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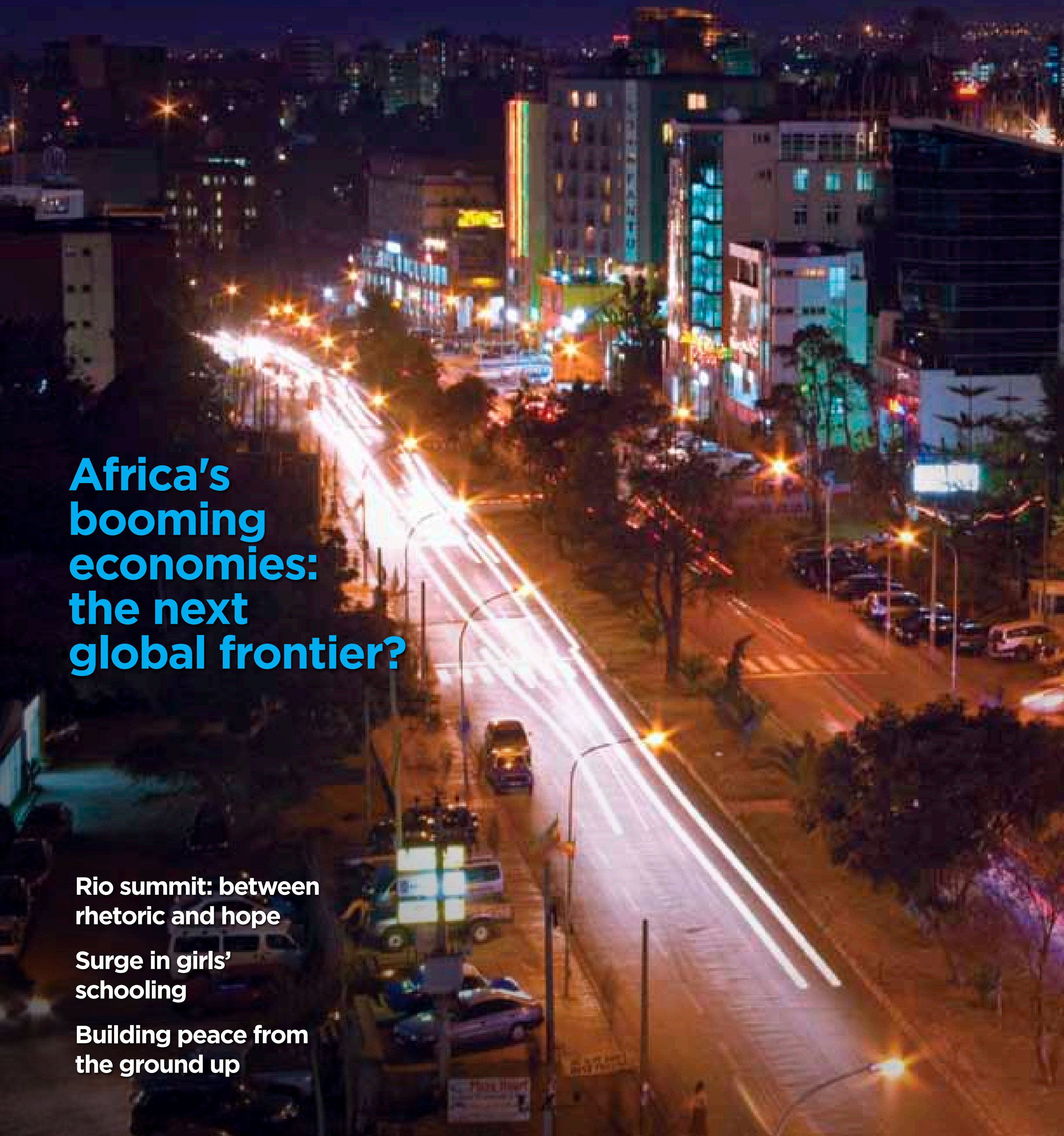

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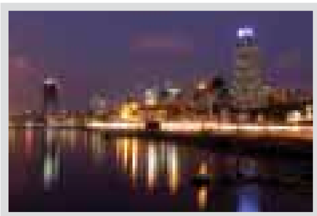

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Aerial view of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at night. Alamy / AfriPics.com

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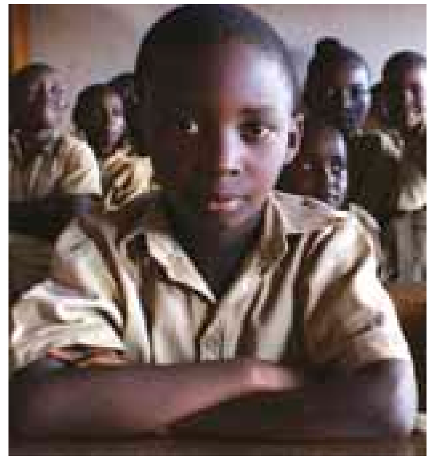

Students in a Burundi classroom: A number of African countries have greatly increased school enrolments.
UNICEF / Pawel Krzysiek

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Rio summit keeps African hopes alive

Some gains, plus commitments to future sustainable development talks

By Kingsley Ighobor

Tree nursery in Ghana: Participants at the Rio summit pledged to plant 100 million trees by 2017. Alamy / GS International

African expectations were high for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the biggest UN summit ever. The conference, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June, was "too important to fail," said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the outset. Under the theme of "The Future We Want," many of the 100 heads of state and more than 40,000 participants demanded ambitious and measurable outcomes to address sustainability issues such as the "green economy," climate change and so on. Yet when it was over, the "Rio+20" summit, as it was commonly called, left a heated debate over whether those goals had been met.

For African delegates, the general view was that while the continent did not come away with a basketful of goodies, it also did not leave with empty hands. Izabella Teixeira, Brazil's environment minister, noted that not everyone was going to be happy with the result. Negotiating with 193 nations to agree on consensus outcomes would inevitably be a grinding task, she said. Some arguments will prevail, some will not.

Africa's preparations for Rio+20 began with a meeting of its environment ministers in Ethiopia in October 2011. There they hammered out a detailed consensus statement that was later adopted by the African Union. Africa anchored its case on two broad principles: that the continent is making serious efforts towards sustainable development and that the world should recognize and support those efforts.

African position

The 14-page statement presented many positions, including a call for a stronger, independent and well financed UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which is based in Nairobi, Kenya. UNEP should have "secure, stable, additional and predictable financing to fulfil its mandate," argued the African statement. Even though the Rio outcome document gave few specifics on strengthening UNEP, delegates nevertheless agreed that the programme needs bolstering.

Africa also asked developed countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) as aid to developing countries and canvassed for "equitable, durable and development-oriented solutions to debt problems."

At the summit, the coordinator of African negotiators, Macharia Kamau of Kenya, said that "the ability of African countries to implement agreements on sustainable development is only possible if they are empowered with the resources and means to undertake development that will protect biodiversity and not lead to climate change." There was no concrete commitment on this, although further talks are planned in the future.

Refocused attention

South African President Jacob Zuma, who was very active in Rio, said that the "outcomes have refocused the attention of the world leaders to the daunting challenges of addressing global poverty, inequality and the deteriorating state of the environment."

Sunita Narain, an Indian environmentalist, went as far as to call the Rio

African delegates in Rio explain their continent's aspirations for the summit.
UN / Maria Elisa Franco

outcome document a "victory for the developing world ... because it reiterates the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities." That terminology relates to a shared vision for combating climate change based upon each country's social and economic capacities.

Ms. Narain also noted that the summit "did not dismantle the framework of justice and equity in global negotiations." She thus alluded to the successful effort by developing countries, especially India, China and those in Africa, to push back a proposal by the rich countries to set targets and timetables towards a "green economy." Such targets, developing countries feared, could have led to trade restrictions or other sanctions if they did not move quickly enough. Instead, the outcome document states that each country will move at its own pace.

Commitments

African negotiators, especially from South Africa, wanted specific commitments on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are expected to replace the Millennium Development Goals after their expiration in 2015. The delegates agreed to constitute by next year a 30-member working group under the UN General Assembly to report on such global SDGs. In addition, there will be an intergovernmental process, supervised by the General Assembly, that by 2014 will recommend ways to finance a sustainability strategy.

"The formulation of the SDGs, and their interface with the post-2015 development agenda, will be one of the most important follow-up actions initiated by the Rio+20 summit," argues Martin Khor, executive director of the South Centre, a Switzerland-based organization of developing country governments. "At least the world has agreed to continue to promote sustainable development," adds Manish Bapna, acting president of the World Resources Institute, a US-based environmental think tank.

Business and civil society

In contrast to the gradual approach seemingly favoured by governments, it appears that businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, universities and others are revving up momentum. The UN reports that, together with governments, such groups made about 700 voluntary commitments during the summit, totalling more than $500 billion. Of that amount, $50 billion will be used for an initiative by the UN Secretary-General to achieve universal access to sustainable energy by 2030.

Bindu Lohani, vice-president of the Asian Development Bank, reminded delegates that eight development banks will invest $175 billion in sustainable transport in developing countries.

José María Figueres, former president of Costa Rica, said, "Those who have failed you, Mr. Sha, are the governments, not the CEOs, not the NGOs." He was referring to Sha Zukang, who headed the conference secretariat and is UN under-secretary-general for economic and social affairs.

A recent survey of 3,000 business leaders by the *MIT Sloan Management Review* and the Boston Consulting Group found that 70 per cent are incorporating sustainability into their business strategy. The survey reported that many companies in Africa plan to increase their sustainability commitments. And more organizations are cutting greenhouse gas emissions and protecting biodiversity.

Summit participants also pledged to plant 100 million trees by 2017, empower 5,000 women entrepreneurs in green economy businesses in Africa and annually recycle 800,000 tonnes of polyvinyl chloride, a commonly used plastic.

Hard to measure

While some African leaders remain hopeful, the Africa Progress Panel, a group of eminent individuals headed by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, believes that the conference commitments were too vague: "The lack of commitment to defined and measurable sustainable development goals at the Rio+20 summit is a profoundly disturbing outcome. We have an obligation to the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, who bear the brunt of the global ecological crisis."

Others believe the conference did not adequately reflect a number of positive developments around the world. "Just look at Germany's shift to clean energy," notes Mr. Bapna, "Niger's efforts to re-green its landscape or Rio's just-launched bus rapid transit system."

There is no doubt that the conference did not meet everyone's expectations. Yet many elements in the outcome document satisfied some African delegates. The next challenge is for world leaders, businesses and NGOs to come through on their promises. "The speeches are over. Now the work begins," said Mr. Ban. "Rio+20 has affirmed fundamental principles — renewed essential commitments — and given us new direction."

‘Green economy’: empty rhetoric or pathway to future?

At Rio summit, African delegates are skeptical of the benefits

By Stephen Leahy
Rio de Janeiro

Solar panels in Mali: More African countries are moving towards use of clean energy sources.
Panos / Giacomo Pirozzi

With current trends leading the earth to disaster, world leaders and some 40,000 people converged on Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June in the hope of charting a path towards a better, more sustainable future for everyone that many are calling the “green economy.” Underlining the urgency, Sha Zukang, secretary-general of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, said more than a year before the summit began: “If we continue on our current path, we will bequeath material and environmental poverty, not prosperity, to our children and grandchildren.”

However, sharp tensions and distrust between countries of the North and South and between civil society and governments — amidst general global economic uncertainty — ultimately resulted in vague agreements that left few satisfied. “It could have been worse” was a common sentiment at the conclusion of the summit, known as Rio+20 after the first Earth Summit in the same city two decades ago.

‘Half full, half empty’

The summit ended up being “a glass half-full, glass half-empty situation for Africa,” said Donald Kaberuka, president of the African Development Bank (AfDB), on the final day in Rio. “We’re making progress on thinking about the green economy, and especially the linkage between poverty alleviation and the environment.”

“This is not something we do because the international community is asking us to do it,” Mr. Kaberuka added. “We do it for Africa because we are closely linked to nature in terms of our livelihoods.”

Achim Steiner, executive director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which has been a driving force in promoting the concept of a green economy, was upbeat. “World leaders and governments have today agreed that a transition to a green economy — backed by strong social provisions — offers a key pathway towards a sustainable 21st century,” he said at the conclusion.

But South Africa’s Kumi Naidoo, the executive director of Greenpeace International, strongly disagreed. “All we have witnessed is three days of empty rhetoric and greenwash from world leaders,” he said. “Governments have failed to produce the historic deal we need to address the perfect storm of crises: of equity, ecology and economy.”

The formal outcome of the Rio+20 summit was a document, “The Future We Want,” that reaffirmed or recalled what had been agreed to years ago but offered little new. Instead, world leaders simply agreed to more talks to strengthen UN institutions, examine whether to provide developing countries with finance and technology, and establish new sustainable development goals.

Resources

Going into the summit, developing countries called on the industrialized nations to provide additional financing of more than $30 billion annually over 2013–17 — and $100 billion per year after that — to help them green their economies.

“We are hoping that the green economy will bear fruit when it comes to combating desertification, poverty, and protecting the environment,” said Adam

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African schools keep an eye on the prize

With sharp increases in enrolment in a number of African countries, teachers often must face over-crowded classrooms.

UNESCO / Petterik Wiggers

Meeting the target for universal primary education

By Jocelyne Sambira

A small, dusty, sparsely furnished building of mud bricks serves as a classroom for pupils at a primary school in Buterere, a town on the outskirts of Burundi's capital. The room is packed with a sea of small bodies in khaki uniforms, some sprawling on the dirt floor trying to balance their notebooks and write at the same time. The lucky few who get desks are tightly squeezed together on the same bench, elbows touching as they scrawl notes while the teacher talks and writes on a chalkboard. The metal sheet that serves as a roof makes the room hot and stuffy.

It is not an unusual scene in the East African nation emerging from a 13-year civil war. Very little has changed since the country scrapped fees for primary school in September 2005 — except for the growing classrooms. The building of new facilities has been painfully slow.

According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), school attendance surged from 59 per cent to 96.1 per cent between 2005 and 2011. The number of girls entering school for the first time was actually higher than the number of boys. Meanwhile, the average number of students per class is estimated at 83, the agency adds.

Children as old as 10 or 12 were enrolling for the first time, Concilie Nizigiyimana, a state inspector for schools in the rural province surrounding Bujumbura, the capital, told *Africa Renewal*. "Most of the families in the area couldn't afford to send their kids to school," she says. "So when school became free, we received a huge number of children. Some classes hold as many as 100 pupils for one teacher. And we often have to borrow desks and benches from the secondary school classrooms."

The government's "double shift" system eases the pressure on the classrooms, though it places a huge burden on teachers, who are forced to teach two sessions in one day. For the teachers, this system effectively crams two school days into one calendar day, as one US Agency for International Development report put it. Over time, it erodes the quality of education.

A poster child?

Yet the lack of teachers, the overfilled classrooms and the scarcity of textbooks and school supplies — none of that could stem the flow of new students.

Burundi could easily be the education poster child for the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has all the makings of an MDG success story: notable progress in a populous and extremely poor country with low literacy rates and a heavy dependence on foreign aid. The UN *Human Development Report 2011* states that 56.4 per cent of Burundi's rural population and 66.5 per cent of its urban population are considered to be living in poverty. It often tops the list of least developed countries that have made remarkable education advances, along with Madagascar, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Tanzania and Togo.

In sub-Saharan Africa overall, enrolment rates for children of primary school age increased from 58 per cent to 76 per cent between 1999 and 2010, according to the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2012*, prepared by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Several countries in the region have also succeeded in reducing their relatively high out-of-school rates, even as their primary-school-age populations are growing. But like Burundi, many of these countries are facing major challenges.

Strong political backing

After Zimbabwe earlier, in September 1994 Malawi became one of the first African countries to embrace free and compulsory primary education for all grades, with Kenya and Lesotho following suit. As in Burundi, the elimination of school fees became a powerful electoral strategy.

Malawi pioneered what the World Bank describes as the "big bang approach." These countries aggressively enforced the policy of free education — hard and fast. Never mind that in most cases the initiative was poorly planned, lacked sufficient funds, was implemented slowly and fell short on quality. The public response was nevertheless huge.

These young democracies dug deep into their national treasuries, mobilizing funds and adjusting budgets to pay for the costly initiatives. This was in line with the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action — a reaffirmation of the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All, a pact to strengthen efforts towards improving education — which recognized the importance of backing political promises with financial commitments. Once domestic funds were released, international donors were convinced to lend their support as well.

According to the 2011 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), countries in sub-Saharan Africa have posted an average annual increase of 4.6 per cent in their education budgets. In Burundi, the report notes, education spending doubled as a share of the gross national product between 1999 and 2008. Much of the increase was spent at the primary level. Ethiopia nearly doubled its education budget but also allotted a share to secondary education. Meanwhile, other heavy education spenders have been Rwanda, Mozambique, Senegal and Tanzania.

Boys and girls in a Burundi classroom: While enrolment has surged, the gender gap has narrowed as well.

UNICEF / Pawel Krzysiek

Closing the gender gap

Increasing the enrolment rate of girls to equal that of boys has been a priority for all of Africa, with 16 countries succeeding in achieving gender parity in primary education. Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania and Senegal have stood out, notes a recent assessment of the MDGs by the African Development Bank (AfDB).

The bank also seems to argue that gender parity in enrolment is likely to be achieved on the continent by 2015 if the current trend continues. Not so, says

UNESCO, which points to sub-Saharan Africa as the region with the widest gender gap at the elementary level.

In many African societies, girls have long come last, since boys are generally accorded higher status. In the past, when parents decided whom to send to school, the choice for them was obvious. Removing the cost factor has made basic education possible for young girls as never before.

Yet convincing African leaders that investing in girls' education is good for the economy has not been easy, says Amina Az-Zubair, former assistant to the president of Nigeria, who was recently named UN special adviser on post-2015 development planning. Nevertheless, she said in a World Bank interview, "I think it has been shown over and over again that with girls' education, there is an impact on maternal mortality in the right direction. There is definitely a skill set of what we gain in the home in terms of continuing that education."

All in all, gender disparities in education across the globe and on the continent remain considerable. A tuition-free education does not necessarily erase the stereotypes or cultural barriers that hinder girls' access to school. Conditions in schools must also be made more welcoming and safe for girls. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics found that the absence of separate-sex toilets discouraged girls from attending school regularly and that they are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, exploitation and disease.

Not on track for 2015

So far, on most of the education targets, African countries continue to perform well. Net primary education enrolment has increased in most African countries, if not all. But sub-Saharan Africa is also home to 43 per cent of the world's out-of-school children.

With three years left before the 2015 deadline for meeting the MDG targets, prospects for achieving universal primary education are becoming more uncertain. Until the recent global economic turmoil, Africa registered strong economic growth, creating a positive environment for progress in education. But the economic difficulties among European and other donor nations — which have been helping to fund some of Africa's educational successes — could threaten recent gains. UNESCO reports that in 2008 the flow of aid to basic education in sub-Saharan Africa fell by around 6 per cent per primary-school-age child.

Eye on the prize

African governments have shown that providing free primary education in countries with limited resources is possible. But national economies need to become vibrant enough that international support is no longer necessary.

Moreover, getting more kids in school and keeping them there is linked with other key development goals such as ending hunger and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. African leaders are therefore worried by the possibility that the international community may slacken its support for the MDGs, comments Jomo Kwame Sundaram, UN assistant secretary-general for economic development.

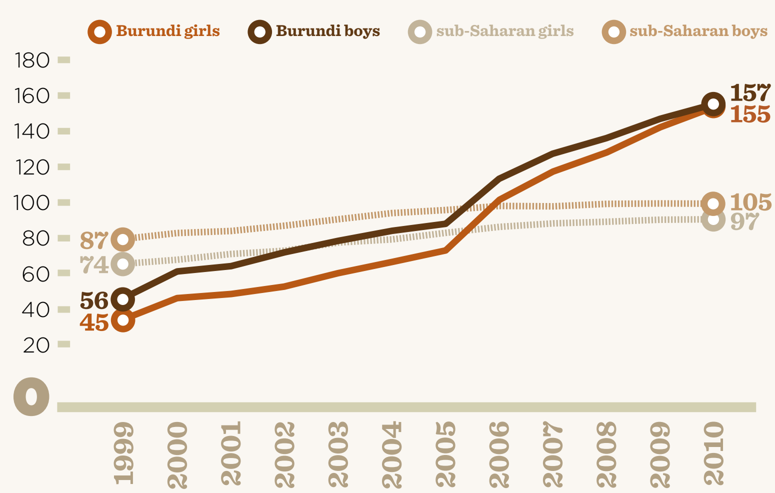
"Africa is concerned that the focus on MDGs may be lost. [African leaders] don't want the current effort to let up. They are understandably concerned that some other discussions are going to detract from the goals."

Mr. Sundaram was alluding to the recent UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, which emphasized additional priorities. "The new thing," he said, "is environmental sustainability."

Meanwhile, most African countries are refusing to be deterred by new hurdles or the ticking clock. The introduction of free, compulsory primary school has been good for sub-Saharan Africa in more ways than one. It has mobilized considerable funds in state coffers, increased cooperation with donors and boosted public trust in governments.

Kenya is pulling out all stops to reach the finish line. It has introduced an Education Act that could bring in substantially more money for building schools. It is even mulling a tough bill to force parents to send their kids to school or risk prison. Such measures, Kenya's leaders hope, could help keep the promise to make primary education accessible to all.

Gross primary school enrolment ratios
Burundi and sub-Saharan Africa



Source: UN Africa Renewal from data taken from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, www.uis.unesco.org, July 2012

Is democracy under threat in West Africa?

"No more coups in Africa," declare demonstrators in Bamako, Mali, during a visit by a delegation from the Economic Community of West African States.

Reuters / Luc Gnago

Coups in Mali and Guinea-Bissau, democratic defence in Senegal

By Lansana Gberie

In May, Said Djinnit, head of the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA), briefed Security Council members on what he saw as a disquieting trend in West Africa. During the preceding two months, Mr. Djinnit told council members, military coups had aborted preparations for democratic elections in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. Senegal, where his office is based, just managed to escape a violent turn. Electoral violence in Nigeria in April 2011 caused the deaths of more than a thousand people, while terrorist violence — led by an Islamist group called Boko Haram — has since escalated, leading to many more deaths and destruction in the country.

Also last year, a simmering civil war in Côte d'Ivoire was reignited after the incumbent president, Laurent Gbagbo, refused to honour an electoral verdict against him. In fact, over the past year, Africa has experienced eight such unconstitutional or extra-constitutional attempts to change governments or to hold on to power, and some have been successful. Something must be done to tamp down this trend, Mr. Djinnit told council members.

Democracy more the norm

Because of West Africa's past experience with coups and civil wars, it was inevitable that the latest developments would induce strong anxieties. Yet for the past 10 years, elections and peaceful changes of government were becoming more the norm. Some of the region's long-lasting wars, like those in Sierra Leone and Liberia, were ended, and democratic elections brought in more capable governments.

That Africa as a whole is becoming more democratic, stable and prosperous as a result of frequent elections was celebrated even by the mildly "Afro-pessimist" London magazine *The Economist*. In July 2010 it commented, "Only a decade ago countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia were bywords for anarchy and bloodshed. Now their people vote enthusiastically. It will be hard even for dictators to take that right away altogether, for the experience of elections, even flawed ones, seems to help embed democracy."

In February 2009, following coups in Mauritania and Guinea and an attempted coup in Guinea-Bissau, the African Union (AU) enunciated a policy of zero tolerance for all coups. It condemned the "resurgence of the scourge of coups d'état in Africa" and declared that it will never recognize a government that comes to power unconstitutionally, a position later endorsed by the UN Security Council.

Rebels in northern Mali: After the fall of the Qaddafi regime in neighbouring Libya, thousands of ex-fighters from there have returned to their home countries with heavy armaments, spreading instability throughout the Sahel region.

Reuters / Adama Diarra

Mr. Djinnit's alarm and the swift condemnation of the coups in Mali and Guinea-Bissau — first by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), then by the AU and the Security Council — were therefore predictable. Yet the manner in which these developments have played out suggests a complicated picture.

Guinea-Bissau has been an exception to the overall trend of democratization in West Africa: the country has experienced five military coups in the past decade, and no elected president has served out his term. So when soldiers seized power on 12 April and imprisoned interim President Raimundo Pereira, Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior and several other senior officials, aborting preparations for a run-off presidential election, the move did not come as a particular shock.

Setback in Mali

Mali, however, was a celebrated case of democratic awakening in West Africa, so the events there did take many by surprise. On 22 March, soldiers led by a young officer named Amadou Sanogo abandoned a faltering campaign against Tuareg rebels in the north of the country and seized power from President Amadou Toumani Touré. ECOWAS promptly condemned the coup and imposed financial and other sanctions on Mali.

This was not simply a case of the military going awry: external factors clearly played a decisive role in the turn of events. The problem had to do with the resulting return to Mali of tens of thousands of migrants, including a few thousand heavily armed and battle-hardened Tuareg fighters who had fled Libya following the overthrow of the dictator Muammar al-Qaddafi. These fighters gave new potency to the few and largely contained Tuareg separatists in northern Mali, leading to the rebels' capture of the three northern regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu and a proclamation of secession from southern Mali.

There are wider implications for the region, beyond Mali itself. A report by a UN inter-agency mission to the Sahel in January to assess the impact of the return of about 420,000 migrant workers to Mali, Niger and Mauritania predicted broader instability. The mission found that Libyan small arms, explosives, rocket-propelled grenades and small-calibre anti-aircraft cannons mounted on pick-ups were finding their way into the hands of diverse separatists and other rebels. Groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Nigeria's Boko Haram were already flocking to Mali in mid-2011. Many parts of Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Chad have been overwhelmed by the returnees from Libya, 95 per cent of whom are male, poorly educated, aged 20-40 and embittered. AQIM was providing relief for some of the returnees, facilitating potential recruitment and popular support, the mission was told.

According to the mission, the most advanced of the measures adopted to deal with these problems were probably those taken under Mali's Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in the North, a pet project of President Touré, although there were local concerns about poor management. Barely two months after the report was issued, the coup took place, and Mr. Touré later fled to Senegal.

Averting crisis in Senegal

When Mr. Touré arrived in Senegal in April as a refugee, the scene was steeped in pathos. Less than two months earlier, Mali, with the dignified Mr. Touré presiding over an electoral process in which he was not participating, seemed to stand taller than Senegal, which was then deep in a morass created by its fumbling president.

Senegal has been a constitutional democracy since it gained independence from France in 1960, and has suffered no coup or serious political upheaval. This would suggest that elections had become routine. However, President Abdoulaye Wade, who came to power in 2000 and was already in his eighties, introduced a new constitution. The Constitutional Court issued a curious legal judgment permitting Mr. Wade to run for a third term, maintaining that since the constitution was new, his first term could not be counted. The argument had a narrowly legalistic logic that was lost on most Senegalese. All they knew was that the constitution said the president should not serve more than two terms, and Mr. Wade had already served two.

There were mass protests, leading to burned public buildings and several deaths. Senegalese — and the world — prepared for the worst. But when the elections finally came in February, Mr. Wade secured only 34.8 per cent in the first round. In the run-off the following month, he was crushed by 51-year old Macky Sall, who had previously served as his prime minister. Following his humiliating rebuff, Mr. Wade handed power over to Mr. Sall.

Residents of Dakar celebrate the election of a new president: Senegal has a long tradition of democratic institutions and its army has never tried to stage a coup.

Reuters / Joe Penney

What accounted for the different outcomes in Mali and Senegal? First, of course, was the spreading rebellion in Mali, bolstered by Libyan arms. Also important is that the two countries have rather different historical experiences, with electoral institutions and a democratic culture much stronger in Senegal than in Mali. In fact, the four communes of the French colony of Senegal enjoyed a remarkable democratic franchise dating back to the 19th century. History does matter.

Election triggers

Yet Senegal's democratic traditions did not prevent pre-election tensions and violence, suggesting that even reasonably strong democratic systems in the region are vulnerable. Vulnerable to what? In all the cases cited, elections were either taking place or approaching.

Are elections becoming, as the UK political scientist and Africa expert Dennis Austin suggests, a "spur to violence" in the fragile democracies of West Africa? Competitive politics, while attractive, clearly add depth to the sense of division in diverse societies, since there is a strong temptation for rogue leaders to exploit ethnic and other fault lines. The problem is that there seems to be no better alternative.

A June report by the New York–based International Peace Institute on "Elections and Stability in West Africa" recommends a creative approach to electoral assistance. It suggests that external electoral assistance be integrated within a broader conflict-prevention strategy that gives attention to the political aspects of the electoral process, as well as the technical ones.

Safeguarding elections, in other words, should be seen as just one component of a longer-term commitment to building democracy. Also important are the growing calls on the international community to stand firm in not recognizing any coup, as espoused by the African Union.

Building peace from the ground up

Voters queue up for a referendum on a new constitution in Kenya in 2010: Activists mobilized in large numbers to help get out the vote. Reuters / Thomas Mukoya

Key roles for civil society in keeping violence at bay

By Ernest Harsch Nairobi

With peace agreements ending wars across Africa, thousands of local communities have in recent years embarked on the long road of rebuilding and revival. The course is daunting: not only to generate productive livelihoods in difficult economic times, but also to avoid new eruptions of violence.

African civil organizations are especially well placed for such efforts, notes Chukwuemeka Eze, programme director of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), a regional civil society group headquartered in Accra, Ghana. That is because they often have much closer links to local communities than do either national governments or international agencies. "The best and most sustainable peacebuilding process should be locally generated, and externally supported," he told *Africa Renewal*. While the United Nations and other external institutions certainly can be helpful, Mr. Eze adds, programmes to consolidate peace must be "driven by African civil society organizations," in close collaboration with African governments and regional organizations.

Whether they came from Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco or elsewhere, various civil society activists delivered a similar message at a brain-storming session on "peace, stability and development in Africa" held in Nairobi, Kenya, last December. Although organized by the UN's Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA), the meeting did not dwell on official UN peacebuilding activities, but instead highlighted the central role of African actors, whether from civil society, governments, regional organizations or the African Union, the continent's leading political body. One aim of the get-together, says OSAA, was to "learn from African experiences," so that the UN and other international agencies can better align their work with African priorities.

Viewed from strife-torn western Côte d'Ivoire, it is clear that external interventions do not always match local needs, notes About Karno Ouattara, a coordinator for the non-governmental Search for Common Ground. When officials from US and other donor agencies come to help vulnerable people, he told *Africa Renewal*, "They pick solutions that have worked more or less in another place, and try to apply it, not taking into account the reality of this place."

Identifying problems

While much attention in Côte d'Ivoire has been devoted to resolving the national political conflict, communities have been grappling with various disputes and tensions of their own, Mr. Ouattara points out. Some were worsened by the partisan warfare of the past decade, but have local causes that have not disappeared with the end of the war. There are "all kinds of conflicts," Mr. Ouattara observes, relating to land, family disputes and the marginalization of youth and women. "Youth and women really have no place to talk."

He and other trainers for Search for Common Ground typically spend time trying to help community members first identify their problems and then devise consensual solutions. Often they use film, radio skits and participatory theatre performances to train residents in problem-solving techniques. In one village, for example, tensions between rival youth associations impeded economic activity. But after two years of training, the youths established a common farm, planted rubber trees and started a fishpond.

Results may not be apparent within the short times allotted by many externally funded peacebuilding projects. "We come to stay with people for a long time," Mr. Ouattara emphasizes. "Even if they say there is peace, we continue working with them. Because peace is really a process, and it takes time."

Many of the "micro-projects" that UN personnel designed for demobilized ex-fighters in Côte d'Ivoire have failed, Mr. Ouattara asserts, because they did not probe deeply enough to identify the former combatants' varied problems and develop programmes tailored to their specific needs. It would have been more productive, he says, to first listen to them carefully. "Some of them just want to be heard. So let them talk."

Traditional chiefs meet in a strife-torn community in western Côte d'Ivoire: Civil society activists argue that women and youth also need to be given a voice to help resolve local conflicts.

UN / Ky Chung

'Listen to local voices'

Thomas Jaye, a long-time rights activist from neighbouring Liberia, concurs. If peacebuilding efforts are to be effective, he told *Africa Renewal*, one must "listen to the local voices. What is it that people want?"

Accurately identifying community problems and needs has been a major preoccupation in post-war Liberia. Beginning in Nimba County in 2008 and then extending to the rest of the country over the next two years, teams of researchers from eight civil society groups canvassed public perceptions of the most contentious problems in more than 270 urban and rural communities.

As part of the UN-supported Platform for Dialogue and Peace in Liberia project, the groups uncovered a wide range of grievances, relating to land and property disputes, corruption and abuses by local authorities, weaknesses in the judicial system, joblessness, gender violence, and competing ethnic, religious and citizenship claims. Conflicts over land were the most common issue. Although the researchers initially set out only to map communities' perceptions — leaving possible remedies for later — they sometimes were drawn into spontaneous efforts to mediate land disputes.

A young man shares his experience during a community gathering on gender at the Women's Peace Hut in Bong County, Liberia: Across Liberia, women are demanding more attention to their grievances, including widespread sexual violence.

UN / UNMIL / Staton Winter

Women and the 'hard core'

Gender violence was another prevalent complaint across Liberia, the civil society activists found, along with perceptions that women's concerns and grievances are simply not being treated seriously. This is despite the fact that Liberia is led by Africa's first elected female head of state, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The dialogue project itself has sought to help redress this shortcoming, with women constituting 41 per cent of the nearly 10,000 Liberians involved in the consultations.

The limited progress achieved by women around Africa does not surprise Norah Matovu, a gender and human rights activist from Uganda who also took part in OSAA's Nairobi meeting. Despite official recognition of the need to involve women in peacebuilding, many African leaders still have an attitude that women do not belong in such "hard-core business," she told *Africa Renewal*. These leaders' outlook is: "The men deal with public issues, the women deal with everything else."

It is important for civil society to mobilize to help capable women become more involved in political affairs, Ms. Matovu insists, so that they can engage not only with social issues, but also with economic matters, security reform and so on. In countries where women have succeeded in debating such issues, she adds, "more and more you see that attitude is slowly changing."

Citizen engagement

While working with local communities, activists have also been very involved in the national political arena, among other things by informing citizens of their rights, exposing corruption, supporting democratic reforms, assisting in voter registration and monitoring elections.

In Kenya, the political crisis that erupted in the wake of the disputed election of December 2007 proved to be a catalyst of public engagement. Rachel Gichenga explains that she and a few friends watched with alarm as violence swept the country, taking hundreds of lives and displacing tens of thousands of people. They formed Kuweni Serious, which, along with other groups, used social media and other means to urge young people to vote in the 2010 referendum on a new constitution that expanded democratic rights and strengthened the electoral system.

While civil groups have long been active in Kenya, the electoral crisis opened the way for a "new wave" of organization and mobilization, Ms. Gichenga recalls. "I feel that civil society has kind of come into its own. People have really seen the power of everyone as a change-maker."

Njoki Ndung'u, who was a member of the committee of experts that drafted the new constitution and now sits on Kenya's Supreme Court, adds that people must remain alert and politically active. "We have a beautiful constitution" and "the judiciary now has teeth," she says, but more is needed to avert a relapse into conflict. "Young people have to make demands."

Checking the military

In some countries, the scope for civil society influence is more limited. This is the case in Guinea-Bissau, where military interventions in political affairs have been frequent, notes Mamadu Quetta, vice-president of the Civil Society Movement for Peace, Democracy and Development. "We find ourselves in a vulnerable situation at all levels," he says.

But even in countries where the military has withdrawn from direct political life, as in Liberia, civil society needs to remain alert, notes Mr. Jaye, who is currently director of research at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana. In Liberia, he reports, representatives of 11 civil society groups have formed a working group on security sector reform. One of the group's central activities has been to help train elected legislators to better perform their duties on parliamentary committees responsible for overseeing reforms of the military and police.

Mr. Jaye worries that not enough is being done in Liberia to create jobs for ex-combatants and other young people. Political reconciliation is vital, he says, but so is "closing the inequality gap" in Liberia. "You can preach your reconciliation, but if a person wakes up every morning and doesn't know what they're going to have that day, that reconciliation will have a little problem."

Kwaku Asante-Darko, a senior expert on conflict prevention at the African Union, also believes that economic revival, especially job creation, is especially important for preserving peace in countries emerging from war. "When people are engaged in purposeful life," he told *Africa Renewal,* "when people are earning their own living and have *hope* for the future, then any appeal for violence will not have much attraction." To create such circumstances, he agrees that the African Union and other official institutions must find ways to better harness civil society abilities and energies.

For early warning, many eyes and ears

To help prevent conflicts from erupting into large-scale violence, political officeholders, police commanders and community leaders all need timely information about developing crises. Traditionally, such information has been gathered and disseminated by state security agencies. But African governments are realizing that their capacities are limited, and that civil society groups, with so many more eyes and ears on the ground, can also help warn of building tensions.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is the first regional grouping of African governments to establish an official early warning mechanism in direct collaboration with a civil society organization, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). The result is the ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN), headquartered in Abuja, Nigeria, with four additional hubs in Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia and Liberia. "The system itself is very new, with a lot of room for improvement," acknowledges Chukwuemeka Eze, a programme director for WANEP.

ECOWARN collects and analyzes data and quickly provides it to the ECOWAS Commission for rapid responses, when necessary. The information comes from government entities, civil society field monitors and open public sources (often Web-based). So far, its timely data has helped ECOWAS mediators and other forces to deploy with varying degrees of success in Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Togo and Guinea.

WANEP, with a network of civil society affiliates throughout West Africa, brings into the work of ECOWARN its own particular concern for "human security," on top of the regional governments' more traditional interest in state security. So in addition to tracking incidents of armed insurgency, drug smuggling and cross-border crime, ECOWARN pays attention to trafficking in people, natural disasters, community conflicts and the plight of refugees and displaced people.

ECOWARN's situation report for the week of 4–10 June, for instance, tallies 29 separate incidents in eight different countries. Their seriousness is ranked as low, medium or high, depending on the number of people affected and the ability of the government to respond effectively. That week, the incidents included the killing of seven UN peacekeepers in Côte d'Ivoire by suspected Liberian militias, fighting between rival rebel groups in northern Mali and a number of deadly confrontations in Nigeria.

In addition to backing ECOWAS's wider conflict-prevention activities, WANEP is active through its own national affiliates. On 14 June, Justin Bayor, the national coordinator of WANEP in Ghana, drew attention to a recent alarming increase in violent community disputes in that country, worsened by inflows of small arms and the presence of ex-combatants from elsewhere in the region. "If we do not take care," he said, "we will very soon have a heavily armed civilian population." With a general election coming up in December, he added that "we have to work to let it pass peacefully."

— Ernest Harsch

African economies capture world attention

Skyline of Luanda, Angola: Will Africa be "the next global economic frontier"?

Reuters / Mike Hutchings

But huge challenges still lie ahead

By Kingsley Ighobor

Young men and women chat along the glittering corridors of the sprawling shopping complex. With state-of-the-art mobile communication gadgets in hand, they go in and out of the mall's 65 shops, filling shopping bags with expensive items. There is a large and well-equipped children's playground at the back. Fully air-conditioned, the mall has 20,000 square metres of retail space, a theatre, restaurants, bars and parking for 900 cars. Welcome to the Accra Mall in Ghana, one of West Africa's best — and comparable to any mall in the world.

In Ghana, as in many other African countries, young people are living out the continent's economic growth. They are educated and relatively well-off, as seen in their cars, dress and homes. Ghana's economy grew by an impressive 14.4 per cent in 2011, while many African economies are expected to be among the world's fastest-growing in 2012, according to the World Bank. Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and others will lead the charge.

Undoubtedly Africa is still bedevilled by poverty, with half of its people living on less than $2 a day. However, its economic growth over the past decade has been striking.

A hopeful continent

"There is a new story emerging out of Africa: a story of growth, progress, potential and profitability," reports Ernst & Young, a US-based business consulting company. Johnnie Carson, the US secretary of state for African affairs, adds: "Africa represents the next global economic frontier." Investors had better be aware, advises Mr. Carson, who recently led a US trade delegation to Mozambique, Tanzania, Ghana and Nigeria. China's trade with Africa reached $160 billion in 2011, making the continent one of its largest trading partners.

Ten years earlier, in 2000, *The Economist* saw no reason for hope. It pronounced Africa "the hopeless continent," noting problems that included a bloody civil war in Sierra Leone, famine in Ethiopia and political conflict in Zimbabwe. But last December, the London magazine reconsidered: "Since *The Economist* regrettably labelled Africa 'the hopeless continent' a decade ago, a profound change has taken hold." Today "the sun shines bright ... the continent's impressive growth looks likely to continue."

Promising indicators

Africa's overall economic indicators have been remarkable. Over the past decade, Africa's trade with the rest of the world has increased by more than

200 per cent, annual inflation has averaged only 8 per cent and foreign debt has decreased by 25 per cent. Foreign direct investment (FDI) grew by 27 per cent in 2011 alone.

Even though projections for overall growth in 2012 have been revised downward due to the political crisis in North Africa, Africa's economy will still grow by 4.2 per cent, according to a UN report in June. Sub-Saharan African economies will grow at more than 5 per cent, notes the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In addition, there are currently more than 600 million mobile-phone users on the continent, while increasing literacy and improving skills have resulted in a 3 per cent growth in productivity.

Most foreign investors are still cautious about Africa, particularly because of security and infrastructure problems. But there is a steady increase in intra-African investment, which in 2011 accounted for about 17 per cent of total FDI, according to Ernst & Young. African entrepreneurs are reaping the benefits. The world's richest black person used to be the US talk show icon Oprah Winfrey, worth $3 billion. Today, Aliko Dangote of Nigeria, referred to by *Forbes* magazine as a "commodities titan," has amassed more than $10 billion.

Investor's dreamland

Several factors make Africa an investor's dreamland. McKinsey Global Institute, a think tank, writes, "The rate of return on foreign investment is higher in Africa than in any other developing region."

Africa's economic growth is driven by a number of factors, including an end to many armed conflicts, abundant natural resources and economic reforms that have promoted a better business climate.

More political stability is lubricating the continent's economic engine. The UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in 2005 linked democracy to economic growth. "Good governance is central to improving economic performance and promoting economic progress in Africa," argued Abdoulie Janneh, the ECA executive secretary at the time.

Another important factor is accelerating urbanization. While it may strain social services in the cities, it has also led to an increase in urban consumers. More than 40 per cent of Africa's population now lives in cities, and by 2030 "Africa's top 18 cities will have a combined spending power of $1.3 trillion," McKinsey projects. *The Wall Street Journal* reports that Africa's middle class, currently numbering 60 million, will reach 100 million by 2015.

Still a long way to go

Africa's current economic indicators may appear upbeat, but analysts say it is not yet time to celebrate. "I'll be cautioning against excessive exuberance," says Donald Kaberuka, president of the Africa Development Bank (AfDB). "A sustained slowdown in advanced countries will dampen demand for Africa's exports," adds Christine Lagarde, managing director of the IMF. Europe accounts for more than half of Africa's external trade, and tourism could also suffer as fewer Europeans come to Africa, denting economies — like those in Kenya, Tanzania and Egypt — that rely heavily on tourism.

The South African central bank also warned in May that the crisis in Europe, which consumes 25 per cent of South Africa's exports, poses huge risks. And adverse effects on Africa's largest economy will have devastating consequences for neighbouring economies.

Another flashpoint is the resurgence of political crises. Due to the Arab Spring, economic growth in North Africa nosedived to just 0.5 per cent in 2011. Recent coups in Mali and Guinea-Bissau could have wider economic repercussions. "Mali was scoring very well, now we are back to square one," says Mthuli Ncube, the AfDB's chief economist. Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and other countries are militarily engaged in Somalia, which may slow their economies. And Nigeria is grappling with Boko Haram, a terrorist sect in the north of that country.

Africa also faces other headwinds. The *2011 Africa Economic Report* of the ECA and African Union warned of Africa's "jobless recovery," noting that investors are concentrating on the extractive sector, particularly oil, gold and diamonds, which produces few jobs.

Another report, the *African Economic Outlook 2012* (produced by the AfDB, ECA, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and UN Development Programme) reinforces concern about unemployment, adding that about 60 per cent of Africa's unemployed are aged 15 to 24 and about half are women. In May, UNDP raised an alarm over food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa, a quarter of whose 856 million people are undernourished.

Talk of a rising African middle class is hasty, the AfDB argues. Defined loosely as those who live on $2 or more a day, most "middle-class" Africans have daily expenditures of no more than $4, notes the bank. Potential economic shocks could easily throw many families into poverty, below the $2 threshold. High income inequality also clouds the picture. In 2008, for example, just 100,000 of Africa's 1 billion people had a total net worth of $800 billion, equivalent to 60 per cent of the continent's gross domestic product.

Despite such hurdles, Africa's economies do not seem set to slow down. Ernst & Young insists that this "story has to be told more confidently and consistently." But equally important is the need to ensure that the continent's economic growth also creates jobs and helps rescue millions from poverty.

Beyond mining taxes, to development

Contracts must benefit communities and promote economic linkages

By Efam Dovi Accra

Small-scale gold miners in Obuasi, Ghana: Across Africa, communities in mining regions are demanding better deals from the big companies.

Panos / George Osodi

Obuasi, about 200 kilometres northwest of Accra, Ghana's capital, is home to one of the world's richest gold mines. For more than a hundred years the precious metal mined there has been taken to jewellers in the West and beyond, earning millions of dollars for mining companies and their shareholders.

But for inhabitants of villages around this rich mine — the tenth-largest in the world at the end of the 20th century — years of extracting what lies beneath the rocks have brought only hardship. Cyanide-polluted streams and farmland contaminated by toxic water are just two of the harmful outcomes. As in many mining communities in Africa, infrastructure is very limited.

"Obuasi is the ultimate example of how mining is developed in Africa," says Yao Graham of the Third World Network, a civil society group. "The resources are taken out and very little is left for the community or the country where the mineral is produced," he told *Africa Renewal*.

The paradox

African nations possess an enviable share of the world's reserves of minerals. These include the six most traded commodities on the London Metal Exchange — aluminum, copper, lead, nickel, tin and zinc. Other valuable minerals coming out of Africa include chromium, cobalt, diamonds, gold, iron, manganese, phosphate, platinum, rutile, uranium and vanadium.

The unprecedented industrial expansion of China, Brazil and India depends in part on Africa's vast natural resources. Experts contend, however, that African economies are net losers in this global trade. Through taxes, they earn only a fraction of the profits from the decades-long mineral boom. The workers employed by mining corporations receive low wages, while they and their communities pay a hefty price in environmental pollution and social disruption, breeding feelings of resentment.

"This sentiment has become particularly pronounced since the early years of the current mineral commodity price boom, which has substantially lifted profits for mining companies," observes a new report, *Minerals and Africa's Development*, launched in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, last December at the second African Union Conference of Ministers Responsible for Mineral Resources Development.

In 2010, net profits for the top 40 mining companies grew by 156 per cent over the previous years. However, Africa's "own share of windfall earnings has been minuscule," laments Stephen Karingi, a director at the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

Meanwhile, across Africa, mining communities are experiencing the negative effects: few schools and roads, health problems associated with poisonous chemicals and unsafe drinking water, forced relocation and the disruption of livelihoods. In research on water quality in Ghanaian mining communities around Obuasi and Tarkwa, the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining, an advocacy group, found in 2010 that 250 rivers had been poisoned by cyanide and heavy metals. Such communities feel that their interests are never taken into account when their leaders sign contracts with mining companies.

Shifting policy

Participants at the Addis Ababa conference focused on ways to implement the ambitious African Mining Vision (AMV) approved by African heads of state in 2009. The AMV is a policy guideline for ensuring the optimal exploitation of Africa's mineral resources for economic transformation and poverty eradication.

Mineral-rich nations, the experts concur, must make strategic policy decisions to maximize mining's contribution to development. This would require shifting from simply extracting minerals to a broader framework that integrates policies for mining, industry, economic development and environmental protection.

An action plan for achieving the AMV was adopted at the Addis Ababa meeting. It calls on governments to improve their policies, strengthen mining institutions and legal and regulatory structures, and invest in human skills and data collection to more effectively manage the sector.

Poor mining management and regulation have fuelled criticism of mining companies and governments, and in some cases hostility. In February 2012, angry villagers from a string of settlements marched across a platinum-rich corner of South Africa to demand a better deal from Xstrata, a multinational mining company.

The AMV acknowledges the importance of mineral rents and taxes. But it also calls for governments to link mining to the development of energy, roads, railways, agriculture and social infrastructure, both in issuing new mineral contracts and in renegotiating existing ones.

To avoid conflicts and address the adverse impacts of mining, the AMV says that it is essential to have "a transparent and inclusive mining sector that is environmentally and socially responsible" and that "provides lasting benefits to the community and pursues an integrated view of the rights of various stakeholders."

Contract negotiation critical

With the current minerals boom, Africa is today being touted as the next global frontier. But the balance of power will not automatically tilt to African governments at the negotiating table. Since mining companies are often better financed and more skilled than African delegations, the AMV stresses the importance of improving African governments' negotiating capacities.

In Sierra Leone the UN Development Programme provides a presidential task force on mining contract negotiations with access to some of the best legal and technical experts in the world. The result has been more income for the government and better deals for affected communities.

In 2010 the African Development Bank (AfDB) established a legal advisory body to back governments in long-term contract negotiations. Aside from supporting legal fees and recommending world-class law firms with special skills, the AfDB also insists that local lawyers be involved in the process. "It is very crucial," the AfDB's Coumba Doucoure Ngalani told *Africa Renewal.* "We are not only supporting countries to get the best deal out of the contract; we also build local legal capacity."

Community dialogue

Ms. Ngalani acknowledges that it is important for governments to engage in dialogue with local communities before signing mining contracts. "At the end of the day, if you explore, it is going to affect the community. You touch on the environment, people are displaced, and livelihoods are lost. If everything is included in the contract at the start, the companies would have to respect that," she emphasizes.

According to the AMV, governments' ability to optimize the benefits of mining contracts is concentrated at the outset. "It is difficult," says the AMV, "to fundamentally renegotiate contracts at a later stage without sending negative signals to investors."

Mr. Graham says it is key to replace the old order with the new thinking outlined in the AMV and Action Plan. "It needs political will and domestic mobilization."

Indeed, where mining has contributed to better development outcomes, as in Botswana, South Africa and Namibia, success can be linked to sound management, good governance, adequate infrastructure and a favourable business environment. The Addis Ababa conference could not emphasize that enough.

Tourism in Africa is slowly coming of age

Innovation and better infrastructure can draw more visitors

By **Kingsley Ighobor** and **Aissata Haidara**

Jet-lagged, 500 delegates from around the world arrived in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in May to deliberate on the path to Africa's tourism future. To unwind, Zimbabwe's Tourism Authority, host of the congress of the Africa Travel Association (ATA), had organized a fun-filled welcome. The delegates toured Victoria Falls — one of the world's seven natural wonders — where they participated in bungee jumping, gorge swinging and zip-lining over the Zambezi River. They then went on safari, encountering lions and elephants. Later they savoured local cuisine and danced enthusiastically to traditional music.

The host's intention was clear: see, feel and believe. Zimbabwe's showcasing spoke louder than routine speeches. It spurred tourism ministers from Ghana, Namibia, Uganda and other African countries to become bullish about the continent's potential. Said US Ambassador Charles A. Ray, "Zimbabwe, even with its political uncertainty, is a potentially huge market."

Economic lifelines

Tourism watchers are upbeat. In 2004, proponents of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) approved an action plan to make Africa the "21st century destination." Taleb Rifai, secretary-general of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), recently stated that "Africa has been one of the fastest-growing tourism regions of the last decade.... With the right investment, tourist arrivals will continue to grow, investors will see excellent returns, jobs will be created and the entire economy will benefit." The sector already employs about 7.7 million people in Africa. Mr. Rifai cited data showing steady increases in Africa's tourist arrivals, from 37 million in 2003 to 58 million in 2009.

Tourism revenues are the lifeline of many economies. About 50 per cent of Seychelles' gross domestic product (GDP) comes from tourism. The rates are 30 per cent in Cape Verde, 25 per cent in Mauritius and 16 per cent in Gambia. The World Bank reports that tourism accounts for 8.9 per cent of East Africa's GDP, 7.2 per cent of North Africa's, 5.6 of West Africa's and 3.9 per cent of Southern Africa's. In Central Africa, tourism contributes just 1 per cent.

Visitors to a cultural festival in Benin: Many potential tourists are interested in experiencing African cultures, not just going on wildlife safaris.

Panos / George Osodi

Small space on global stage

Despite the chest-thumping, Africa's share of global tourist arrivals is relatively small. There were 980 million international tourist arrivals in 2011, of which only 50 million traveled to Africa. However, Africa is still receiving more tourists than the Caribbean, Central America and South America combined, according to UNWTO.

North Africa suffered a 12 per cent loss in 2011 from the previous year due to that region's political unrest, denting the continent's share of international arrivals. But that loss was partially offset by a 7 per cent uptick in sub-Saharan Africa, which gained 2 million arrivals. Overall, the 2011 data shows that Africa performed better than the Middle East, which lost 5 million arrivals. Generally, the continent's top earners are Egypt, South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritius, according to UNWTO.

Tourists in Africa come mostly from Europe and the US. France is the number one source, followed by the UK and the US. French tourists like to go to Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritius, Senegal and Madagascar. Tourists from the UK mostly go to Egypt, South Africa, Mauritius and Gambia, while those from the US prefer South Africa, Tanzania, Ghana, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.

Infrastructure problems

The East African Community (EAC), a regional bloc, hopes to attract tourists from other parts of the world — not just the West — to go to different parts of East Africa — not just Kenya and Tanzania. The EAC strategy, developed in 2006, includes using DVDs, brochures and other materials to promote the region as a bloc. At international tourism conferences, East Africa now speaks with one voice.

What draws tourists to a country, region or continent? "I wanted to see something different from Europe and I decided to visit Kenya and Tanzania. It is a different feel I got, and I like that," Sven Brun, from Norway, tells *Africa Renewal*. The McKinsey Global Institute, a think tank, maintains that tourists are attracted to countries with good infrastructure, safety and security, and sanitation. Janet Kiwia, the managing director of World Jet Travel and Tours in Tanzania, adds that bad roads, poorly maintained airports, power outages and other shortcomings keep tourists away.

There are concerns over the safety of Africa's aircraft and airspace. In just two days in June, two planes crashed in Nigeria and Ghana, killing more than 160 people. In 2009 the World Bank found that 60 per cent of runways in North Africa were in excellent condition, but only 17 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa were. In addition, many sub-Saharan airports are small and have trouble dealing with increasing arrivals. Most depend on a single airline and some have no connections to major carriers.

Innovative approaches

A report by New York University, the World Bank and the ATA calls on industry operators to apply innovative approaches to managing the different types of African tourism, which it categorizes as "safari," "nature" and "culture." The report recommends "going beyond traditional safari to include new adventures" by tapping tour operators' creativity.

Nature tourism, including gorilla tracking, presents opportunities. More than 700 mountain gorillas live in the Virunga Mountains that span Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Faced with political instability, the DRC is trying to attract tourists by charging lower rates than Rwanda and Uganda. In 2011 the three countries raked in a total of $225 million from gorilla tourism. Through the website www.friendagorilla.org, tourists pay to track gorillas using webcams. It is also possible to "friend" a gorilla on the social network Facebook. Raising awareness of gorilla tourism through social media may attract more tourists from different parts of the world. More tourists mean more money spent on hotels, restaurants, tour guides and souvenirs, stimulating local economies.

Culture tourism requires aggressive promotion. Like food festivals in Mexico and music and cultural festivals in Jamaica and Trinidad, African festivals can draw visitors. Film festivals in Zanzibar and Burkina Faso attract culture tourists. Africa needs to "develop flagship tourist attractions and communicate brand effectively," advises a McKinsey report.

Africa's domestic tourism (by resident visitors) has been flagging. Not more than half of Kenyan chief executives have seen an elephant, notes Victoria Safari, a Kenyan tourism company. "Africans should know Africa better than the white person from outside," it adds, recommending cheaper transportation rates and ease of travel to encourage African tourists. Currently it costs about $1,500 to travel 1,800 miles from Luanda, Angola, to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, but only $1,100 to go from London to Dar es Salaam, a distance of 4,600 miles.

Bright prospects

Some countries are moving in the right direction. Frommer's, a US travel guide series, named Ethiopia one of the world's top 12 destinations in 2007. The 2010 World Cup in South Africa attracted more than 300,000 foreign visitors. Only recently, renowned international singer Youssou N'Dour became Senegal's minister of culture and tourism, which may help boost tourism in his country.

It may take some time before Africa catches up with Europe, which received 480 million tourists last year. But as international arrivals hit the milestone of 1 billion worldwide in 2012, Africa should aim for a bigger slice of the pie. The right infrastructure, safety and security, and effective communication of the continent's attractions can be starting points.

Harnessing African stock exchanges to promote growth

Traders on the floor of the Nigerian Stock Exchange: Most African exchanges are still small and dominated by just a few large companies.

Panos / Jacob Silberberg

Despite some weaknesses, right policies could unleash their power

By Masimba Tafirenyika

Days before Facebook became a public company on 18 May, the hype behind the social network giant went into overdrive. The media proclaimed it the biggest ever stock market flotation by an Internet company. Investors salivated over a rare chance to make quick profits. The 900 million plus fans who had turned Facebook into a global giant wondered publicly what was in it for them. For a while, it wasn't just seasoned investors eyeing the stock; even the public showed momentary interest.

In the event, Facebook's crowning achievement as a public company was an anticlimax — and even almost turned into a disaster. Yet the flotation showed the twin power of stock markets: an ability to raise capital for business expansion (a massive $16 billion for Facebook), along with a potential to destabilize economies.

With African stock exchanges becoming important sources of investment capital for large corporations, Facebook's experience has revived debate on whether exchanges are capable of promoting economic growth. Suspicions over their weaknesses are not without basis. The absence of laws regulating trading in derivatives was largely blamed for the 2007 global financial crisis. If such practices could happen on the world's biggest exchanges, critics ask, how can Africa's fragile economies withstand the whims of markets?

Positive outlook

As European economies struggle with a debt crisis and sluggish growth expected in the US and elsewhere, investors are eyeing Africa as the next frontier, thanks to a surging economy and positive growth estimates over the next few years. Indeed, Africa "could be on the brink of an economic take-off, much like China was 30 years ago, and India 20 years ago," says the World Bank.

This year, sub-Saharan Africa's economy is forecast to expand by 5.9 per cent, ahead of North Africa's growth of 4.2 per cent, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Seven African countries are expected to be among the 10 fastest-growing economies in the world for the period 2011-2015. Perceptions of Africa among investors "are becoming more distinctly positive over the long-term horizon," says Ernst & Young, a global business consultancy company, in its 2011 *Africa Attractiveness Survey*, with capital investments there set to reach $150 billion by 2015.

Given Africa's growth prospects, the challenge for investors is to identify the best avenue for entering the market. Stock exchanges hold some advantages over, say, private equity (see page 25) in raising investment capital: Companies can raise large sums of money to expand operations without getting expensive bank loans, listed firms are required to publish regular reports and stock exchanges give individuals a chance to invest directly in large corporations.

The World Bank reckons that investors looking for opportunities in Africa can expect "some of the highest investment returns in the world." InvestingInAfrica.net, a website that monitors African stock markets, reports that as of May 2012, six stock markets (Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia) had three-year returns of at least 27 per cent in dollar terms. Zambia topped the chart with a whopping 57 per cent, thanks to a growing economy boosted by rising commodity prices. Last year, however, was a bad year for Africa's stock markets because of the global recession. Still, Zambia's Lusaka Stock Exchange, one of the best performers, was up 18.3 per cent, with better-than-average medium-term returns expected elsewhere in the region.

There are 23 stock exchanges in Africa today, up from 18 a decade ago. The newest is the Rwanda Stock Exchange (with four listed companies), which officially opened its doors to the public about three years ago. Other countries, including Gambia and Sierra Leone, are showing interest in joining the club.

Not every country in Africa, however, needs a stock exchange. "It is very expensive to run an exchange and not commercially viable to have lots of exchanges all around the continent," Nicky Newton-King, the first female chief executive officer of South Africa's Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), told journalists last year.

Markets are too small

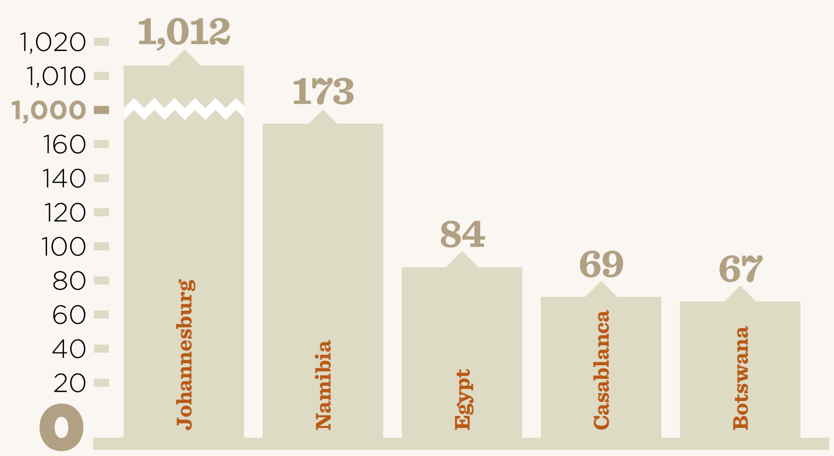
There are many obstacles that inhibit the growth of stock markets in Africa. Except for the JSE, the continent's biggest in terms of the number of listed companies and market value, African stock markets are still small and often dominated by a handful of large corporations. For example, the conglomerate Dangote Group makes up about 30 per cent of the Nigerian Stock Exchange. Trading in shares is less frequent, and when it happens, it is usually limited to a few firms. Many do not have access to reliable and up-to-date information technology; in some, trading is done manually. Lack of liquidity is a major weakness, and in many cases, the general public does not have confidence in the integrity of stock exchanges.

These problems, many of them deep-seated, cannot be fixed overnight. They require time and resources. Nor are they the only weak spots — institutional flaws are equally harmful.

"The destabilizing effects of introducing stock markets into economies with underdeveloped legal, regulatory and monetary systems can produce economic instability that outweighs potential gains," noted Michel Isimbabi in a research paper on African stock markets. Without these safeguards, critics charge, traders could use stock markets to gamble and speculate.

Yet Isimbabi's study, published in the US-based Johns Hopkins University's *SAIS Review*, concluded that notwithstanding these criticisms, there is strong evidence that a stock market can be an essential part of a developing

Top five African stock exchanges
by $ billion in market capitalization, 2010



Source: UN Africa Renewal from African Securities Exchanges Association data.

Stock markets are one way for African companies to raise cash for expansion.

Alamy / Jake Lyell

economy. A number of studies by the IMF also arrived at the same conclusion: if supported by the right policies and reforms, stock markets can help African companies expand operations, in turn contributing to economic growth.

Increased investment flows

Luckily, environments favourable to the growth of stock exchanges are beginning to take root in Africa. Political stability now exists in many countries — despite recent setbacks in Mali and Guinea-Bissau — even in post-conflict countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. In its latest survey, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, a group that supports good governance in Africa, says that "political stability in sub-Saharan Africa has dramatically improved in recent years."

Sound economic policies and accountable institutions too are a must. Along with political stability, the World Bank's 2012 *Global Economic Prospects* report attributes increased investment flows to Africa to higher commodity prices and improved macroeconomic stability. Rwanda, for instance, is now one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, thanks to its pro-business policies and a positive investment climate. South Africa — and to some extent Kenya — has a long history of investor-friendly policies. And the continent's sleeping giant, Nigeria, even in the face of current bombings by the Boko Haram group, is gradually getting its act together, guided by reformist finance minister and former World Bank managing director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

In contrast, countries with high levels of risk, such as weak investment laws or lack of respect for property rights, have learned the hard way. Zimbabwe comes to mind. Uncertainty over the direction of its economic policies has seen the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange — once one of Africa's biggest and most active — shrink in both size and value.

The small size of African stock markets and the absence of liquidity are often cited by foreign investors as the major impediments to investing in the region. Experts have recommended merging them into regional exchanges as one solution. "A regional exchange should mean more liquidity — the lifeblood of exchanges — by making stocks available to a wider range of investors," argues *The Economist*, a British weekly magazine.

Regional integration is slow

But so far, there has been little progress on regional integration. Cooperation among exchanges is still limited to technical and regulatory issues. The modest market value and size of Africa's two regional stock exchanges — one made up of five countries in Central Africa and the other representing eight in West Africa, with both sharing common currencies — limit their attraction to investors.

The most recent attempt towards regional integration is last year's partnership agreement between FTSE, the British stock market index, and 16 of the 22 members of the African Securities Exchanges Association (ASEA) to launch the FTSE-ASEA Pan Africa Index in 2012. "The index will help to improve the visibility of African stocks and also provides an opportunity for investors to access African equities," Siobhan Cleary, the JSE director of strategy and public policy, said in response to questions from *Africa Renewal*.

Early this year, the JSE unveiled a new strategy designed to improve relations with several stock exchanges in Africa through the ASEA and the Committee of Southern African Development Community Stock Exchanges (CoSSE). The JSE has offered CoSSE members the use of its advanced trading system at less than market cost. Except for Namibia, there have been no takers, "though discussions with other exchanges are ongoing," says Cleary.

Even with obvious rewards such as a bigger market size, low costs and more liquidity, the conditions for regional integration are yet to mature. According to financial experts, progress would require African countries to harmonize their trading laws and accounting standards, set up convertible currencies and establish free trade among members. Also, nationalism still plays a part: countries tend to treat stock markets as national symbols and therefore are not rushing to relinquish control.

True, stock exchanges are not the only entry for investors to buy into African companies, nor are they so far fully up to the task. Yet with the right policies and incentives, African countries can encourage the growth of their stock exchanges to become important vehicles for future Facebooks to raise capital for business expansion.

Private equity: new cash for expanding businesses

Funds target capital-hungry companies in Africa

By Bill Hinchberger

Africa is growing, and African companies need cash to expand. Investors want in on the action, especially given low returns in many other parts of the world these days. But with few stocks and bonds, and scant liquidity for those out there, how do investors get a foothold? And how do African firms access much-needed cash?

Enter private equity — the purchase by a private investor of a share of a company that is not listed on a stock market. The company can take the money from the sale and use it for expansion or other investments. In exchange, the owner gives up some control, as the new partner gets a seat on the board or, in smaller companies, plays an advisory role. Eventually investors make money by selling their shares or receiving dividends.

Opportunities galore

In Africa, private equity is all the rage. "If you look at all the opportunities," says David Jeromin, managing partner of the US-based Global Mean Capital, it is like the "nightmare" of someone with attention deficit disorder. "There is just so much stuff."

Announcements of new African private equity funds come regularly. In February the African Development Bank (AfDB) announced that it would chip in US$50 million towards a fund of the US-based Carlyle Group, which plans to invest at least $500 million in sub-Saharan Africa. In May, the Brazilian investment bank BTG Pactual launched a $1 billion Africa-focused private equity fund. In the 15 months from January 2011 to March 2012, eight new funds focusing on East and Southern Africa were launched.

East Africa alone has 16 dedicated funds, out of 53 active in that region. Officials of nearly three dozen funds responded to a survey, released in March by Deloitte, a global consultancy, and Africa Assets, a private research and consulting firm, showing that nearly four-fifths planned to increase outlays in the next year.

Train station in Mombasa, Kenya: In 2011, an Egyptian company invested in the company operating the railway from Mombasa to Uganda in the largest private equity deal in East Africa that year.

Alamy / Tina Manley

The overall numbers are impressive, although a bit volatile. Private equity investment in sub-Saharan Africa jumped from $741 million in 2003 to $1.3 billion last year, with ups and downs in between, according to the Emerging Markets Private Equity Association.

All sizes

Private equity placements come in all sizes. The biggest in East Africa last year was a $287 million deal by Egypt's Citadel Capital to invest in Rift Valley Railways, which operates the railroad from Kenya's Mombasa seaport to Uganda. The AfDB, whose private equity portfolio stands at $1.1 billion, regularly invests in independent funds that make equity placements in Africa. These funds have invested in 294 companies, of which 54 topped $15 million and 163 were under $1 million.

Infrastructure, banking, mining, oil and gas, and other commodities generally attract the heavy hitters. At the other end of the spectrum, venture capital focuses on less mature companies, which are generally small and often headed by a charismatic entrepreneur.

One such company is Cheetah Palm Oil, a start-up in Ghana founded by the well-known economist George Ayittey. Cheetah has backing from Global Mean Capital. Instead of buying land and growing crops, it will work with a producers' cooperative to help market products internationally and to ensure that farmers get fair prices, microcredit and agricultural extension services. The project has the potential to encompass 50,000 small growers with farms covering 75,000 hectares of land.

This is not your genteel, Silicon Valley–style venture capital. "You have to rally resources around the entrepreneur and build infrastructure," says Mr. Jeromin, whose firm is solidly in the venture capital realm. "It takes a heck of a lot of time."

Venture capital remains a small subset of all private equity operations in Africa, partly because it is so labour-intensive. "There are a lot of people who do not want to get their hands dirty," Mr. Jeromin complains.

A rutted road

Even for larger investors, the path to profitability can seem more like a rutted dirt road than like a freshly paved expressway. "Private equity is not challenging in terms of finding investment opportunities," says Larry Seruma, chief investment officer and managing principal of Nile Capital Management, based in the US state of New Jersey. "It is like fishing in a barrel. The problem is with managing the business. Often there is not enough talent to take it to the next level. If you are a minority shareholder, you might not find the right people to represent you on the board, for example."

On the talent front, Seruma, himself a native of Uganda, finds hope in the return of people who were once counted as drops in the brain drain. "The African diaspora is huge," he says. "Well educated people are going back. Employment in the developed markets is not that good anymore, and Africa is growing. Local talent is moving back."

Investors are also worried about their "exit strategies," a euphemism for how they expect to realize returns on their investments. After all, these are profit-seeking capitalists, not philanthropists.

Venture capitalists like Mr. Jeromin sometimes look to larger private equity firms to buy their stakes as their protégés grow. Another option is known as a "trade sale," selling all or part of a firm to a muscular multinational company looking to expand. Potential buyers could include major players in neighbouring countries seeking cross-border expansion to take advantage of the liberalized flow of goods and services within regional trade blocs.

Recently the Aureos Southern Africa Fund sold its 49 per cent stake in Zambia's foremost producer of table eggs, Golden Lay, to the African Agriculture Fund, a private fund managed by Phatisa, which invests in sustainable food businesses across Africa. "This marks a very successful investment and exit for Aureos," says Ron den Besten, its managing partner. "Golden Lay has made great strides in the last five years. Production capacity has more than doubled as a result of our strategy of investment in new state-of-the-art laying houses, providing the impetus for exponential financial growth during our investment period."

Few IPOs

One popular exit strategy elsewhere, especially in the US, is the initial public offering (IPO), in which an investor sells at least part of its stake when the company puts its shares up for sale on a stock market. But African stock markets tend to be thin and illiquid (see article, page 22), and so IPOs have been relatively rare, although not unheard-of.

Mr. Jeromin reaches back into US history for another strategy. "If you go back to the 1800s, before there were liquid markets, investors got their money through dividends. You can set up a preferred-share structure," in which certain shareholders receive privileged pay-outs.

Private equity is not without its drawbacks. Company owners and entrepreneurs will not always be pleased by pressure they might get from their new partners. And investors may lose interest if their exit strategies prove elusive.

But private equity seems to be starting to fill a void that cannot be handled by banks alone. "For most companies in Africa, raising money means going to the bank," says David Levin, senior managing partner of Nova Capital Global Markets in New York. "We bring in a different level of financing."

Northern Mali's 'city of saints' suffers rebel fury

Destruction of Timbuktu mausoleums is "repugnant," says UN

By Jocelyne Sambira

Djinguereber mosque in Timbuktu, Mali: Rebel forces have destroyed some of the mosque's mausoleums, along with other holy shrines in the ancient northern city.

Redux / laif / Berthold Steinhilber

History dating as far back as the 5th century is literally being chipped away with pick axes and shovels at the hands of an extremist rebel faction in northern Mali. Holy Muslim shrines in the ancient city of Timbuktu have become targets of the Ansar Dine. For the Islamist faction, the Sufi shrines are a form of idolatry.

But for many others in the overwhelmingly Muslim country, the mausoleums of Islamic saints are religiously significant, and regularly draw crowds of people, including Muslims preparing for the *Hajj*, or pilgrimage, to Mecca. These ancient buildings and monuments — some listed by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as World Heritage Sites — are also an integral part of world history and the collective memory of the people of Mali. Timbuktu was an intellectual and spiritual capital that played an essential part in the spread of Islam across Africa's Sahara and Sahel in the 15th and 16th centuries.

A number of Timbuktu's sacred tombs are now gone, reduced to piles of rubble. "Repugnant" is how Irina Bokova, director-general of UNESCO, has described the vandalism. "There is no justification for such wanton destruction. I call on all parties engaged in the conflict to stop these terrible and irreversible acts, to exercise their responsibility and protect this invaluable cultural heritage for future generations."

Still in danger are the pyramidal structures of the Tomb of Askia, as well as other religious and cultural artifacts, including 1,000-year-old Islamic manuscripts. The manuscripts — a testimony to Africa's written history — are specific to West Africa and unique in the Islamic world.

The United Nations has now placed Timbuktu and the Tomb of Askia on its List of World Heritage in Danger. Ansar Dine's threats to destroy more have brought Fadima Diallo, Mali's minister of culture, to tears. The African Union called its actions "criminal." The new chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda of Gambia, has warned that her office will open an investigation into what she calls "war crimes," under the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

The destruction in the fabled city follows a deepening crisis in the region since a military coup in Mali's capital in March (see page 9). Separatist Tuareg rebels took advantage of the instability to proclaim northern Mali an independent state. The Ansar Dine ("Protector of the Faith") then in turn ousted the Tuareg rebels and took control of Timbuktu.

The UN Security Council has condemned the group's destruction and threatened to impose sanctions against it. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is seeking the council's support for an armed intervention to regain control of northern Mali.

For hundreds of years, Timbuktu has endured every major upheaval thrown its way: foreign invasions, armed raids, an earthquake, famine. Africa and the world are hoping that it will survive the current threat.

Africa's love affair with BlackBerry

Smartphone's secret to success is affordability

It's elegant, it's hip and it's one of the hottest phones on the African market. Nothing says "I am important" like a man or woman whipping out a BlackBerry smartphone. It's easily recognizable with its wide screen and trade-mark keypad. According to Masahudu Ankiilu Kunateh, editor at Ghananewslink.com, "What is your BB pin?" has become the ultimate sizing-up request. To be asked the question, he says, you have to be considered cool enough to own one.

Research In Motion (RIM), the Canadian company that owns BlackBerry, has managed to carve itself a niche in Africa. In 2010, with the help of Brightstar, a global services company that works with key players in the wireless industry, it started distributing its gadgets throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Today South Africa boasts over 2.5 million active devices, according to World Wide Worx, a South African technology research firm. Nigeria has 2 million active devices.

A lot of phone companies are trying to tap into the African smartphone market, because of flagging sales elsewhere. Samsung and Nokia are competing for the Kenyan youth market, writes James Ratemo, online sub-editor at the Nation Media Group. Even RIM stocks went down by 70 per cent in late June, losing to Apple and Google in North America and Europe.

But the secret to BlackBerry's success in Africa is its affordability. The BlackBerry Messenger application software, which enables people to share voice and text messages, pictures and video clips, is free. Affordable data plans, like those in South Africa, allow users to pay a flat-rate of $7 per month for Internet access. RIM of Africa has also partnered with top mobile carriers like Vodafone, MTN and Airtel, sharing profits instead of tying the device to one carrier, underscores Mr. Kunateh. And its signature feature — a secure, encrypted data system that makes it difficult for an outsider to monitor communications — could help it win over local businesses.

But nothing is set in stone. The Chinese company Huawei is a strong competitor with its low-end smartphones. Currently, its locally-manufactured Android phone, which goes for the equivalent of US$80, is a big hit in rural Kenya. Google, whose Android apps are the latest craze in sub-Saharan Africa, is also testing out the waters. ●

Cheap applications and data plans have enabled BlackBerry to carve out a niche in Africa. Africa Renewal / John Gillespie

Taking the Internet to all homes in Mauritius

Mauritius is set to join a growing list of African countries with a fibre-optic network, which guarantees high-quality bandwidth and makes Internet services more accessible and affordable. The Mauritian government wants every home and office linked to the network, and Bharat Telecom, an Indian investor, is working to make the dream come true for the country of 1.3 million people.

Most Mauritians consider Internet tariffs to be exorbitant. Poor performance by service providers has also angered citizens. In November 2011, Minister of Information Technology and Communication Tassarajen Chedumbrum Pillay announced the licensing of Bharat Telecom to set up a 2,900-kilometre fibre network to cover the entire country. Work is advancing on the first phase of the project — called "Fibre to the Home" — and is expected to cover 70 per cent of the country.

In May 2012 the company announced on its Facebook page that it had experienced delays with "aerial fibre optic installations" in some parts of the country. But in June Bharat Telecom began testing its services to the satisfaction of many potential customers. ⇒

Baljinder Sharma, Bharat Telecoms' executive director, says about the broadband service: "The cheaper it is the more uptake there will be and therefore there will be more subscribers, which in turn will sustain lower bandwidth prices."

When completed, subscribers will pay just $10 per month and receive up to 40 television channels, including Fox and HBO from the US. More affluent subscribers will pay $200 for premium content and faster bandwidth. Subscribers currently pay about $50 monthly for basic Internet services.

An excited Mauritian blogger writes: "We will be able to get 40 Internet protocol television channels and Internet access for just Rs280 ($9.10.) Compare that with Rs1,500 ($49) for the [current] package and it looks like an 80 per cent saving."

Other offerings, according to Mr. Sharma, include "most Indian news channels and soaps, Hollywood, French programmes and Bollywood.... We want to be able to deliver e-commerce and education through partners." He notes that many people are eager to use Internet protocol TV.

Bharat Telecoms is not adding voice service to the overall package. "We don't want to get into a fight with the local big boys," explains Mr. Sharma, although the company plans to offer a telephone port so that subscribers can make calls within the network if they wish to.

To break even, Bharat Telecoms is setting sight on 50,000 subscribers. Mauritius currently has about 320,000 broadband users (25 per cent of the population), so the potential is great. With literacy over 80 per cent, chances are that faster and cheaper Internet service will attract many more.

Mauritius' economy is currently growing at 3.6 per cent annually, and with per capita income of $7,420, the country is considered to be middle income. The UN Development Programme's human development index ranks it second in Africa. Access to a faster and more affordable Internet can only boost its development efforts. ●

Google brings fun to Africa through SMS

It used to be that only people with smartphones able to handle photos and videos could get onto social media networks such as Facebook or Twitter and have all the fun. Now anyone in more than 40 countries with the most basic mobile phone can join the party by simply using text messaging or SMS, even when the phone is not connected to the Internet.

Recently the search engine giant, Google, announced that starting this year, its increasingly popular social network, Google+, will now be available in 41 new countries, including 22 in Africa. Until recently, Google+ through SMS was available only in the US and India. The targeted African countries are Algeria, Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia.

To sweeten the deal, Google+ users in East Africa will have the added advantage of sending SMS commands in KiSwahili, an official language in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and also spoken widely in several other countries in the region.

"We wanted to ensure that Google+ is also available at times when you are not connected to the Internet," Anat Amir, head of marketing at Google Africa, wrote on the company's blog. "This means that you can post updates, receive notifications and reply to them via SMS." Mr. Amir touted Google+ as a platform people can use "to easily manage who you share [information] with, ensuring your boss won't see your party pics and your friends are not bored with you sharing work-related news articles." To use the SMS features, mobile owners will need to go to the Google Mobile page and activate their phones.

According to TechZim, a news blog, Google considers Africa an essential market and is deliberately pushing its services through several developer and user events in a number of countries there. ●

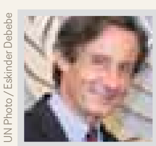
Appointments


UN Photo / Mark Garten

The Secretary-General has selected **Maged Abdelaziz** of Egypt as his new special adviser on Africa. Mr. Abdelaziz has been Egypt's permanent representative to the United Nations since 2005, as part of a 33-year diplomatic career. His Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) is in charge of overseeing UN support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).


UN Photo / Mark Garten

The Secretary-General has selected **Carlos Lopes** of Guinea-Bissau as executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). At the time of his appointment, Mr. Lopes was executive director of the UN Institute for Training and Research and director of the United Nations System Staff College, following a long career with the UN Development Programme (UNDP). At the ECA, he succeeds Abdoulie Janneh.


UN Photo / Eskinder Debebe

Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal of Austria has been named the UN's new under-secretary-general for communications and public information. Mr. Launsky-Tieffenthal brings to the position 30 years of experience with the Austrian Foreign Service, with responsibilities ranging from public diplomacy and development cooperation to press and information. Since 2007 he has been head of communication and information of the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs.

Green economy

from page 5

Mohammed Nour of Sudan's Ministry of Environment, Forests and Physical Development. The promise of the green economy, he said, "can only be achieved if there are sufficient resources available for that purpose. If we do not deploy sufficient effort we will never reach sustainable development goals."

President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya agreed, arguing that an international sustainable development financing strategy would "facilitate the mobilization of financial and other resources to assist developing countries to make the transition to the green economy more effectively."

After developed countries failed to agree to new funds — only to future talks on financing — AfDB President Kaberuka expressed disappointment. The Rio summit, he said, did not produce any concrete timetables or establish any mechanism to monitor and verify progress towards greening economies. "We are still very much in an aspirational, transitional phase."

Some African ministers pointed to the North's unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. "Countries must acquit themselves of their obligations and consume in a responsible manner," said Raymond Tshibanda, foreign minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, referring to the fact that industrialized countries' carbon emissions and water and resource use have a far higher impact on the planet than those of African nations.

'A black box'

Leaders at the Rio summit agreed that the green economy "should contribute to eradicating poverty as well as sustained economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, improving human welfare and creating opportunities for employment and decent work for all, while maintaining the healthy functioning of the earth's ecosystems." They also agreed that it was up to individual countries to set their own policies on how to achieve this.

But beyond this general consensus, the summit did not produce a clear understanding of what the term "green economy" means. Many in Africa and in civil society groups remain suspicious that it is simply business as usual or may represent new ways to restrict trade and development.

"The green economy is a black box right now," said Davinder Lamba, director of the Mazingira Institute, a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Nairobi, Kenya. "We don't know what will make it tick." More "transparency and agency" will be required to overcome the reluctance and opposition to creating green economies, Mr. Lamba added. By "agency," he means that those at the bottom, the poor and poorest countries, must have a role in shaping what green economies are and how they will work.

The Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC), an NGO network of more than 155 organizations in 22 African countries, said it was encouraged by the commitment in "The Future We Want" document to improving the livelihoods of the poor and to valuing their needs and concerns.

According to Nigel Crawhall, director of the IPACC Secretariat, many destructive projects have been justified on the basis that they increased economic growth, while ignoring their impacts on local communities and their land. Such projects now need to be "reassessed, adjusted or just cancelled, as they create poverty rather than alleviate it," he said. "The main issue which IPACC is raising is the need for checks and balances in infrastructure and extractive industries 'development,' which are alienating land from indigenous peoples, destroying biodiversity and making people poorer or pushing them into urban slums."

Some came to Rio looking for practical steps that could boost economic development and job creation. "We were hoping

South African electricity company urges use of energy-saving lightbulbs.

Alamy / Stuwdamdorp

Rio would produce concrete solutions on sustainable development. In the East African region our priority is safeguarding nature, on which our economies depend," said Jesca Eriyo, deputy secretary-general of the secretariat of the East African Community, a regional intergovernmental group of Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania. "We expected solutions that will help our women and our economies to grow because most of our people are poor and our economies still performing below expectation," said Eriyo.

However, she added, it is not clear what a green economy would mean for those active in nature-dependant sectors like agriculture, fisheries and tourism. If it brings innovation and industrialization, resulting in jobs in new industries, it could be an opportunity, she conceded.

Charles Mbella Moki, the mayor of Buea, a town in southwestern Cameroon, thought it would take time for the significance of the Rio summit to become clear. "It is yet to be seen in the years ahead if this get-together will have a positive impact on humanity."

Africa Books

Winner Take All: China's Race for Resources and What It Means for the World by Dambisa Moyo (Basic Books, New York, NY, USA, 2012; 272 pp; pb $26.99)

Sudan, South Sudan, and Darfur: What Everyone Needs to Know by Andrew S. Natsios (Oxford University Press, New York, NY, USA, 2012; 280 pp; pb $16.95)

Conflits identitaires en Afrique francophone by Pape Marc Adoux (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2011; 216 pp; pb €20.50, e-book €18.45)

Rethinking Development in Africa by Munyaradzi Mawere (Langaa RPCIG, Bamenda, Cameroon, 2011; 229 pp; pb £18.95)

The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacekeeping by Séverine Autesserre (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2010; 311 pp; pb $28.99)

Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa by Jason Stearns (PublicAffairs, New York, NY, USA, 2012; 416 pp; pb $16.99)

Afrique au fil de la démocratisation du développement et de la mondialisation by Yao Assogba (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2012; 206 pp; pb €19, e-book €15)

The Last Hunger Season: A Year in an African Farm Community on the Brink of Change by Roger Thurow (PublicAffairs, New York, NY, USA, 2012; 304 pp; pb $26.99)

The Journey to Tahrir: Revolution, Protest and Social Change in Egypt, eds. Jeannie Sowers and Chris Toensig (Verso Books, London, UK, 2012; 310 pp; pb $29.95, £19.95)

L'Egypte en marche, eds. Christian Lochon and Jean-Jacques Luthi (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2012; 232 pp; pb €22.30, PDF €18)

Race Troubles: Race, Identity and Inequality in Post-Apartheid South Africa by Kevin Durrheim (Lexington Books, MD, US, 2011; 248 pp; hb $70)

Comment l'Afrique en est arrivée là by Axelle Kabou (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2011; 426 pp; pb €35)

Effectiveness of Aid for Trade in Small and Vulnerable Economies: An Empirical Assessment by Dirk Willem te Velde, Massimiliano Calì and Mohammad A. Razzaque (Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK, 2011; 90 pp; pb £15.00, e-book £12.00)

Madagascar dans une crise interminable by Toavina Ralambomahay (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2011; 138 pp; pb €13.50)

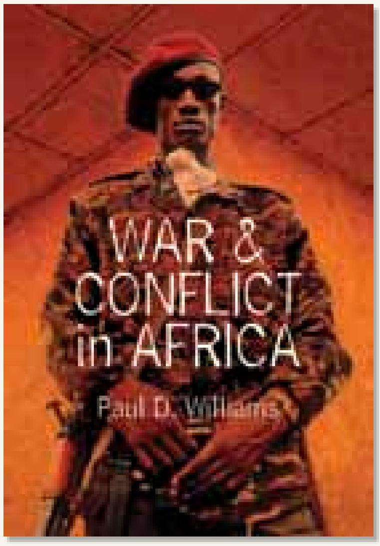
BOOK REVIEW

War and Conflict in Africa

by Paul D. Williams (Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 2011; 320 pp; $24.95)

Even as more of Africa's wars wind down, the question of why so many broke out on the continent still yields few clear answers. Yet a better understanding of what triggered those wars may help preserve fragile peace agreements, resolve the wars that still fester — and even prevent new outbreaks of mass bloodshed. *War and Conflict in Africa* gives a comprehensive — if somewhat dry and academic — overview of the broad patterns of warfare in Africa, and highlights a few possible lessons for achieving peace.

Paul Williams avoids the pitfall of trying to identify a single, sweeping explanation. In a detailed study of scores of wars and other violent conflicts in more than two dozen countries from 1990 to 2009, he finds that the reasons for war in Africa have been as complex as anywhere else in the world. The most common "big ideas" — that African wars are a heritage of colonialism, are instigated solely by elites, are driven by ethnicity or are caused by greedy criminals — do not hold up on inspection, Williams argues. Those elements may well be present, he admits, but by themselves explain little, since they are also at play in most African countries that have not had wars. Williams does detect a common thread in countries where war broke out: they had weak states that were dominated by personalized networks of political patronage, and when those states responded to new challenges with violence, they were unable to contain the violent counter-reactions that resulted.



International — and increasingly African — peacemakers and peacekeepers have succeeded in patching together a number of tenuous peace accords, Williams acknowledges. But all too often those efforts have paid scant attention to the local causes of conflict and have relied too heavily on cobbling together elite power-sharing arrangements. "The top-down peacemaking of elite bargains will not offer any quick fixes to Africa's wars," he warns. Instead, deep-going reforms are needed, especially of Africa's security forces, and far more resources must be provided both for peace efforts and for post-war development programmes.

— Ernest Harsch

La place et le rôle des femmes dans la société congolaise: 1960-2010 by Jeanne Dambendzet, Scholastique Dianzinga and Elise Thérèse Gamassa (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2011; Vol. 1: 236 pp; pb €24; Vol 2: 276 pp; pb €27)

Sud-Soudan, conquérir l'indépendance, négocier l'Etat by David Ambrosetti (Karthala, Paris, France, 2011; 232 pp; pb €19)

Au Cameroun de Paul Biya by Fanny Pigeaud (Karthala, Paris, France, 2001; 276 pp; pb €24)

Indépendances africaines: chroniques d'une relation, ed. Olivier Barlet (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2011; 248 pp; pb €22, e-book €16.50)

Chroniques afro-sarcastiques. 50 ans d'indépendance, tu parles! by Venance Konan (Favre, Lausanne, France, 2011; 152 pp; pb €18)

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