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IMF Approves $43 Million for Congo Amid Economic and Governance Debate

Cédric Lyonnel, writing for *Africa News*, reports that the IMF Executive Board approved a $43 million disbursement to the Congolese government under an extended credit facility, recognizing the positive impact of structural reforms. Economic improvements, such as a 3.7% inflation rate, indicate progress at the macroeconomic level. However, civil society members and political actors criticize the governance, pointing out corruption and the lag in pension and scholarship payments. Despite the IMF's forecast of a 3.5% growth rate, many Congolese feel disconnected from these positive indicators, although the government remains optimistic about future improvements.

Former Mozambican Finance Minister Manuel Chang on Trial in US

According to *Africa News*, former Mozambican finance minister Manuel Chang is on trial in the US for his role in the "tuna bond" scandal, where he is accused of taking bribes to commit Mozambique to secret loans that were subsequently looted. These loans, intended for tuna fishing ships, plunged Mozambique into a

financial crisis when $2 billion in hidden debt was uncovered in 2016, with prosecutors alleging that large portions were used for bribes and kickbacks, including $7 million to Chang. The scandal severely impacted Mozambique’s economy, causing growth stagnation, currency devaluation, and loss of foreign investor confidence. Despite reaching some settlements with creditors, Mozambique's economy continues to struggle, and the trial has sparked legal actions across multiple continents.

African Development Bank Approves $1 Billion Loan for Transnet's Infrastructure Upgrade

Africa News reports that the African Development Bank has approved a $1 billion loan to South Africa's state-owned railway and ports company, Transnet, guaranteed by the South African government. This 25-year loan will fund the first phase of an $8.1 billion plan to upgrade the country's rail and port infrastructure. South Africa's deteriorating transport infrastructure is a significant barrier to foreign investment and export efficiency, with Transnet facing scrutiny for corruption and mismanagement. The loan aims to support President Cyril Ramaphosa's efforts to revive the economy and reduce high unemployment rates.

UAE Lifts 21-Month Visa Ban on Nigerians After Successful Negotiations

According to *Africa News*, the United Arab Emirates has lifted a 21-month visa ban on Nigerians, following successful negotiations between the two governments. New requirements for Nigerian travelers include identity verification and travel history documentation. The ban was originally imposed due to alleged misconduct and visa rule violations, exacerbated by a dispute over flight frequencies between the two countries. Emirates had suspended flights to Nigeria in late 2022 but plans to resume daily flights between Lagos and Dubai in October 2023, coinciding with the lifting of the ban.

Kenya Cuts Spending and Widening Fiscal Deficit After Tax Hike Rollback

As per *Africa News*, Kenya plans to reduce its 2024-25 spending by 1.9% and increase the fiscal deficit to 3.6% of GDP after rolling back tax hikes due to

protests. President William Ruto, facing demands for his resignation and reforms, dismissed nearly his entire cabinet and promised a more inclusive government. To address a $2.7 billion budget gap caused by the withdrawn tax hikes, Ruto proposed spending cuts and additional borrowing. Lawmakers will debate a supplementary budget outlining total spending of 3.87 trillion shillings ($30 billion), with significant reductions in recurrent and development expenditures.

Ethiopia and Iran Discuss Agricultural Collaboration and Technology Exchange

All Africa reports that the Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture Girma Amente met with Iranian Ambassador Ali Akbar to discuss collaboration on agricultural investment and technology. Amente praised Iran’s commitment and expressed Ethiopia’s interest in acquiring agricultural technology from Iran. He highlighted Ethiopia’s favorable environment for agricultural investment and invited Iranian investors to participate. Ambassador Akbar expressed Iran's eagerness to cooperate and exchange agricultural knowledge with Ethiopia.

Sudan’s Sugar Industry Devastated by Conflict, Struggles with Production and Security Challenges

According to *All Africa*, the ongoing conflict in Sudan, which began on April 15, 2023, has severely impacted the sugar industry, particularly in the states of El Gezira, White Nile, and Sennar, where most of the country's sugar factories are located. Two of the six operational factories have been directly damaged, and the remaining four face significant operational challenges. With Sudan's high per capita sugar consumption and a pre-war annual consumption of around 1 million tonnes, the industry has struggled to meet domestic needs, relying on imports to fill the gap. The sugar factories have also become targets for the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) due to their valuable resources and infrastructure, leading to fierce battles with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF).

South Africa's Tax Hike on Imported Clothing Sparks Debate and Consumer Backlash

Kate Bartlett, writing for *All Africa*, report that Rotondwa Mbadaliga, a South African fashion influencer, has praised Chinese e-commerce platforms Shein

and Temu for their affordable and trendy clothing, but South Africa's tax authority plans to impose a 45% tariff and VAT on imported clothing under 500 rand ($27). This new tax is expected to increase costs for consumers who favor these platforms due to their lower prices and wide variety. Local retailers and e-commerce companies are pushing back against the tax loophole that benefits small imports, arguing it creates an unfair market. In response, platforms like Takealot and Zando are striving to offer competitive alternatives, while Amazon has also entered the South African market, adding more options for consumers.

UAE Seeks to Strengthen Economic Ties with Angola Through Investments in Key Sectors

All Africa reports that the UAE aims to deepen economic ties with Angola by investing in energy, technology, maritime logistics, and food security. Emirati companies like Masdar, DB World, and Abu Dhabi Ports Group are already active in Angola’s key sectors, including port operations. The UAE views Angola as a growing market with potential in food production and mineral resources, including diamonds, which are a significant export to the UAE. This partnership aligns with the UAE's broader strategy to connect Africa with the Middle East and Asia, leveraging Angola’s economic growth and resource potential.

Nigerian Government Investigates Land Grabbing Claims by Agip & Shell in Bayelsa State

According to *All Africa*, the Nigerian Federal Government has launched an investigation into allegations of land grabbing by international oil companies, specifically Nigerian Agip Oil Company and Shell Petroleum Development Company, in Bayelsa State. Led by Engr. Kamoru Busari from the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources, the investigative team, which includes officials from the Nigerian Police and Bayelsa State Government, visited affected communities to assess the situation. Complaints, submitted by Agi Bestman of the Niger Delta MOU, accuse the companies of inadequate compensation for land use. The oil companies have responded by requesting meetings to address the grievances and resolve the issues.

Nigeria Enhances Air Security Through Bilateral Cooperation with Spain

Ikechukwu Aleke, writing for *All Africa*, reports that Nigeria's federal government has bolstered its air surveillance and security capabilities by strengthening ties with Spain. Led by Defence Minister Mohammed Badaru Abubakar and Aviation Minister Festus Keyamo, a Nigerian delegation visited Spain to explore advanced dual-use technology. The three-day visit to Indra, a leading technology and consulting company, aimed to enhance Nigeria's airspace safety with state-of-the-art equipment and systems. The collaboration promises improved air safety, border security, and defense capabilities for Nigeria.

Liberia Launches "Liberians Feed Yourselves Agenda" to Enhance Agriculture

On July 10, 2024, Liberia launched the "Liberians Feed Yourselves Agenda," a National Agriculture Development Plan for 2024-2030, at the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Ministerial Complex, reports All Africa. The event, which featured President Joseph Nyuma Boakai and Agriculture Minister Dr. Alexander J. Nuetah, focused on achieving food self-sufficiency and indigenous wealth creation through agriculture. The plan emphasizes cultivating cash crops and animal rearing, aligning with President Boakai's "ARREST" Agenda priorities. The Ghanaian Embassy congratulated Liberia on this significant agricultural sector initiative.

Liberia Offers Incentives and Seismic Data for Upcoming Oil and Gas Licensing Round

Ahead of a new licensing round, Liberia is offering incentives for early investors and showcasing extensive seismic data in its Liberia and Harper basins, reports *All Africa*. Marilyn Logan of the Liberia Petroleum Regulatory Authority highlighted the country’s potential for oil and gas exploration at the Invest in African Energy reception in London. With a proven petroleum system and competitive fiscal regime, Liberia aims to attract significant investment. The upcoming 2024 licensing round promises prime exploration blocks, supported by recent seismic data and a stable operating environment.

Chevron Acquires 80% Stake in Namibian Offshore Asset

African Law and Business' Dippy Singh reports that Chevron has acquired an 80% stake in Petroleum Exploration Licence 82 (PEL 82), an offshore hydrocarbon asset in Namibia, from the state-owned NAMCOR. The remaining 20% will be held jointly by NAMCOR and Custos Energy. The transaction, structured as a farm-out agreement, is expected to close soon pending regulatory approvals. NAMCOR's interim managing director welcomed the partnership, noting it will attract further international expertise to Namibia's under-explored Walvis Basin.

Angola Enforces New Law with Up to Eight Years' Jail Time to Combat Illegal Mining

Dippy Singh, writing for *African Law and Business* reports that a new law in Angola, effective from July 3, targets illicit mining with penalties including up to eight years in prison. The Law to Combat Illegal Mining Activity criminalizes harmful exploitation of mineral resources and imposes severe sanctions on those involved in or facilitating illegal mining, with additional penalties for forgery and illegal mineral transactions. Angola faces significant challenges with around 1.3 million illegal miners, primarily diamond prospectors, and the law aims to curb these activities. Despite some criticism that the law may also affect artisanal miners, the government asserts it targets those threatening the nation's mineral resources.

Tolaram Expands in Nigeria with Acquisition of Diageo's Stake in Guinness Nigeria

Robert Li, writing for *African Law and Business* reports that Singapore-based Tolaram will acquire Diageo's 58.02% majority stake in Guinness Nigeria, valued at approximately $105 per share, representing a 63% premium. The deal, set to close in 2025 pending regulatory approval, includes a long-term cooperation agreement to grow Guinness Nigeria and manage the Guinness brand. This acquisition marks Tolaram's further expansion in Nigeria, where it has invested for over 50 years, and aligns with Diageo's strategy to foster growth in the Nigerian market.

Rwanda's Banking Sector Sees Surge in Profits and Stability Over the Past Decade

Writing for *The New Times*, Tesi Kaven reports that Rwanda's banking sector has experienced substantial profit growth over the past decade, with net profits increasing from approximately $60 million in 2014 to over $200 million by September 2023. This rise is attributed to stable net interest margins, effective risk management, and operational efficiency. Despite a decline in loan yields, banks have maintained profitability through cost control and growing payments and remittance flows. The sector remains resilient, with strong capital reserves and liquidity, positioning it well for future growth and attracting external interest.

Rwanda Mandates ESG Reporting, Boosting Advisory Opportunities and Sustainability Efforts

Heritier Bahizi, writing for *The New Times* reports that Rwanda is transitioning its regulatory framework to make ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) reporting mandatory, creating opportunities for advisory firms like BDO East Africa (Rwanda) Ltd. The new regulations mandate the inclusion of environmental and climate change priorities in institutional budgets, reflecting a broader commitment to sustainability. Challenges remain, including a lack of awareness and expertise in emerging markets, but successful initiatives like Volkswagen Rwanda's electric vehicles highlight potential benefits. Future trends suggest increased investment in ESG projects and advancements in technology will drive further integration, with government support and funding facilities playing a key role.

South Sudan Completes Africa’s Universal Coverage of Voluntary National Reviews: 2024 High-Level Political Forum

At the 2024 High-Level Political Forum in New York, South Sudan marked a significant milestone as the last African nation to present its first Voluntary National Review (VNR), achieving universal coverage for the continent, reports the ECA. The VNR Lab highlighted the challenges faced by countries in fragile and conflict-affected situations, with panel discussions focusing on data gaps, financing, and innovative approaches to sustainable development. Despite challenges, these VNRs are crucial for garnering political support and addressing the root causes of conflict and fragility. Delegates called for enhanced support to strengthen statistical systems and coordination

mechanisms, with the Economic Commission for Africa pledging continued support in these areas.

Côte d'Ivoire Joins UN Water Convention

The ECA reports that on 16 July 2024, Côte d'Ivoire became the 53rd party to the 1992 UN Water Convention, marking a significant step in Africa's efforts to enhance transboundary water management amidst rising water stress and climate impacts. This accession underscores Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to improving cooperation on shared water resources, given its challenges with water quality and uneven distribution. The move adds momentum to regional water cooperation, with key West African economies now participating in the Convention. Strengthening such cooperation is crucial for addressing water scarcity, adapting to climate change, and achieving sustainable development goals in Africa.

Events – 07/19/2024

"**Women's Day Breakfast.**" Invest Africa. *Nairobi, Kenya*. 22 August 2024.

"**The Next Big Waves in the African Fintech Ecosystem**." Invest Africa. *Nairobi, Kenya*. 22 August 2024.

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