News: 02.28.2025

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28 February 2025

Controversial Moves by the Trump Administration to Scale Back Government

Sidney Shapiro and Joseph Tomain, writing for *The Conversation*, report that President Donald Trump has issued executive orders aimed at significantly reducing the size of the U.S. government, which include deep cuts to federal funding for scientific and medical research, freezing grants and loans for businesses, and deregulating medical insurance and other sectors. These actions have led to the firing of thousands of federal employees, including those in critical positions, resulting in operational paralysis across various government functions. The measures have sparked over 70 lawsuits, challenging the legality and constitutionality of the orders. Amidst these drastic changes, a new book titled "How Government Built America" argues for the historical and ongoing necessity of government regulation and funding in safeguarding public welfare and fostering economic stability, contrasting sharply with the current administration's efforts to dismantle federal oversight and support.

The Retreat from Globalization and Its Implications

All Africa reports that Donald Trump's MAGA campaign and similar movements reflect a growing ethnonationalism and a retreat from globalization, which has been blamed for deindustrialization in the West and economic disparities. The decline of multilateral trade liberalization, as critiqued by economist Jagdish Bhagwati, and the rise of plurilateral and bilateral agreements have further undermined global economic cooperation. This shift away from established international norms and the undermining of institutions like the WTO and Bretton Woods have eroded confidence in US-led economic structures. Moreover, Western policies, particularly contractionary monetary policies like interest rate hikes, have exacerbated global economic stagnation. Developing countries, feeling marginalized within this framework, are exploring independent monetary policies and rejecting Western economic prescriptions. The weaponization of trade and economic sanctions, particularly by the West, has also intensified, complicating global economic relations and threatening sustainable development.

South Africa Faces Trade Uncertainty with the US Under Trump Administration

All Africa reports that South Africa is grappling with potential economic disruptions due to the Trump administration's threats to cut ties, including ending the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) benefits, amidst disagreements over South Africa's land reform policies and international stances. AGOA has significantly aided South Africa's economy, particularly the automotive sector, which heavily relies on tariff-free access to the US market. The Trump administration's pivot towards reciprocal tariffs and reduction in aid has heightened concerns about job losses and economic shifts, prompting calls for reorienting the economy towards more sustainable and local production. With the US as a major trading partner, the outcome of these policies could force South Africa to seek new trade partnerships and reassess its economic strategies, amidst domestic policy challenges and global trade dynamics.

U.S. Absence at G-20 Meeting in South Africa Amid Strained Relations

According to *Africa News*, as South Africa hosts the first G-20 foreign ministers' meeting under its presidency, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio will not

attend, further highlighting the strained relations with Washington under President Trump's administration outlined in the above piece. This absence is seen as a significant setback, with experts like Professor Daniel Bradlow suggesting it could signal a shift in global governance dynamics, potentially allowing countries like China to fill the vacuum or prompting a reevaluation of international relations by middle powers. South Africa aims to use its G20 presidency to champion the interests of developing nations, focusing on solidarity, equality, and sustainability, particularly in debt refinancing and climate change mitigation.

Diplomatic Efforts Amidst Tensions Between Ethiopia and Somalia

Africa News reports that Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in Mogadishu to discuss strengthening bilateral relations despite recent tensions. These tensions escalated after Ethiopia leased coastline from Somaliland, planning to build a naval base and potentially recognizing Somaliland's independence, which Somalia opposed as a threat to its sovereignty. The leaders engaged in comprehensive talks covering trade and security, aimed at normalizing relations following mediation by Turkey. However, the security situation remains fragile, underscored by unexplained shelling in Mogadishu coinciding with the Ethiopian leader's arrival, amidst ongoing threats from the Islamist group al-Shabaab.

Kenya's Lamu Port Expansion and Regional Cooperation

All Africa reports that President William Ruto of Kenya announced a significant increase in activity at the Port of Lamu following an agreement with Ethiopia to use the facility for transshipment to the hinterland. This move is part of broader regional efforts to utilize Lamu as a key hub within the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) corridor. The port's first three modern berths are now operational, and the president encouraged local utilization to boost jobs and economic growth. Additionally, Ruto outlined multiple infrastructure and social projects, including housing and power connections, aimed at enhancing the development and integration of Lamu and surrounding areas, emphasizing the government's commitment to equitable national development and urging unity against tribal politics.

Strengthening Trade and Diplomatic Ties: Zimbabwe, Indonesia, and Kenya

Writing for *The Herald*, Zvamaida Murwira opines that trade between Zimbabwe and Indonesia has increased significantly under Zimbabwe's Second Republic, with exports, particularly tobacco, leading to a growth from $60 million to $93 million. The outgoing Indonesian Ambassador highlighted the deepening cooperation in sectors like health and agriculture, and discussed potential collaboration in lithium mining to support Indonesia's burgeoning electric vehicle battery production. Meanwhile, the Kenyan Ambassador reflected on her successful tenure, noting increased bilateral relations and collaboration on regional issues like conflict resolution in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Both countries have seen enhanced engagement, with Kenya increasing flights to Zimbabwe, boosting trade and tourism, and supporting Zimbabwe's re-engagement with international communities.

Nigeria Strengthens Trade and Investment Ties with UAE

According to *The Vanguard,* the Nigerian government is actively enhancing investment opportunities and trade relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other nations, as confirmed by Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment. Speaking at an Investopedia conference in the UAE, Oduwole detailed President Bola Tinubu's reforms which have stabilized the currency and improved fiscal policies, making Nigeria a more attractive investment destination. The minister emphasized the focus on sectors like construction, energy, and digital trade, and noted Nigeria's significant role under the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, leveraging its strong tech sector. With a commitment to sustainable and impact-driven investments, Nigeria aims to foster an enabling environment for business, driving regional trade and economic self-reliance.

Economic and Security Dynamics in West Africa: AfCFTA and the Alliance of Sahel States

According to *All Africa,* the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Alliance of Sahel States are pivotal developments poised to reshape West Africa's economic and political landscapes. AfCFTA, initiated in January 2021, aims to unify African markets, enhance trade, and promote economic

integration, potentially boosting growth, job creation, and living standards in the Sahel states. However, challenges arise from the region's underdeveloped private sector and informal economies, which may struggle against more established African entities and cheaper imports. Conversely, the Alliance of Sahel States, formed by Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, seeks regional stability and economic autonomy, planning a new currency and a joint military force to lessen external dependencies and address security threats. The complexity of integrating these initiatives highlights the delicate balance between seizing growth opportunities and addressing inherent regional challenges.

New Petrochemical Complex to Boost Egypt's Economy

Writing for *African Law & Business*, Robert Li reports that Shard Capital Partners, along with partners from Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia, has committed $7 billion to construct a petrochemical facility in New Alamein, Egypt. This initiative, advised legally by Cairo-based Zaki Hashem & Partners, is set to create significant employment opportunities, with 20,000 jobs during construction and 3,000 permanent positions post-completion. The facility aims to revolutionize the petrochemical industry by using advanced American and European technologies to produce 3.1 million tons of crude-oil-derived products annually. This project not only represents a substantial investment in Egypt's petrochemical sector but also signifies a pivotal step towards enhancing the country's economic future through strategic international collaborations.

New Bill to Enhance Market Fairness and Consumer Protection

A new bill introduced to Parliament in Rwanda aims to enhance competition and protect consumers by addressing anti-competitive practices such as mergers that could lead to market dominance, reports *The New Times.* The legislation, which seeks to update the 2012 law, focuses on creating a fair playing field for all businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises, and introduces a more rigorous merger review process. Key aspects of the bill include defining mergers, requiring public notifications of merger reviews to ensure transparency, and involving stakeholders in the merger assessment process to safeguard against competitive imbalances. The bill also empowers the regulatory authority to conduct market inquiries across sectors to detect and address competition restrictions, marking a significant step forward in

regulating market dynamics and protecting consumer interests.

Surge in Trade at Rwanda-Uganda Border Post with Infrastructure Improvements

The New Times reports that in 2024, trade at the Cyanika border post between Rwanda and Uganda reached $19 million, marking a significant increase from previous years. This boost in trade, which includes both imports and exports of food products, construction materials, and sugar, was attributed to the resumed cross-border activities that had been suspended previously. The import volume rose to 43.4 million kilograms while exports increased in both volume and value. The Minister of Trade and Industry, Prudence Sebahizi, highlighted ongoing infrastructure developments at the border, such as a new parking lot and a 732-square-meter warehouse with 34 rooms, which are expected to further enhance trade efficiency. These facilities aim to improve the handling of goods and reduce congestion, potentially benefiting the local economies of Rwanda and Uganda and extending service to the DRC market.

ECOWAS Vice President Advocates for Water-Energy-Food Nexus at Munich Security Conference

At the 61st Munich Security Conference, *ECOWAS* Vice President, H.E. Damtien Tchintchibidja, emphasized the crucial role of the Water-Energy-Food Nexus in conflict prevention and resolution in West Africa. Highlighting ECOWAS's Early Warning System, she outlined the region's challenges with natural resource management, which exacerbate security and stability issues. Her address covered the significant potential for economic growth if these resources are managed effectively. Concrete regional strategies and initiatives have been established to tackle human security concerns linked to these nexus areas. Additionally, her meeting with German officials underscored ongoing collaboration to support regional stabilization and development in West Africa.

New Diplomatic Accreditations Strengthen COMESA Partnerships with Egypt, Turkey, and France

Egypt, Turkey, and France have bolstered their diplomatic ties to the *Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa* (COMESA) with the accreditation of their ambassadors in a ceremony at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka, Zambia. The

Egyptian Ambassador, Mayada Essam Abdelrahman, affirmed Egypt's ongoing support for COMESA's integration efforts, which aim to improve regional living standards. Meanwhile, Turkish Ambassador Hüseyin Barbaros Dicle emphasized Turkey's commitment to gender equality and capacity building within the region. French Ambassador Thomas Rossignol expressed France's dedication to collaborative initiatives, highlighting the importance of regional integration. Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe praised the countries' contributions, noting France's significant support through the European Union, Egypt's leadership in boosting intra-COMESA trade, and Turkey's growing role as a strategic partner, particularly in sectors like agriculture, health, and tourism.

ACTESA and IFDC Sign MoU to Boost Agriculture Productivity in COMESA Region

The Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) and the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability across the COMESA member states, reports *COMESA*. Signed in Lusaka, Zambia, this partnership focuses on improving access to quality and affordable fertilizers for smallholder farmers, a move pivotal to advancing regional agriculture. The MoU supports the implementation of the COMESA Fertilizer Regional Program (COMFREP), aiming to boost smallholder farmers' access to necessary resources. Both organizations emphasize the role of private sector engagement and smart agriculture initiatives in driving economic growth and ensuring food security through enhanced trade and soil health across the continent.

SADC Hosts Workshop to Enhance GBV Data Management and Reporting in Southern Africa

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) reports that in collaboration with UN Women and GIZ it conducted a five-day workshop in Johannesburg from February 17 to 21, 2025, focusing on strengthening research, data use, and reporting of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) across its member states. Attended by 90 delegates from 14 SADC countries, the workshop aimed to enhance the implementation of the SADC Regional Strategy

for Addressing GBV 2018-2030. Key discussions revolved around the use of approved GBV indicators for annual reporting, enhancing data quality, and the harmonization of GBV data systems at both national and regional levels. The workshop also addressed the roles of various societal sectors in GBV prevention and emphasized the importance of effective multi-sectoral coordination and evidence-based policy-making to combat GBV effectively.

Angola's Accession to SADC Free Trade Area Marks Significant Regional Milestone

Additionally, the *SADC* reports that Angola is set to become the 14th member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Free Trade Area (FTA), a development that promises considerable economic benefits both for Angola and the existing member states. Concluding at a Trade Negotiating Forum in Luanda, Angola's accession was supported by the SADC Secretariat and the CESARE program, backed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Union. This integration into the SADC FTA will facilitate reduced tariffs and eliminate non-tariff barriers, enhancing trade flows and economic cooperation across the region. With Angola's formal integration anticipated to be ratified in upcoming SADC meetings, this move is seen as a crucial step towards deeper economic integration and increased regional prosperity.

Kenya Seeks Stronger Policies to Support Textile Industry Post-AGOA

According to the *KBC*, the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) is advocating for enhanced policies to sustain and grow the textile and apparel industry following the impending expiration of the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) in September. The trade pact has significantly benefited Kenya, making it the fourth largest exporter to the US under AGOA in 2022, with textile and apparel products leading the exports. KAM emphasizes the need for a robust policy framework to support local production and reduce dependency on imports, including second-hand clothes. The government has pledged to support cotton farmers and facilitate market access for Kenyan designers, aiming to re-establish Kenya as a major player in the global fashion and textile market.

Events – 2/28/2025

“SADC Council of Ministers.” South African Development Community. *Harare, Zimbabwe*. 6-19 March 2025.

“Fifty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa: Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.” ECA. *Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. 12-18 March, 2025.

View online: News: 02.28.2025

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