News: 12.20.2024

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20 December, 2024

D-8 Summit Opens Amid Regional Turmoil

According to *Africa News*, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi inaugurated the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation summit in Cairo, emphasizing the far-reaching impacts of the ongoing conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria on regional stability. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan advocated for supporting Syria's recovery following the recent overthrow of Bashar Assad, emphasizing the need for unity and a rapid rehabilitation of the war-stricken nation. Erdogan also addressed the geopolitical shifts following Israel's territorial expansion into southern Syria, underscoring the necessity of restoring Syria’s territorial integrity and promoting peaceful coexistence. The D-8 summit brought together leaders from its member countries, highlighting pressing regional challenges and cooperation opportunities.

China Criticizes U.S. Telecom Equipment Removal Plan

Africa News reports that China rebuked the U.S. for politicizing trade, particularly over plans to allocate over $3 billion to U.S. telecom companies for the removal of Chinese equipment, which it claims is due to unfounded security

concerns. He Yadong, spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce, criticized the U.S. for undermining market economy principles and fair competition by extending national security measures into commercial realms. This comes as the U.S. House of Representatives passed a defense policy bill including funds to remove equipment from firms like Huawei and ZTE, which now awaits further approval in the Senate and from the President. Amidst these tensions, China has reportedly begun to restrict exports of drone components, a move He linked to stringent controls over dual-use items.

Botswana's Persistent Trade Deficit and Economic Challenges

Africa News reports that Botswana has been facing a persistent trade deficit, recording a 430.6 million deficit in September 2024, according to Statistics Botswana's International Merchandise and Trade Statistics Monthly report. Despite exports totaling 434.5 million, dominated by diamond sales at 56.8%, the country's economic reliance on diamonds has been criticized amid weakening sales. Economist Lame Bothata emphasized the need for diversification and value addition in the diamond sector to mitigate economic risks. He advocated for promoting non-resource-based exports like tourism, manufacturing, and agriculture, and exploring import substitution strategies to boost domestic production and reduce reliance on imports, particularly from South Africa and other SACU members.

DRC Sues Apple Over Illegal Mineral Use in Tech Products

According to *Africa News*, the government of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), has initiated legal action against Apple in France and Belgium, alleging the use of minerals illegally mined in the DRC in Apple's product manufacturing. Apple has denied these accusations, emphasizing its commitment to responsible sourcing and high industry standards. Central to this dispute are tantalum, tungsten, and tin, crucial for various high-tech applications including consumer electronics and weapons systems. The lawsuit not only targets Apple but also implicates Rwanda, which the DRC accuses of facilitating the illegal mineral trade, exacerbating regional tensions. This case highlights broader global concerns about the ethical sourcing of minerals essential for modern technology and green energy, amidst ongoing human rights issues.

Ethiopia and South Sudan Forge Stronger Bilateral Ties

Africa News reports that Ethiopia and South Sudan are intensifying their efforts to strengthen cooperation, particularly in border governance and trade harmonization, as part of their ongoing diplomatic engagement. In a recent meeting, Ethiopian Deputy Head of Mission, Ambassador Ababi Demissie, and key South Sudanese officials, including Ambassador Anthony Akon, discussed ways to bolster economic ties between the two nations. The discussions highlighted the importance of smooth trade relations to boost economic growth. Additionally, both parties are preparing for the second Ethiopia-South Sudan investment and trade forum in Juba, aiming to foster business partnerships and investment opportunities. Ambassador Akon also lauded Ethiopia's commitment to African Union principles, particularly in promoting regional peace and security. This meeting is a significant move toward enhancing the bilateral relationship and regional cooperation.

Kenya Hosts Workshop to Integrate Green Practices into Coffee and Tea Trade According to *Africa News*, Kenya, in partnership with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Government of Denmark through DANIDA, conducted a stakeholder validation workshop in Nairobi to integrate sustainable practices into its coffee and tea value chains. This initiative, part of the national implementation strategy for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), aims to address climate-induced challenges in these sectors. The workshop gathered policymakers, industry leaders, and environmental experts to validate strategies that promote sustainability in these crucial agricultural sectors. By incorporating "green supplements" into these value chains, the effort seeks to enhance climate resilience and sustainability, aligning with global sustainability goals and boosting regional trade integration.

Nigeria's Inflation Hits 28-Year High Amid Economic Struggles

Africa News reports that Nigeria's inflation rate reached a 28-year peak at 34.60% in November 2024, up from 33.88% in October, driven largely by surging food prices and economic reforms such as the removal of petrol subsidies and the adoption of a floating exchange rate. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) highlights a significant year-on-year increase in food inflation,

which stood at 39.93%, influenced by factors like insecurity affecting agriculture and adverse weather conditions. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has responded by raising its benchmark interest rate to 27.50%, marking its sixth consecutive hike this year in efforts to stabilize prices and the naira. Despite these measures, the inflationary trend continues to push many Nigerians into poverty, with severe impacts on food security and overall economic stability.

Kwara Trade Fair Showcases Diverse Industries Amid Economic Challenges

According to *Africa News*, the Kwara Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (KWACCIMA) recently concluded its week-long trade fair in Ilorin, Kwara State, with 88 exhibitors from various sectors participating. Held at the Ilorin township stadium from December 11th to 16th, 2024, the event showcased a wide array of products and services, from electronics to agricultural inputs. The fair included educational programs by industry experts, live music, and cultural performances. At the opening, KWACCIMA President Mrs. Ronke Adeyemi appealed for more support for businesses affected by urban renewal projects and noted the economic impact of rising fuel and electricity costs. The closing remarks by Engr. Abu Salami, chairman of the fair's organizing committee, highlighted the resilience of exhibitors and the successful generation of significant sales and business leads, projecting optimism for future events.

Rheinmetall Under Scrutiny for Alleged Arms Re-exports in South Africa

According to *Africa News*, Rheinmetall, a German arms manufacturer, has come under intense scrutiny in South Africa over allegations of re-exporting weapons to conflict zones such as Israel and Ukraine. The company, which has been operating quietly in South Africa, producing artillery shells, is accused of exploiting loopholes in South African export controls to reroute munitions through Germany or other countries to conflict areas. NGOs like Open Secrets and activists such as Terry Crawford-Browne have criticized both Rheinmetall and the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) for what they see as regulatory failures and corporate malpractices that enable these

exports, potentially undermining South Africa's neutral stance in global conflicts. Amid growing protests and mounting evidence presented by critics, the situation highlights broader issues of accountability and ethics in the global arms trade, raising significant concerns about South Africa's role and the implications for its international reputation. **Economic Resilience in the Face of Nigeria's Challenges**

Africa News reports that Nigeria, amid significant economic hardships, faces a pivotal moment that could redefine its future. With inflation rates soaring above 25% in 2024, the removal of fuel subsidies and the instability of the exchange rate have compounded the economic strain, pushing prices for essential goods and services to unprecedented levels and driving millions into poverty. However, this crisis also presents an opportunity for substantial economic reform and renewal. Stabilizing the naira, investing in agriculture, and implementing social welfare measures could alleviate immediate hardships, while long-term investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure might secure sustainable growth. Strategic diversification into technology and renewable energy could further reduce the economy's oil dependency. Drawing on historical resilience and guided by comprehensive reforms, Nigeria has the potential to emerge from its current predicament stronger, creating an inclusive economy that benefits all its citizens.

Zimbabwe's Economic Recovery Hindered by Counterfeit Goods and Smuggling

According to Africa News, Zimbabwe's journey toward economic recovery faces significant hurdles due to the pervasive issues of counterfeit products and rampant smuggling, as highlighted by government and industry leaders. Dr. Thomas Ushe Utete, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, emphasized the urgency of tackling these challenges during the CEO of the Year Awards ceremony. He urged the cessation of smuggling and the promotion of local manufacturing to strengthen the formal economy and enhance government revenue. Echoing this, Delta Corporation CEO Matts Valela spoke at the Capital Markets Awards, calling for better asset quality and stronger governance to attract investment. Economists like Dr. Cornelius Dube and Mr. James Wadi stressed the negative impact of informality on business profitability and proposed incentivizing the formalization of informal sectors.

Despite the government's efforts, analysts point out enforcement weaknesses and corruption that allow smuggling and counterfeits to thrive, suggesting stricter penalties and improved inter-agency cooperation as solutions.

Mozambique Unrest Disrupts Eswatini's Sugar Exports to US and Europe

According to *Africa News,* the ongoing riots and demonstrations in Mozambique are jeopardizing Eswatini's sugar exports, a major economic contributor, to the European and US markets. Typically, Eswatini exports its raw sugar through the jointly owned sugar terminal at the Maputo port, which it shares with South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Nontobeko Mabuza from the Eswatini Sugar Association highlighted the serious threats posed by the unrest, suggesting a potential shift in export operations to the South African port of Durban. This change, however, would increase costs and strain transport infrastructure due to longer turnaround times for shipping. Bhekizwe Maziya, CEO of the Eswatini national agriculture marketing board, noted that the unrest has already caused significant congestion and delays at borders, particularly with the closure of the Lebombo/Ressano Garcia border post, affecting both importers and exporters. In 2023, Eswatini's sugar exports generated $305 million, underscoring the critical nature of this issue for the country's economy.

UK High Court Denies Privinvest's Appeal in $2 Billion Tuna Bonds Case

African Law and Business reports that the High Court of England and Wales has rejected an appeal by Privinvest Companies against a $2 billion judgment related to the "Tuna Bonds" scandal. The court, led by Justice Robin Knowles, found none of the six proposed grounds presented by Privinvest compelling enough to warrant an appeal. The ruling concerns the extensive legal battle where Mozambique sought damages for losses linked to corruption and mismanagement in a project intended to boost its tuna industry. Although the appeal was denied, a stay of enforcement has been granted, pending Privinvest's decision on whether to apply directly to the Court of Appeal, provided they pay £20 million in costs immediately. Meanwhile, Mozambique continues to navigate other legal challenges, including arbitration proceedings initiated by ETG concerning the seizure of its exports.

Cameroon Oil Company's $100 Million Claim Dismissed by London's High Court

According to *African Law and Business*, in a significant legal ruling at the High Court of England and Wales, Cameroon's state-owned oil refinery, Société Nationale de Raffinage (Sonara), has triumphed over a substantial financial claim by Nigeria's Sahara Energy Resource. The claim, which exceeded $100 million, was dismissed as the court, led by Mrs Justice Cockerill, ruled that the demands for interest, penal charges, and foreign exchange losses due to delayed payments were time-barred and legally too remote. The dispute stemmed from a 2013 agreement where Sahara financed oil purchases for Sonara through loans from Nigerian banks, leading to financial losses due to payment delays. However, the court determined that there was no binding agreement for Sonara to cover these additional losses, marking a clear victory for the Cameroonian company in this cross-border contractual battle.

ECA Workshop in Rabat Aims to Boost Libyan Value Chain Development

The *ECA* Office for North Africa wrapped up a capacity-building workshop focused on enhancing value chain development for Libyan officials. Conducted in collaboration with Mohammed V University and the Libyan Ministry of Economy and Trade, the workshop aimed to equip participants with essential skills to bolster Libya's production and supply chains. This initiative is part of broader efforts under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to reduce Libya's heavy import dependency by leveraging its geo-strategic position and youthful demographic for economic diversification. The training also provided a platform for sharing experiences and lessons between Morocco and Libya, with further sessions planned on topics like taxation and public-private partnerships to support inclusive growth in Libya.

Events – 12/20/2024

"**Regional Outlook Webinar Series - West Africa**." Invest Africa. *Virtual*. 16 January 2025.

"**World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025**." United Nations. *Virtual*. 9 January 2025.

View online: News: 12.20.2024

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