengthen regional integration and cooperation, structurally transform the economies of these brotherly countries, and improve the living conditions of the Sahelian-Saharan population, within an innovative and integrated approach promoting the stability and security of the region.

اجت



NIGER

المنتدى الإفريقي والمؤتمرات الإقليمية بالخارج

**BAKARY YAOU SANGARÉ, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF NIGER**

## **"The Atlantic Initiative of His Majesty the King stems from Morocco's commitment to promoting the co-development of the Sahel"**

Niger expresses its "full support for this commendable initiative which strengthens our convictions and the hopes of our people for the betterment they legitimately aspire to," stated Mr. Sangaré during the Ministerial Coordination Meeting on His Majesty King Mohammed VI's international initiative to facilitate access for Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean, which also saw participation from Mali, Burkina Faso, and Chad.

In this regard, the Nigerien Foreign Minister observed that the Royal Speech to the Nation on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the Green March, in which the Sovereign announced this Initiative, "once again reflects the great vision" of His Majesty King Mohammed VI in favor of pan-Africanism.

"We hope that this Royal Initiative will offer real opportunities for the exploitation, transformation, and commercialization of our resources, and for accelerating regional connectivity and trade flows for the shared prosperity of Morocco and the Sahel countries," he explained.

Furthermore, Mr. Sangaré indicated that the Royal Initiative aligns perfectly with the integration dynamics initiated by the Sahel States, notably through the upgrading of infrastructure in these countries and their connection to transport and communication networks established in their regional environment, noting that thanks to the collective efforts of Morocco and the countries in the region, the Sahel "will no longer be a zone of instability but rather a zone of pros-

perity."

Moreover, the Nigerien minister applauded the constant support provided to his country by Morocco, "a true friend of Niger, a friend for all times."

Initiated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccans Residing Abroad, Nasser Bourita, this coordination meeting also includes the participation of the Malian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Abdoulaye Diop, the Burkina Faso Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation, and Burkinabés Abroad, Karamoko Jean Marie Traoré, as well as the Director-General for Africa and African Integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Chadian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Abakar Kourma.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI's international initiative to facilitate access for Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean is in line with the ongoing efforts made by the Kingdom of Morocco, under the enlightened leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, for a prosperous Africa.

It offers unprecedented potential to provide tailored solutions to strengthen regional integration and cooperation, structurally transform the economies of these brotherly countries, and improve the living conditions of the Sahelian-Saharan population, within an innovative and integrated approach promoting stability and security in the region.



## **MAHAMAT SALEH ANNADIF, CHADIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

# **"Under the leadership of His Majesty the King, Morocco is a strategic and reliable partner for African countries"**

"I would like to pay tribute to the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God assist him, on the continent, making the Kingdom a strategic and reliable partner for all African countries," Mr. Saleh Annadif stated in a speech read on his behalf in Marrakech by the Ambassador of Chad to Morocco, Hassan Adoum Bakhit Hagggar, on the occasion of the Ministerial Coordination Meeting on His Majesty the King's Initiative to facilitate access for Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean.

He also praised this Royal Initiative aimed at facilitating access for Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean, noting that Chad's regional economic integration project aligns with His Majesty the King's vision for the region.

The Chadian Foreign Minister also thanked the Sovereign for the Kingdom's interest in the Sahel, a region facing political and security challenges. "Security and development are inseparable," emphasized the Chadian minister, calling for support for initiatives in this regard at the regional level.

"Chad firmly believes that only inclusive deve-

lopment policies can prevent the spread of terrorism in the Sahel," Mr. Saleh Annadif asserted.

Initiated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccans Residing Abroad, Nasser Bourita, this coordination meeting also includes the participation of the Malian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Abdoulaye Diop, the Burkina Faso Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation, and Burkinabés Abroad, Karamoko Jean Marie Traoré, the Nigerien Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, and Nigériens Abroad, Bakary Yaou Sangaré, as well as the Director-General for Africa and African Integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Chadian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Abakar Kourma.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI's international initiative to facilitate access for Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean is in line with the ongoing efforts made by the Kingdom of Morocco, under the enlightened leadership of the Sovereign, for a prosperous Africa.

Réu Minist





# His Excellency Abdoulaye Diop, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali

**Many initiatives aimed at opening up, not just the Sahel, but also Africa are recurrent in the political world of continent. How do you see the recent one from Marrakech including the goal is to connect the Sahel countries between them and open them to world via the Atlantic Ocean by Morocco?**

Mali commends the initiative of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, which the Government of Mali fully recognizes and supports. It is important to recall that the initiative aims to "facilitate access for the Sahel States to the Atlantic Ocean." In this context, "Morocco is ready to provide its road, port, and rail infrastructure to support this initiative." Therefore, the goal is to "upgrade the infrastructure of the Sahel States and connect them to the transportation and communication networks established in their regional environment."

As a landlocked country, His Majesty the King of Morocco's initiative has sparked the interest of the Government of the Republic of Mali, which sees it as a demonstration of solidarity and active fraternity from the Kingdom of Morocco towards fellow African countries. Therefore, we commend and thank Mr. Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs,

African Cooperation, and Moroccans Residing Abroad, for his invitation to the ministerial coordination meeting held in Marrakech on December 23, 2023, which was attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, the Republic of Mali, the Republic of Niger, and the Republic of Chad. During this meeting, we, the

***We welcome the timely royal initiative that requires upgrading infrastructure to facilitate interstate exchanges.***

foreign ministers of the aforementioned countries, expressed our countries' adherence to this initiative with regional and international significance. In this spirit, we agreed to establish a national Task Force in each country to prepare and propose the operational modalities of the initiative.

In conclusion, I emphasize the strategic importance of this initiative, as well as the inclusive and participatory approach favoured by the Moroccan authorities for its implemen-

tation.

**How do you interpret this act of solidarity and fraternity of Morocco that some observers equate to diplomacy cultural and influential from this Maghreb Country? Who wants to get ahead other countries of this same region?**

In this initiative, we perceive the commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco to extend its actions beyond bilateral cooperation, within a broader framework of an integrated approach aimed at meeting the common aspirations of the authorities and populations of the Sahel. We applaud the timely royal initiative, which calls for the upgrading of infrastructure to facilitate interstate exchanges.

The royal initiative aligns seamlessly with Mali's desire to diversify its access to the sea, especially after the sanctions imposed by ECOWAS against our country, which, among other things, resulted in border closures.

This is an opportunity for me, on behalf of the Malian authorities, to extend our sincere thanks to Guinea and Mauritania for demonstrating their solidarity with Mali by keeping their borders open and committing to long-term facilitation.



**Many challenges - security crisis overcome, growth economic, group's rebels, infrastructure, roads, rails, etc. - exist so that such initiative can give his best potential to the signatory States. How are you overcome?**

Firstly, by relying on ourselves, our strategies, endogenous development programs, and projects, and consequently improving governance. Secondly, by relying on our partners who adhere to the three principles now guiding Mali's foreign relations policy. These principles include respecting Mali's sovereignty, respecting Mali's strategic choices and choice of partners, and taking into account the vital interests of the Malian people. Finally, by relying on offers and initiatives such as His Majesty King Mohammed VI's initiative, to which the government of Mali

recognizes and adheres.

**It will be said that their implementation requires significant financing. How do you plan to develop inter-infrastructure States? Have you a strategy to mobilize funds?**

We recalled that following the Marrakech meeting in December 2023, we agreed to create a national Task Force in each country to prepare and propose the operational modalities of the initiative. In this context, it is important to note that since September 2023, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have established the Liptako Gourma Charter, instituting the Alliance of the Sahel States (AES). This reflects a strong political will of the Heads of State of Burkina Faso, Captain Ibrahim Traoré, Mali, Colonel Assimi Goita, and Niger, General Aboudourahame Tiani, to move

towards military and development cooperation by pooling resources for the harmonious development of our states for the benefit of our populations.

Within this framework, the Ministerial Meeting of AES member countries on economic development in the Liptako Gourma area, held on November 25, 2023, in Bamako, recommended, among other things, the development of basic infrastructure, acceleration of the implementation of energy, agricultural, and hydraulic projects, development of road, air, and rail transport networks, establishment of an airline company, construction and reinforcement of infrastructure projects (dams, roads, etc.), promotion of diversified partnerships, and so forth.

**Interview done  
by S. Ntiaze at Rabat**

# FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ

## MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE IN MARRAKECH

**Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad express their adherence to the Royal Initiative to facilitate access for Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean.**

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad expressed, in Marrakech, their countries' adherence to the International Initiative of His Majesty King Mohammed VI to facilitate access for Sahel States to the Atlantic Ocean, which offers significant opportunities for the economic transformation of the entire region.

In the final communiqué concluding the Ministerial Coordination Meeting, organized at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccans Residing Abroad, Nasser Bourita, the diplomatic heads of these African countries expressed their adherence to this regional and international initiative. They emphasized the strategic importance of this initiative, which is part of His Majesty King Mohammed VI's active solidarity measures towards brotherly African countries in general and the Sahel in particular. It offers significant opportunities for the economic transformation of the entire region by accelerating regional connectivity, commercial flows, and shared prosperity in the Sahel region.

In this context, they praised the inclusive and participatory approach to realizing this initiative, expressing their shared ambition to strengthen cooperative relations through joint mul-

ti-sectoral, structural, and innovative partnerships, reflecting the values of South-South cooperation and co-development.

The participating Foreign Ministers agreed to establish a national Task Force in each country to prepare and propose the operational modalities of this initiative. They also agreed to finalize proposals to be submitted to His Majesty King Mohammed VI and His brothers, the Heads of State of Burkina Faso, the Republic of Mali, the Republic of Niger, and the Republic of Chad, for their utmost attention.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the ministers expressed their gratitude to His Majesty King Mohammed VI for this initiative and for the Kingdom of Morocco's offer to make its road, port, and rail infrastructure available to the Sahel States to enhance their participation in international trade.

The Royal Initiative to facilitate access for Sahel countries to the Atlantic Ocean was announced in the Royal Speech to the Nation on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the Green March, in which the Sovereign stated, "To facilitate access for the Sahel States to the Atlantic Ocean, we propose launching an international initiative," adding that "Morocco is ready to provide its road, port, and rail infrastructure to support this initiative." His Majesty also emphasized that "for such a proposal to succeed, it is essential to upgrade the infrastructure of the Sahel States and connect them to the transportation and communication networks established in their regional environment."

BRICS /

# Economic Implications of the Accession of Egypt and Ethiopia



Since August 2023, both African countries, Egypt and Ethiopia were invited alongside Arabia Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Iran at the 15th BRICS summit which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. It was a call to these two countries to join the group.

Originally composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, the BRICS, an important platform for cooperation among emerging markets and developing countries, have received numerous membership requests in recent years. Ethiopia and Egypt were welcomed by the bloc of emerging par-

ties as new members on January 1, 2024, alongside Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Argentina. The entry of these two African countries into the BRICS stemmed from a selection process among more than 23 applications submitted during the 15th summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August 2023.

Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa, with 123 million inhabitants, and one of the most dynamic economies in the world during the 2010s. Egypt, home to the headquarters of the Arab League, is a significant player on the diplomatic stage. Nevertheless, Egypt's membership

provides a geostrategic advantage to the BRICS due to its access to the Suez Canal. This artificial waterway facilitates nearly 12% of global trade. Egypt collected \$8.6 billion in customs duties during the fiscal year 2022-2023, demonstrating the economic interest in access to the canal.

Moreover, leaders overseeing the development of the Suez Canal economic zone have shown interest in projects in cooperation with various BRICS members. Discussions between Egypt and Brazil are underway regarding the implementation of measures to accelerate the production and use of green fuel to decarbonize

industrial and maritime activities. This could potentially alleviate concerns raised by Brazil regarding the accession of new members to the BRICS.

The official international reaction to the expansion of the BRICS economic grouping is rather modest. The United States, a long-standing economically of Egypt, asserts that they do not view the group as a geopolitical rival. They even plan to continue their existing relationships with the new members, as well as with members already within the BRICS, such as Brazil, India, and South Africa.

It should be noted that the selection of members is not based on specific conditions like those for the European Union. Each new member is selected according to the interests of the BRICS, and the reasons can only be presumed. Criteria for selecting new members remain guarded.

There is still ambiguity surrounding the criteria for selecting new BRICS members. While the exact criteria governing the selection of new entrants have not been disclosed by the BRICS powers, Jean Louis Boillot, President of the Institute of International and Strategic Relations (Iris), told an international press body that the ad hoc committee of experts created to define the criteria had identified three: "respect for the initial balance between command economy military regimes and market economy democratic regimes; geographical distribution; the desire to move towards a multipolar, de-dollarized order."

Despite not sharing goals similar to multilateral organizations such as the United Nations or the World Bank, the principle behind the grouping is still oriented towards the economic development of its members. Even before the accession of new members, the BRICS represent over 40% of the world's population and nearly one-third of the world economy.

## Is potential for economic influence an asset?

The BRICS, an economic organization born in 2009 in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, have emphasized their economic dimension more strongly on the eve of the Johannesburg summit. The bloc reaffirmed its commitment to usher in a new world order, to expand the influence of the "Global South." Reading between the lines of recent developments, orientations, positions, and ambitions displayed by the bloc in recent years, some analysts believe that the priority choice of Ethiopia and Egypt in Africa primarily responds to economic and geostrategic motives,

## ***The future plans of the BRICS and their growing influence on the global economy remain subjects worthy of attention for international actors. However, China's objectives...***

considering that some candidate countries like Algeria - which had positioned themselves to join the bloc this year - were rejected.

"The economic expansion criteria have been much more important precisely because the BRICS are primarily an economic bloc," says international economist Pape Demba Thiam. "It is the capacity for economic influence that determines the presence of countries in the BRICS. It is about their capacity to polarize economic activities and spread economic opportunities around these countries," he explains.

The two African countries, Ethiopia

and Egypt, now enhance African presence within the BRICS alongside South Africa. A choice made among several African candidacies is not insignificant. To understand the reasons, according to experts, one would need to consider the geostrategic positioning of these countries, their economic scope, and their monetary independence. Not all BRICS members share the same view on the integration of new members. China, the country most eager to push for inclusion of new members, also has the highest GDP within the group, accounting for 70% of the total.

India harbors distrust towards the hidden intentions behind Chinese ambition and questions the reasons for its desire to include new members. Nonetheless, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserts that there are positives in the accession of new members that could give new impetus to the collective efforts of the BRICS.

Brazil, on the other hand, fears that this expansion will lead to the dilution of its influence internationally and within the group.

## BRICS Outlook

The future plans of the BRICS and their growing influence on the global economy remain subjects worthy of attention on the international stage. However, China's objectives deserve particular attention in connection with the new memberships, as access to the Suez Canal is part of its Belt and Road Initiative, allowing for the creation of "the new Silk Road." The acronym BRICS was originally used to define large, rapidly growing middle-income countries at the beginning of the 21st century. According to economist Jim O'Neill, Brazil, Russia, India, and China "could become the world's leading economic powers by 2050."

By Ferdinand Gade

## UEMOA FINANCIAL MARKET

# Custody of securities of the Central Depository/Settlement Bank reaches 19,140 billion FCFA in 2023



**The Central Depository/Settlement Bank (DC/BR) of the Union West African Economic and Monetary (UEMOA) saw its centralized custody of securities reach 19,140 billion francs CFA at the end of 2023, compared to 17,861 billion CFA francs in 2022, an increase of 7.16%.**

The announcement was made on Thursday, January 18, 2024, by the Director-General of the Central Depository/Clearing Bank, Birahim Diouf, during the annual meeting with stakeholders of the Regional Financial Market at the new headquarters of the DC/BR in Abidjan-

Plateau.

Facing the Professional Associations of Management and Financial Intermediation Companies of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (APSGI/UEMOA) and the Banks Holding Custodian Accounts of the UEMOA (APBTCC/UEMOA), Mr. Diouf presented the 2023 assessment of the institution's activities and its 2024 prospects. Close to 50 participants attended the meeting, both in person and online. The APBTCC was represented by President Marie-Antoinette N'Zebo and the APSGI by its Executive Director, Soualiou Fadiga. The Director-General emphasized

the essential role of the DC/BR in the Regional Financial Market ecosystem since the beginning of its operations in 1998 before recalling the missions of the financial institution of the Union, notably centralized securities custody for management and intermediation companies, custodian banks, and issuers.

The assessment reveals that the DC/BR distributed a total amount of 1,929 billion FCFA in 2023, compared to 1,497 billion FCFA in 2022, for the payment of dividends, interests, and bond capital repayment, representing a 28.83% increase.

"We are delighted with this remar-

kable progression of activities, particularly off-market activity, which demonstrates the commitment and dynamism of the DC/BR and its members. This reflects our commitment to providing quality services to our members and maintaining our reputation for excellence," declared the Director-General of the DC/BR.

Regarding the distribution of dividends by sector, the financial sector leads with 45.05%, or 85 billion CFA francs, followed by public services with 36.95%, or 69 billion CFA francs. Agriculture and industry contributed 7.44% (14 billion CFA francs) and 4.83% (9 billion CFA francs) respectively. Finally, the distribution and transportation sectors complete the total with 5.06% (9 billion CFA francs) and 0.67% (1 billion CFA francs) respectively.

For the 2024 prospects, the DC/BR plans to develop a comprehensive product offering for the financial ecosystem, based on Swift standards. This includes finalizing the digitalization project of Public Call for Savings operations and continuing the coding of financial instruments. Additionally, the DC/BR will undertake efforts to establish a collateral management offer for repo operations, securities pledging, etc.

Participants discussed the automation and digitalization of DC/BR operations, the establishment of a documentary exchange system between the DC/BR and market actors, and interconnection with central depositories of the Economic Community of West African States and the continent.

Management of shareholder registers of non-listed companies, launching the DC/BR website, organizing CSR activities, meetings with journalists, and professional banking associations are also on the list of activities' prospects for 2024, along with client account registration and adjustment of the Settlement/Delivery cycle from T+3 to T+2.



This meeting was an opportunity for the President of the Professional Association of Banks Holding Custodian Accounts of the UEMOA (APBTCC/UEMOA), Marie-Antoinette N'Zebo, to announce the organization this year of the General Assembly of her structure, the opening of projects related to the AELP and online trading in collaboration with the APSGI.

On the other hand, the Executive Director of the Professional Association of Management and Financial Intermediation Companies of the UEMOA (APSGI/

UEMOA), Souliou Fadiga, announced the reinforcement of the association's organization with the arrival of human resources and new, more functional offices to facilitate activities. He further indicated that his structure aims to work towards the professionalization and certification of market actors.

Lastly, in terms of market promotion, Mr. Fadiga announced the upcoming organization of a Salon for which he sought the participation of the DC/BR.

The DC/BR is the Central Depository of securities in the UEMOA, headquartered in Abidjan, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. It centralizes the custody of securities for its members, ensures the completion of settlement/delivery operations following stock transactions, and payment of events on securities. As a full member of the Association of National Numbering Agency (ANNA), it ensures the coding of securities in the UEMOA. The DC/BR was established in 1996 and effectively commenced operations on September 16, 1998.

***The DC/BR distributed a total amount of 1,929 billion CFA francs in 2023 compared to 1,497 billion CFA francs in 2022, for the payment of dividends, interests, and the repayment of the principal of bonds.***

By Valery FOUNGBE

# THE GUEST





## DR ABOUBAKAR NACANABO, MINISTER OF ECONOMY, FINANCE, AND PROSPECTIVE OF BURKINA FASO

# " Fight against poverty and control of public debt are first and foremost the responsibility of States."

The top official in charge of the Economy in Burkina Faso actively participated in the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF in Marrakech in late 2023. He addressed several issues regarding the economy of his country, the African continent, and the world.

Interview with an African Official on the Role of the IMF and World Bank in Africa's Development.

**The meetings organized by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are held in a consistently challenging context, especially for African countries facing inflation, exploding public debt, lack of financing, poverty, and more. In your view, what can the World Bank and the IMF do to reverse this trend?**

The World Bank and the IMF, through their mandates and relationships with African countries, are key players in seeking solutions to development challenges. They are international financial institutions that play a crucial role in managing global economic challenges, including those faced by many African countries.

To reverse the trend of problems such as inflation, exploding public debt, lack of financing, and pover-

***World Bank and IMF are two key international financial institutions.***

ty, these institutions can implement several measures: It should be noted that debt management, financing, and poverty reduction are primarily the responsibility of the States. This management primarily involves mobilizing domestic resources, manifested through the efforts of the States. The contribution of these institutions supplements and cannot replace the efforts of the States. Specifically on financing, these two institutions, given their position, could lead other financial

partners in line with the fundamental principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, including alignment and harmonization. Indeed, we believe that alignment with the development objectives of the States, consideration of local systems, and simplification of procedures should accelerate the efficient implementation of development projects and programs, thereby satisfying the needs of beneficiary populations and local communities.

They should increase the resources available to the least developed countries by providing significant concessional grants or loans and better distribution of SDR allocations with the aim of precisely supporting these countries to finance budget deficits largely related to internal and external shocks.

Moreover, the two institutions could also support states in mobilizing innovative financing (climate green fund, adaptation); facilitate the strengthening of South-South cooperation for better sharing of experiences and skills among African countries; strengthen their support for private sector promotion in support of government policies in this sector.

Finally, they can support investment in human capital develop-

ment by supporting projects aimed at improving access to education, health, clean water, and other essential social services, thereby contributing to poverty reduction.

**For a long time, voices have been raised in Africa demanding a rebalancing of the IMF and the World Bank by granting a third seat on the IMF board of directors. How would such a reorganization better benefit Africa?**

Granting Africa, specifically Sub-Saharan Africa, a third seat on the IMF Board of Directors would strengthen the participation and voice of African countries in global economic decisions, promote economic development in the region, and enhance cooperation among African nations. This would contribute to better representation and greater equity in the international financial system.

Frequent criticisms of the IMF suggest that its interventions in African countries, which are heavily dependent on its financing, have worsened poverty and debt in the aided countries by eliminating or reducing the ability of these States to intervene. What do you think about this?

Your question leads me to talk about Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and their harmful consequences for our countries. It is true that SAPs, propelled by the IMF, have led to the privatization of many state-owned enterprises. In general, these programs have contributed to reducing the ability of States to intervene in certain key areas of economic and social life. It is worth noting that these SAPs were underpinned by an ultra-capitalist vision that did not always correspond to the realities of the States on the ground,



where practically everything was to be built or almost, and the private sector was almost non-existent. Despite some macroeconomic performances achieved, the result of this phase of implementing the "Washington Consensus" over this period was catastrophic

***Africa has undertaken significant reforms aimed at strengthening governance and improving the living conditions of its populations.***

for many developing countries socio-economically.

Rightly so, you will recall the famous work of Joseph E. STIGLITZ, "The Great Disillusionment" published in 2002. It is this period that undoubtedly left its mark on minds and justifies the criticisms addressed to the institution. However, it seems to me that the IMF is learning from these past experiences to improve its relations with African states and peoples, who often see it more as a gendarme than as a supportive and supportive institution. However, this judgment cannot endorse a delegation of responsibility of African leaders in the choices made in the past; insofar as the beneficiary countries are members of the IMF and therefore stakeholders in the decisions taken at the level of the institution. Indeed, any IMF operation in a

country is negotiated and approved by the parties concerned. As such, States are accountable for the beneficial or harmful effects of these operations. It is therefore up to policymakers to take responsibility for signing agreements and programs that are beneficial to their citizens.

### **What measures need to be taken to welcome change responsibly and derive benefits from it while mitigating its main risks?**

Faced with these major challenges, significant reforms must be undertaken to strengthen governance, reduce poverty, work for the empowerment of women, and create jobs for young people. In addition, mechanisms for the prevention and management of crises must be developed. Regarding changes related to digitization and the increased use of artificial intelligence, the content and instruments developed must be adapted to realities, cultures, and the promotion of good manners.

To this end, as measures to be taken, it will be necessary to define a conducive regulatory framework guaranteeing respect for ethics policies; invest in research and development of digital infrastructures adapted to both social and economic needs; invest in the development of local expertise and digital skills; develop values and knowledge for effective integration of individuals into the digital society; strengthen international cooperation to address global challenges posed by these changes.

### **Finally, what faces would you like to see the IMF and the World Bank wear at the end of this summit?**

Our expectations are numerous but specifically we can retain some



important aspects that African States hope to see at the end of the Annual Meetings.

It includes, among others:

- A strengthened partnership and dialogue: the IMF and the World Bank must be active and engaged partners in meaningful and constructive dialogue with African governments. They must take into account the needs, priorities, and specific realities of each African country, especially countries in fragile situations;
- Debt reduction: it is important that the IMF and the World Bank continue to support initiatives to reduce the debt of African countries, especially in the context of crises. This could include calls for a re-evaluation of debt sustainability criteria and more substantial debt reduction measures;
- Access to more resources and affordable financing: The IMF and

the World Bank should continue to provide financing on favorable terms, with low-interest rates and flexible repayment periods, to help countries cope with internal crises and external shocks that negatively affect countries' ability to finance their economies. Their role in stimulating economic development in countries must be prominent;

- Participation of African countries: Finally, African States wish to be actively involved in the decision-making processes of these institutions. This could involve reforms to give more weight to African countries within these institutions. The voice of African countries must be more heard.

**Interview done By  
Samirat Ntiaze  
and Sylvestre Tetchiada**



**MR. BOUM III JR IS THE CO-FOUNDER AND CEO OF DABA FINANCE**

# "Daba Finance aims to revolutionize investment in Africa"

**Categorized as the first end-to-end investment platform dedicated to the African continent, "Daba Finance" works to revolutionize investment in Africa by giving individuals and institutions the opportunity to play significant roles in investment in terms of economic opportunities. In this interview, the co-founder and CEO of Daba Finance, Mr. Boum III Jr, a Cameroonian citizen of African origin, reveals the immense opportunities offered by this unique modern tool.**

**Our readers would be delighted to get to know you better**

My name is Boum III Jr, an African citizen of Cameroonian origin. I am the co-founder and CEO of Daba Finance, the first end-to-end investment platform dedicated to the African continent. Daba Finance aims to revolutionize investment in Africa by making transparent and accessible to everyone, individuals and institutions alike, the opportunity to invest in the immense economic opportunities of the continent. I worked as a Fintech software engineer at Nasdaq, focusing on creating investment intelligence, analysis, and capital allocation tools for institutional investors, asset managers, and

investment consultants investing in public and private markets in the United States and Europe. I also hold an MBA focused on finance, strategy, and innovation from the University Of Chicago Booth School Of Business in the USA, one of the top-ranked MBA programs in the world.

***Our mission: democratize investment in Africa...***

**A course undoubtedly very attractive. But tell us, it's what DaBa finances and what is its target?**

Daba Finance is a unified investment platform with the mission to democratize investment in Africa and address the glaring lack of liquidity and reliable information in this field. In practical terms, Daba Finance offers a range of technological solutions, enabling individuals and investment companies to invest and grow their wealth across multiple asset classes on the African continent. The tar-

get audience is very diverse, ranging from individual investors to multinational corporations and investment funds.

**In your opinion, what would be the best financing tool for an aspiring entrepreneur?**

In my opinion, the best financing tool for an aspiring entrepreneur is the one that allows them to retain control of their vision while accessing the capital they need to develop their business. That's why Daba Finance offers a wide range of financing options tailored to the specific needs of each entrepreneur, whether its equity stakes, traditional loans, or equity investments. The goal is truly to provide customized solutions.

**In this New Year, what are the prospects for DaBa Finance?**

In this New Year, Daba Finance's ambition is to become the leading technological platform for everything related to investment in Africa. We aim to democratize investment and wealth creation across the entire continent to contribute to the emergence of a prosperous Africa. The continent is currently experiencing dynamic growth, and Daba Finance intends to play a leading role in structuring African financial markets.



## PROFESSOR JACQUES-FRANÇOIS MAVOUNGOU, RECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LIBREVILLE BERTHE ET JEAN (UIL-BJ) IN GABON

# “To parents, I send a vibrant appeal to come and entrust their children to us without reservation and without complexes”

**Mr. Rector, this year is special for your university, can you tell us the reason for this particularity?**

Thank you Sir, for taking your precious time to come and visit us at ESSASSA, in our beautiful and prestigious university which remains open to all nations as its name indicates. International University of Libreville Berthe and Jean for short (UIL-BJ).

I would like to take this opportunity to say that our university is made up of 5 establishments which are: 1. Faculty of Law and Political Sciences (FDSP); 2. Polytechnic School of Libreville (EPL); 3. Higher Institute of Management and Applied Economics (ISGEA); 4. Karl Kabangoye Biomedical Research Institute (IRBK); 5. School of Medicine and Pharmacy (EMP). Alongside these establishments we have a Doctoral School which brings together doctoral training in legal sciences, management and economics.

All this to say that the UIL-BJ is there to welcome high school graduates to train them and lead them towards the acquisition of skills through their engineering diplomas, Masters and Doctorates to enter the world of work.

The partnership being at the heart of our development strategy, we have set up in Libreville with the University of Quebec in Montreal, a training offer, the Executive MBA which allows executives from the private and public sector to perfect their training and increase their managerial and management capacities. All training takes place at

UIL-BJ.

So, to answer your question, the year 2024 is special for us because it is the date of our tenth anniversary. 10 years of existence for a university is still a good age, it is also an important milestone in the progressive construction of our university.

This is the time to take stock, self-evaluate to identify the strong

***Ten years of existence for a university is still a remarkable milestone...***

points to consolidate and the weak points, on which we must work to be part of the dynamic of continuous improvement.

**After ten years of activity, can we say that your university is at the firmament of its existence? What are the prospects?**

As I said earlier, after ten years of existence, we must first give thanks to God through whom all things are possible.

We thank Dr Marie Madeleine MBORANTSUO, President of the Berthe and Jean International Institution, who is a Patron for us. We thank him for his works in favor of the greatest number and salute his vision, the materialization of which makes it possible to put in place the infrastructures to teach and educate children in order to give them a destiny. In summary, his efforts serve to free humans from the yoke of ignorance, which causes a lot of problems and damage in our nations. The prospects of the UIL BJ are to continue the work of building infrastructure, diversifying training offers adapted to the needs of our societies, because the UIL has a vocation to serve nations across the continent and beyond of the continent by providing countries with well-trained executives.

**What particular message do you want to send to your parents, to your students but especially to the Gabonese and Africans who read you?**

To parents, I send a vibrant appeal to come and entrust their children to us without reservation and without complexes, because at UIL we are going to train them to transform them so that they are high-performance executives in companies. And model citizens because they will have integrated our motto, interpersonal skills, know-how.

**Interview done By  
S. Ntiaze at Libreville**



**HUMAN TECHNOLOGY  
FOUNDATION**

**ETHICAL TECHNOLOGIES  
FOR A CONNECTED,  
HUMAN & SUSTAINABLE  
SOCIETY**



**HUMAN  
TECHNOLOGY  
FOUNDATION**

**2024**



# About us

The Human Technology Foundation, founded in 2012, is an international think tank that places human beings at the core of technological development.

Technological advances (AI, Metaverse, Blockchain, IoT, Web3...) are transforming the way we study, work, get information, interact and, more globally, live.

Our foundation brings together public and private decision-makers, researchers and representatives of the academic world, all of whom are committed to making the technologies we use, beneficial tools for humankind, which must contribute to building a more inclusive, sustainable and respectful society for everyone.

Indeed, while most technologies are neither good nor bad in themselves, they are not neutral either: they carry an intentionality and a vision of the human being that we must constantly question.

With this in mind, the Human Technology Foundation is committed to putting digital ethics back at the heart of public debate and corporate concerns, with several fundamental questions to which we are trying to provide answers.

- How can we make technology a driver of sustainability?
- What kind of society are we leaving to future generations?
- How can we make technology a lever for social and economic inclusion?



An international network with offices in Paris, Montreal, San Francisco, Geneva, Brussels & Rome.



Two working groups per year.  
The topics for 2024:  
Generative Artificial Intelligence and Digital Identity.

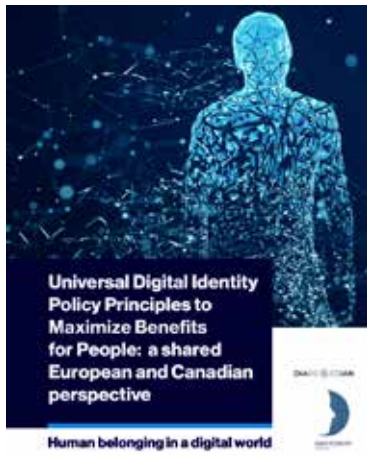
# Join Us

## Why join us?

- Participate in research in practical ethics
- Get involved in the public debate on major and key issues for our society: child safety online, TECH FOR GOOD, democracy.
- Contribute to the development of more inclusive and responsible technologies
- Be part of an international, human-centered tech community
- Drawing up concrete and applicable recommendations for businesses
- Anticipate the risks posed by the use of digital tools



# Our studies



The Human Technology Foundation brings together business leaders, technology experts and public officials to define concrete recommendations in order to make technology a tool at the service of our society and humanity.

Our Foundation leads working groups that meet once a month for an average of 6 months, defining recommendations and best practices for companies and helping to shape public policy.

In addition, the Human Technology Foundation works directly with its partners' teams to help them identify solutions to their company's specific challenges.

At the end of the reflection cycle, our foundation publishes a report or white paper and organizes an event to present its recommendations and proposals.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

# Pledge of the Future of Education in Africa

Education, a fundamental pillar for development and human progress, is recognized as a universal right. It constitutes a crucial lever for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations, which aim to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. This recognition of the importance of education resonates particularly in Morocco, where His Majesty the King declared "education the second national priority after territorial integrity." This declaration not only underscores Morocco's commitment to strengthening its education system but also reflects the growing awareness among African governments of the crucial importance of education.

In Africa, a continent of contrasts and immense potential, the challenge of providing quality education to all is both urgent and complex. It is no coincidence that the African Union, aware of this situation, declared 2024 as the Year of Education in Africa. The cultural diversity, economic disparities, and geopolitical challenges on the continent, both unique and global, make the goal of accessible and quality education even more imperative. The Moroccan example, which places education at the heart of its national priorities, inspires a continental vision where education is seen not only as a fundamental right but also as a cornerstone of economic and social development and stability. In this context, African countries are called upon to

redouble their efforts to strengthen their education systems by adopting inclusive policies and integrating innovative technologies like artificial intelligence to meet the educational needs of their growing and diverse populations.

A holistic approach to education: The Tamkine Equation for Qualitative Improvement of Education

The quality of education, a crucial pillar for the development of any society, can only be optimized through a holistic approach that takes into account the complexity and interdependence of the various actors in the educational ecosystem. This comprehensive vision is crucial because education is not solely the responsibility of educational institutions but a collaborative process involving multiple stakeholders. This reality is particularly relevant in Africa, where educational challenges are often exacerbated by factors such

***The integration of artificial intelligence into African educational systems is a necessity to meet the demands of an ever-changing world and to ensure a prosperous future for the continent.***

as cultural diversity, economic disparities, and geopolitical challenges.

The Tamkine Foundation, a non-governmental organization based in Rabat, Morocco, has developed and implemented an innovative approach, highlighting the crucial role of each actor in this ecosystem. This approach, which is highly relevant in the African context, emphasizes the importance of interaction and collaboration among all stakeholders, each contributing in its own way to the construction of a resilient, inclusive, and Africa-tailored education system in the 21st century.

By working together, these actors can transform education in Africa, making it not only a fundamental right accessible to all but also a driver of both personal and societal development. While being a solution to the educational challenge in Africa, given its holistic nature, the Tamkine Equation, relying on the implementation of its programs through information and communication technologies, cannot overlook the importance of Artificial Intelligence in its quest for qualitative improvement of education.

### **AI: Reinforcing the Holistic Approach to Education in Africa**

Africa, with its unique educational challenges such as lack of infrastructure, access disparities, and sometimes obsolete teaching methods, is seeking innovative solutions; artificial intelligence emerges as a promising response to these challenges. Integrated into the equation, AI offers opportunities for personalized learning, optimization of



educational resources, and continuous teacher training.

**Personalized learning:** With AI, it is possible to adapt educational material to the needs and pace of each student, thereby fostering better understanding and increased knowledge retention. Intelligent systems can analyze student performance and preferences to offer customized learning paths.

**Access to resources:** AI facilitates access to quality educational resources, especially for remote or underserved communities. For example, through AI-powered online learning platforms, students in remote regions have access to courses and materials that would otherwise be inaccessible.

**Teacher training:** AI also provides tools for teacher training and professional development, enabling them to stay at the forefront of innovative teaching methods and improve their teaching skills.

Case studies across the continent already demonstrate the positive impact

of AI in education. For example, in some African countries, AI programs have been implemented to facilitate language learning, mathematical understanding, and even to identify and support students with special needs. Also, substantial savings of financial and material resources are achievable through the adoption of responsible and ethical AI. Indeed, students, teachers, and each variable in the equation have access to expertise, experiences, and means (VR, AR, etc.) through creative and innovative integration into the educational process.

The integration of artificial intelligence into African education systems is not just an opportunity but a necessity to meet the demands of an ever-changing world and to ensure a prosperous future for the continent. However, it is necessary to demystify AI while encouraging collaboration among different actors in the educational ecosystem and adopting innovative approaches. This is essential to enable Africa to

transform its educational challenges into growth and development opportunities.

### Demystification of AI: a Necessity in Africa

For the successful integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into education, it is crucial to demystify this technology and establish a common understanding, especially in an African context where access to and familiarity with advanced technologies may vary considerably. AI, often shrouded in myths and misconceptions, is sometimes perceived as a panacea and also as a threat or a distant concept rather than as a valuable educational tool capable of transforming education.

In response to this perception, the Tamkine Foundation has taken the initiative to change this narrative by focusing on education and awareness-raising. Recognizing the importance of breaking psychological barriers and



biases surrounding AI, the Foundation has embarked on a series of initiatives aimed at educating and informing not only education professionals but also the general public.

To date, the Foundation has organized seven hybrid international conferences that have played a crucial role in disseminating a precise and nuanced understanding of AI. These conferences, covering themes such as "Transforming Education in the AI Era," "Regulating Artificial Intelligence (AI and Ethics)," and "Education in the Metaverse," have highlighted the potential benefits of AI in education. They have provided platforms where researchers, educators, policymakers, and technology experts could share ideas, experiences, and best practices, helping to create constructive dialogue around the integration of AI into educational systems.

These conferences have also addressed key issues such as privacy protection, ethics in AI, and the importance of creating inclusive and accessible AI systems. By focusing on these aspects, the Tamkine Foundation has contributed to shedding light on possible paths

for a responsible and ethical integration of AI into education, emphasizing that the adoption of these technologies must be accompanied by profound reflection on their social and ethical implications.

Furthermore, these conferences have served as a platform to present case studies and successful examples of AI integration in education in Africa, demonstrating how these technologies can be adapted to local contexts and used to overcome the continent's specific challenges. They have emphasized the importance of developing AI solutions tailored to African educational needs, taking into account linguistic, cultural, and infrastructural realities.

The efforts of the Tamkine Foundation to demystify AI and promote its understanding among various stakeholders in the African educational ecosystem are an important step toward realizing the potential of these technologies to improve access to quality education and prepare young Africans for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Through its initiatives and conferences, the Tamkine Foundation is pioneering

in this transformation. By continuing its holistic approach to qualitative education transformation, informing and training skills, and supporting the integration of AI into education; by opening up to international expertise and experiences in a collaborative, inclusive, and partnership-based dynamic, the Foundation aims to contribute to shaping a future where every young African has access to quality education, enriched and enhanced by technological advances.

The future of education in Africa stands at the crossroads of innovation and tradition. By adopting a holistic approach, integrating information and communication technologies, and embracing a responsible and ethical approach to artificial intelligence as proposed by the Tamkine equation for qualitative improvement in education, the continent can not only overcome its current challenges but also become a leader in the adoption of advanced educational technologies. Commitment to this vision is not only an investment in education but also a guarantee for the future of Africa.



**LaRAD**

Laboratoire de Recherches et  
d'Actions Diplomatiques

# 2<sup>ème</sup> SOMMET

**SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES FEMMES  
ET DES JEUNES EN AFRIQUE EN MARGE  
DE LA 79<sup>ÈME</sup> SESSION DE L'ASSEMBLÉE  
GÉNÉRALE DES NATIONS UNIES  
(#S2FJA2024)**

 **NEW YORK**

 **25 & 26  
SEPT 2024**



**Pour toute inscription et informations complémentaires,  
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# REJUVINATING EFFORTS TO WIN THE FIGHT AGAINST NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

Over the past decade, Africa has made remarkable strides in the battle against Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs). So far, 19 countries have eliminated at least one NTD, with the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting 18 million fewer people needing interventions. In 2022, the Republic of Togo emerged as a beacon of hope, eliminating four NTDs – Guinea-worm disease, elephantiasis, sleeping sickness, and trachoma. WHO indicates Guinea worm disease is near eradication, sleeping sickness has been eliminated in seven countries, and reported Buruli ulcer cases dropped by 71% from 2010 to 2021.

These milestones not only demonstrate Africa's resilience against NTDs, but also fuel hope, bringing us closer than ever to overcoming these devastating diseases. However, Africa still carries 40% of global NTD cases. Inadequate funding, particularly linked to the ongoing global financial crisis, limited integration into national health programmes, and the threat of climate change cast a shadow over the sustained progress. Our goal to control, eliminate, and eradicate NTDs demands strengthened resolve to address this diverse group of diseases affecting the most impoverished communities with women and children suffering the brunt of the impact.

## **Making the fight against NTDs more sustainable**

The national NTD programmes across our continent are predominantly reliant on external donor funding. The volatility brought on by recent glo-

bal challenges, including the unpredictability and shrinkage of funding linked to both the COVID-19 pandemic and the global economic downturn underscores the need for new and groundbreaking financing mechanisms. Sustained political commitment and action must be spearhead for innovative health financing to complement the crucial support from our existing international partners, which has been fundamental in achieving current successes against NTDs. This collaborative effort is not only crucial

***Sustainable political commitment and action must spearhead innovative health financing to complement the crucial support from our international partners.***

to sustaining the momentum realised over decades but, more importantly, to extending wins toward the elimination of all NTDs.

## **The time is now for African leaders to take center stage**

The time has come for African leaders play a central role in driving country leadership and ownership of national NTD programmes as well as translation of commitments

into concrete action. At COP28 in Dubai in December 2023, during the Reaching the Last Mile Forum, commitments totaling \$777 million were pledged. In a landmark moment, the United Republic of Tanzania and the Republic of Sierra Leone showcased their outstanding dedication to the fight against NTDs, committing to increasing their domestic contributions for combating NTDs. This exemplary move establishes a laudable precedent for leaders across the African continent.

National governments are duty-bound to step up their investments in NTD programmes. Beyond traditional budgetary allocations, exploring innovative funding such as through taxation models becomes essential. We must leverage the potential of cross-sectoral collaboration, embracing a holistic societal approach that unites the private sector, civil society organizations, religious institutions and youth, to consolidate their collective strengths and effort against NTDs. A pioneering example emerges in my own country, Guinea Bissau, where we launched Africa's first integrated End Malaria and NTD council. This initiative aims to coordinate multisectoral action and mobilise domestic resources against these diseases, setting another remarkable precedent for the continent. I am delighted to share that several other countries across the continent are also working to launch their End Malaria and NTD councils this year!

## **Investment in NTDs is a win for equity and Universal Health Coverage**

In our pursuit of advancing glo-



Integrated Malaria / NTDs\_Scorecard  
Oct - December 2022

District	(1) Proportion of STH	(2) Number of Schisto cases	(3) Rabies deaths	(4) Snake bites cases OPD	(7) Malaria proportional morbidity	(8) Coverage of LLINs in EPI	(9) Coverage of LLINs in ANC	(10) Malaria Incidence	(11) Proportion of severe malaria to total malaria cases
Bugesera District	1.8%	4	0	65	1.6%	102%	100%	23	0.2%
Burera District	26.6%	40	0	8	0.5%	99%	98%	3	1.2%
Gakenke District	9.8%	0	0	10	1.1%	100%	100%	13	0.1%
Gasabo District	1.0%	1	0	32	5.1%	84%	57%	37	0.2%
Gatsibo District	2.4%	6	0	13	0.2%	100%	100%	3	0.1%
Gicumbi District	16.3%	1	0	108	1.8%	101%	100%	29	0.2%
Gisagara District	6.0%	9	0	18	2.9%	98%	100%	20	0.3%
Huye District	17.7%	2	0	2	0.3%	100%	100%	6	0.0%
Kamonyi District	3.0%	0	0	2	0.6%	95%	99%	8	0.3%
Karongi District	16.7%	0	0	8	1.5%	100%	97%	13	0.5%
Kayanza District	1.4%	9	0	10	0.3%	102%	100%	3	0.2%
Kicukiro District	8.7%	1	0	68	4.2%	91%	89%	29	0.3%
Kirehe District	2.4%	0	0	260	0.5%	99%	97%	5	0.2%
Muhanga District	10.1%	0	0	6	1.5%	118%	98%	19	0.1%
Musanze District	14.7%	1	0	14	0.5%	97%	91%	4	0.9%
Ngoma District	3.2%	1	0	185	0.1%	100%	100%	1	1.2%
Ngororero District	22.8%	0	0	0	2.2%	99%	100%	13	0.3%
Nyabihu District	30.1%	0	0	1	0.4%	100%	98%	2	1.0%
Nyagatare District	10.4%	1	0	3	1.0%	100%	99%	10	0.2%
Nyamagabe Distr	32.0%	0	0	7	2.6%	101%	100%	28	0.1%
Nyamasheke Dist	16.7%	2	0	40	1.4%	100%	99%	23	0.2%
Nyanza District	13.0%	3	0	1	0.7%	98%	89%	7	0.2%
Nyarugenge Distr	1.0%	2	0	28	1.7%	89%	76%	20	0.1%
Nyaruguru District	29.2%	0	0	0	1.9%	120%	104%	24	0.1%
Rubavu District	28.9%	3	0	8	0.5%	95%	98%	4	0.8%
Ruhango District	8.9%	0	0	4	0.2%	100%	100%	5	0.2%
Rulindo District	14.5%	0	0	1	2.0%	124%	100%	19	0.3%
Rusizi District	12.3%	5	0	6	0.9%	103%	100%	12	0.4%
Rutsiro District	33.7%	34	0	3	2.2%	102%	100%	21	0.2%
Rwamagana Distr	5.3%	0	0	11	0.5%	100%	100%	7	0.1%

bal health equity and Universal Health Coverage (UHC), the WHO's investment case for NTDs reveals a multifaceted opportunity. It is not just about treating diseases; it is an investment in strengthening health systems and reinforcing community resilience. With 40% of the global burden, affecting around 600 million individuals, NTDs unfairly burden marginalised populations in Africa. The existence of cost-effective interventions holds the promise to end needless suffering and prevent the pervasive impact of NTDs. By doing so, communities can thrive socially and pursue economic opportunities

without interruption. Moreover, the individuals and communities grappling with NTDs are often the poorest and most marginalised, limiting their access to quality health services and obstructing their path to UHC. Our national governments must invest adequately in NTDs, aligning with the Continental Framework and African Common Position on NTDs, which calls for increased national funding to achieve the goal of elimination in Africa by 2030. We must also integrate NTD elimination into country efforts to achieve universal health coverage, address the threat

of climate change on health and ensure pandemic preparedness and response. This targeted investment aims to serve the most vulnerable groups, marking significant progress in our journey towards an Africa free of all NTDs by 2030. Furthermore, by diminishing the disease burden of NTDs, we can simultaneously alleviate poverty within our communities. This reduction will contribute to consolidating gains in critical areas such as hunger, education, gender equity, and inequality reduction, fostering economic growth across our nations. As African leaders, let us collectively commit to this trans-

formative agenda, paving the way for healthier, more resilient societies and propelling our continent toward sustained prosperity as envisioned through our collective aspirations in the Africa Health Strategy (2016-2030) and Agenda 2063.

### Let us embrace data for evidence informed policies and programmes through scorecards and digitalization

We must also recognize the role of digitalisation of data related to NTDs. This digital transformation enables more informed decision-making not only about NTDs but also broader health aspects. The integration of the NTD composite indicator into the ALMA scorecard is a prime example of this approach. By utilizing both continental and national NTD scorecard tools, we have been able to catalyze progress. These tools facilitate sustained accountability and action and have been instrumental in elevating the visibility of NTDs on a global, Africa and country scale. Country feedback indicates that the inclusion of the NTD indicator in the ALMA scorecard for accountability and action significantly increased the visibility of NTDs at country level, by increasing the attention of senior leadership to NTDs. This has resulted in increased resource allocations from both government and partners. Countries like Kenya, Rwanda and the Republic of the Congo considerably increased their domestic budgets between 2019 and 2023 while others like Malawi and Togo eliminated more than one NTD in the same period. In addition, we recognize the achievement of countries in improving NTD data and in integrating more NTD indicators into the existing Health Management Information Systems. In East Africa, Rwanda, Burundi and Kenya have already added more than 50% of their NTD indicators into their HMIS. This allows countries to access up to date data to drive real time decision making and action.

### Leveraging the One Health Approach

The Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) champions a holistic one-health approach, recognising the interconnectedness of health threats at the human-animal-environment nexus. In 2022, WHO unveiled the One Health Approach for Action Against NTDs, while the Kigali Summit echoed the need for a unified approach, emphasizing integrated efforts against NTDs and malaria. Further, the African Union's Continental Framework for NTD Control and Elimination by 2030 underscores coordination and harmonisation as catalysts for NTD elimination targets while the 2023 COP28, spotlighting health impacts of climate change, further solidified the call for integration. Our victories against NTDs are intricately tied to integrated strategies.

As such, the One Health Approach holds the key to unlocking greater

***This targeted investment aims to serve the most vulnerable groups, marking significant progress in our journey towards an Africa free from all neglected tropical diseases by 2030.***

success in our fight against NTDs. By recognising the broader system surrounding NTDs, beyond the human health sector, we can unveil new avenues for collaboration, efficiencies, and cost savings. In the face of some of the greatest challenges of our generation like climate change and pandemics such as COVID-19, this holistic approach is vital, providing an opportunity to strengthen surveillance, leverage data and tools

for coordinated response. It is time to shift from traditional silos to address diseases, especially NTDs, and open windows for greater impact across multiple spectrums of our communities.

### Let us Unite and Act to Eliminate NTDs

As we commemorate the fourth World NTD Day on 30th January, we not only celebrate our successes but also take note of the profound impact Neglected Tropical Diseases impose on our most marginalised populations. This day, our clarion call is to join hands at all levels to intensify and sustain efforts in the fight against NTDs.

Our triumphs over the last decade have shown us that NTDs are treatable, preventable, and well within our grasp for elimination. We must ride on the promising trajectory of this fight to propel more progress. Country ownership, essential for sustainable NTD programmes, coupled with investments in NTDs to promote equity and universal health coverage, lays the groundwork for success. Embracing digitalisation, and a one-health approach for collaboration across multiple disciplines and stakeholders further paves the way for achieving the WHO NTD Road Map goals, empowering each of us fulfill our role in delivering quality health services beyond NTD services to affected populations. By rallying together, we can reach the last mile, liberating Africa from the burden of NTDs for good.

Together, we can unite, act, and eliminate NTDs.



By HE PRESIDENT UMARO Sissoco Embaló President Of Guinea Bissau And Chair Of Alma



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نادي إفريقيا و التنمية

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