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Forty die as tropical storms hit Mozambique

The known death toll from tropical depression “Dando” and cyclone “Funso”, which hit southern and central Mozambique in January, has risen to 40, according to the government spokesperson, Deputy Justice Minister Alberto Ntutumula. The number of people directly affected by the torrential rains, high winds and flooding brought by the two storm systems is 119,000.

In Maputo City, five accommodation centres remain open for people whose homes collapsed during the storms, housing 459 people. They are waiting to be allocated plots of land on which they can build new houses.

All the food needs of the people displaced by the flooding are being met by the government in coordination with the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

Nkutumula warned that the situation could deteriorate further since the rainy season is far from over. The weather forecast for the rest of this month and for March is for normal to above normal rainfall for much of the country.

Following the partial opening of a floodgate on the Cahora Bassa dam, and the contribution from major tributaries such as the Revobue and the Shire, the Zambezi River has risen above flood alert level on its lower reaches, at Caia and Marromeu.

Further heavy rains in the Zambezi basin could lead to flooding in these two districts.

Japanese aid for disaster victims

The Japanese government on 6 February delivered a \$250,000 donation to the Mozambican government’s relief agency, the National Disaster Management Institute (INGC), to assist the victims of “Dando” and “Funso”.

The donation consists of 50 electricity generators and 1,096 water containers that can hold 20 litres each.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Director of the Second Division for Africa in the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Shinichi Asazuma, stressed that “Mozambique’s pain is also Japan’s pain”.

He expressed his condolences for the families affected by the storms, and recalled that in March last year, when Japan was struck by a catastrophic earthquake and tsunami, with a death toll of over 15,000, Mozambique had expressed its solidarity with the Japanese government and people.

“We will never forget this, and now, in recognition of the solidarity of the Mozambican people, Japan is responding immediately to your emergency requirements”, he said.

The general director of the INGC, Joao Ribeiro, thanked the Japanese diplomat for the donation and pledged that it will be sent to the correct destinations.

This is the latest in a flow of solidarity with the victims of the torrential rains and flooding brought by the two storm systems. On 3 February, the government of Botswana

delivered aid consisting of 12.5 tonnes of foodstuffs (maize, maize flour, beans, tinned meat, mineral water, sugar and vegetable oil), and 334 blankets.

Mozambican heroes a “source of inspiration”

Mozambican President Armando Guebuza said in Maputo on 3 February that when Mozambicans recall the lives of Eduardo Mondlane and other national heroes, they are seeking a source of inspiration to continue the struggle and overcome all the obstacles that may appear.

President Guebuza was speaking to reporters shortly after laying a wreath at Maputo’s Monument to the Mozambican Heroes where Mondlane, the founder and first President of Frelimo, is buried. Mondlane was assassinated in Dar es Salaam by a parcel bomb sent to him by the Portuguese political police, the PIDE on 3 February 1969. The date is now a public holiday celebrated as “Mozambican Heroes Day”.

President Guebuza said that Mozambicans are inspired by heroes such as Mondlane “because they had the courage to come together and overcome all the difficulties they faced during the struggle”.

Today’s reality, he continued, is that Mozambique has been hit by floods and cyclones, in which lives have been lost and property destroyed. “We face difficulties because of the occurrence of natural disasters”, he said. “But, inspired by our heroes, we shall continue to fight and we shall win”.

He pledged that the government will continue to provide all possible support to the victims of the floods and cyclones, so that their current difficult situation may be overcome as quickly as possible.

This year, 3 February is not just a commemoration of the country’s heroes, but also the launch of celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the creation of the ruling Frelimo Party.

“The first moment – 3 February as Heroes Day – we celebrate every year”, said Guebuza. “And the second moment is also obvious because when a party which has any self-esteem reaches its 50th birthday, it uses this as an opportunity for reflection”.

Frelimo General Secretary Filipe Paunde said that today’s Mozambican heroes are the peasants in the fields and the workers in the factories – all those who struggle in their daily lives, “so that Mozambique reaches self-sufficiency and wellbeing for all”.

President receives US business mission

President Armando Guebuza on 6 February received a business mission from the United States, which is interested in projects for investment in the area of energy.

The mission is coordinated by the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Johnnie Carson. After the audience with President Guebuza, he told reporters that the mission wants to look at investment opportunities that will increase Mozambique's capacity to generate electricity.

"We had a very receptive meeting with the President", he said. "This delegation includes eight executives from companies in the areas of transformation and transmission of electricity in the United States, to discuss the best ways of cooperating in this area".

This mission will be in Mozambique until 17 February. It hopes to look at how American energy companies might invest in setting up new power stations to meet the needs for safe and low cost electricity in Africa. The delegation will also visit Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya.

Among the companies on the mission are Anadarko Petroleum (which has made major natural gas discoveries off the coast of the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado), Caterpillar, Chevron, Energy International, General Electric, Pike Enterprises, Strategic Urban Development Alliance LLC, Symbion and Zanbato Group.

Tripartite cooperation with US and Brazil

Mozambican, Brazilian and United States technical staff are to work together to improve Mozambique's performance in food security, agriculture and health, under a declaration of intent signed by the three governments in Maputo on 23 January.

Signing the document were Mozambique's Deputy Foreign Minister, Henrique Banze, and the Brazilian and American ambassadors, Antonio Sousa e Silva and Leslie Rowe.

At the same occasion the Mozambican and Brazilian governments signed a bilateral adjustment to the "Project for Technical Support for Nutrition and Food Security Programmes in Mozambique". This is valued at \$1.68 million and also has financial support from the US government to the tune of \$1.1 million.

Speaking at the ceremony, Banze said that the staff from the three countries will work together to identify areas of intervention in agriculture and health and then draw up projects to be implemented in Mozambique.

For her part, Rowe said that success in the fight against HIV/AIDS, improved food security, and increased rural incomes demand technical solutions and knowledge.

"The technical cooperation between the USA, Brazil and Mozambique can greatly benefit each of us in our search to find solutions for the various challenges in health and agriculture", she said.

Rowe added that part of the work has already begun, since the US and Brazil are collaborating with the Mozambican Agricultural Research Institute (IIAM) and the Ministry of Education in a programme of vegetable production and school meals.

The IIAM has also worked with the US and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Company (EMBRAPA) to set up a platform for agricultural research and technological innovation in collaboration with other national research institutes.

In the health area, the ambassador stressed that the work will concentrate on the logistical system to ensure the

distribution of anti-retroviral drugs and other essential medicines, and on improving the monitoring and assessment systems.

"The United States and Brazil will also increase the training opportunities for Mozambican doctors", she added.

Sousa e Silva said that one of the goals of the partnership in agriculture is to build the capacity of the staff already working at the IIAM in soil analysis in order to improve productivity.

"The idea is to train up the IIAM technical staff so that they can improve their performance and bring solutions for improving production and productivity", he stressed. "All this activity is designed so that it will have an impact on other projects". He was thinking in particular of "Pro-Savana", which is an agricultural partnership between Mozambique, Brazil and Japan.

The Brazil-USA-Mozambique declaration of intent is tied to the "Mozambique Platform for Agricultural and Livestock Research and Technological Innovation", which involves collaboration between national and international research centres, in order to speed up the transfer of modern agricultural production technologies.

The Platform is budgeted at a total of \$13 million over the next three years. The US will provide \$8.8 million and Brazil \$4.2 million. The Mozambican government will contribute by providing the research premises, the researchers and experts, and operational support.

The implementing agencies for the three year cooperation programme are the Mozambican Health and Agriculture Ministries, The US Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Brazilian Cooperation agency.

Tripartite anti-piracy agreement signed

The Mozambican, South African and Tanzanian governments have established a mechanism to coordinate their efforts to fight against piracy and other illicit activities on the high seas.

To this end, the Defence Ministers of the three countries, Filipe Nyussi of Mozambique, Lindivi Sisulu of South Africa and Hussein Mwinyi of Tanzania, signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding on 7 February in Dar es Salaam.

According to the Mozambican Defence Ministry, the memorandum is also intended to promote the territorial integrity of the three countries, and peace, stability and the well-being of their peoples.

The three countries are already cooperating in joint maritime patrols, to ensure the safety of shipping and protect the resources of the Mozambique Channel. The new memorandum is intended to improve levels of security in the waters of the signatory countries.

There have been several attacks by gangs of Somali pirates off the coasts of Tanzania and Mozambique. The southernmost raid was on 27 December 2010, when pirates hijacked the Beira-based shipping boat the "Vega 5", operated by the company Pescamar, off the coast of the southern Mozambican province of Inhambane, and took hostage its crew of 24 (19 Mozambicans, three Indonesians and two Spaniards).

The pirates took the "Vega 5" to Somalia where they converted it into a pirate mother ship, and used it for attacks on merchant shipping in the Arabian Sea. An anti-pirate patrol of the Indian navy engaged the "Vega 5" in a gun battle in March 2011, captured 61 of the pirates, and rescued 13 members of the original crew.

Tete government changes resettlement strategy

The government of the western province of Tete has rethought its resettlement strategy, and will no longer allow companies to resettle households in small, one bedroom ("type 1") houses.

According to the head of the Tete Provincial Resettlement Commission, Albertina Tivane, "because we want the quality of housing for those being resettled to improve, we have abolished the type 1 houses. They are too small and they do not allow the harmonious development of families".

Only type 2 houses or larger would be accepted, she said. They should have bathrooms, piped water and electricity, as well as a spacious yard.

Tivane was speaking at a meeting with the mining company Rio Tinto Coal Mozambique and the population of Capanga, in Benga, where Rio Tinto is operating a gigantic open cast coal mine.

The immediate problem is that 39 Capanga families have to be moved because they are living on top of the 15 kilometre route of a branch railway that will run from the Rio Tinto mine to the main Sena line. The recently rebuilt Sena line runs from the Moatize coal basin to the port of Beira.

The 39 families will be resettled provisionally in Moatize town, before they are moved again, to definitive homes that Rio Tinto will build for them at Mbodza, in Moatize district.

"In order not to compromise the operations of the company, the 39 families must be moved as quickly as possible", said Tivane. "Rio Tinto has promised the people, the Provincial Resettlement Commission and the Moatize District Government that it will comply with the agreements it has reached with the Capanga population and with the government".

In the first phase of resettlement Rio Tinto has promised to pay the rent for the houses in Moatize, and the electricity and water bills up to a maximum of 250 kilowatt hours and 15 cubic metres a month.

"The people affected, and the resettlement commission, have agreed with this proposal", said Tivane.

The change in resettlement policy follows protests in January by hundreds of families resettled by the Brazilian mining company, Vale, at the locality of Cateme, about 35 kilometres from Moatize town. Many of the houses built by Vale were type 1, and the residents complained, not only that they were too small, but that the walls were cracked and the roofs leaked.

The families staged a demonstration on 10 January, blocking the road and railway out of Moatize, and interrupting the movement of Vale coal trains for about 24 hours. Vale has promised to repair all defective houses in Cateme within six months.

Health Minister pledges to tackle tropical diseases

Health Minister Alexandre Manguela announced on 30 January that his government is committed to protecting 27 million people a year from Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) by 2015.

The minister was speaking at the launch in London of the largest ever worldwide initiative to tackle ten NTDs.

The international campaign is backed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the British Department

for International Development (DFID), the World Bank and thirteen pharmaceutical companies.

The aim of the campaign is to coordinate improvements in drug supply and delivery, research and development and infrastructure in order to control or eliminate NTDs by 2020.

At the launch in the Royal College of Physicians, Manguela pointed out that Mozambique has a significant NTD burden.

He revealed that the government is initiating a new integrated programme with the support of the British Department for International Development (DFID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The programme will take a multi-sectoral approach, using the existing health and education network to carry out a mass drug administration programme. This means that whole populations will receive drugs irrespective of whether individuals have the diseases.

According to the minister, mass treatment against blinding trachoma will begin this year. Next year the government aims to administer drugs to everyone to protect them from lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis). And the government has set a target that school based treatment should cover everyone against the threat of schistosomiasis (bilharziasis) by the end of 2014.

In total, the government will by 2015 be treating 27 million people a year against NTDs.

NTDs affect more than a billion people worldwide, and kill an estimated half a million people each year.

Government to invest \$200 million in Zambezi Valley

The publically-owned Zambezi Valley Development Agency is to invest more than \$200 million in a range of projects to promote social and economic development in the region, according to the daily newspaper "Noticias".

The projects will be implemented between now and 2014 covering the areas of agriculture, fisheries, agro-processing, agro-industry, and regional planning and infrastructure.

The projects will be funded through the state budget and national and foreign cooperation partners. Operating in more than 35 districts in the provinces of Manica, Sofala, Zambezia and Tete, the development agency also receives financial support from the Exim Banks of China and India, the World Bank, and the governments of the Netherlands and Norway.

In Manica province the agency has already built a cotton ginning factory in Guro district, and plans to launch projects in the districts of Barue, Guro, Tambara and Macossa.

In Tete province the agency has plans for projects in Angonia, Cahora Bassa, Changara, Moatize, Mutarara, Tsangano, Zumbo and the city of Tete.

In Zambezia province projects will be located in Chinde, Mopeia, Inhassunge, Maganja da Costa, Milange, Mocuba and Morrumbala,

In Sofala province one of the projects is for the establishment of a tractor assembly unit in Murraca. Other projects will be in Caia, Chemba, Cheringoma, Gorongosa, Maringue, Marromeu and Muanza.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service – for details contact aim@aim.org.mz

Limpopo railway could handle 700,000 tonnes by year end

The volume of cargo handled by the Limpopo railway line could reach 700,000 tonnes by the end of this year, according to projections by Mozambique's publicly-owned rail and port company, CFM.

These projections are based on current trends in the Zimbabwean economy, which show signs of improvement, coupled with growing regional interest in Maputo port as an import and export route.

Rebuilt in 2004 after the destruction caused by floods in 2000, the Limpopo line has been operating far below capacity due to weak demand from Zimbabwe and other countries in the region.

Currently, the line is capable of handling two million tonnes of cargo annually with trains moving at speeds of up to 50 kilometres per hour.

According to the Chairman of the CFM Board, Rosario Mualeia, the company needs to carry out better routine maintenance on the line.

The Limpopo line is 522 kilometres long, running from Maputo port to Chicualacuala district, in the southern province of Gaza. It is beginning to attract more customers from neighbouring Zimbabwe and other countries in the region, which see it as a viable and cheap alternative access route for international trade.

Mualeia told Radio Mozambique that "this year we want to invest in maintenance in order to reach profitable cargo volumes in this important line. Indeed, we already have customers who inform us that they want to ferry 500,000 tonnes of ferrochrome along the line. Certainly, this is a positive development since the current demand is below capacity".

Mualeia recently visited the Limpopo railway line accompanied by technical staff and managers to assess the state of the line.

"The truth is that we expected to find things in a worse condition since the line is seldom used. We have identified the areas where intervention is required, and I can guarantee that the line is fit to meet the demands of both the domestic and international markets, even taking into account growth projections for the near future", he said.

Mualeia conceded that CFM is battling with a severe shortage of locomotives and wagons. The company has ordered 230 new wagons, while locomotives are being repaired in the company's workshops.

According to Mualeia, under ideal conditions, CFM should have at least 1,500 wagons.

Mozambique rises in press freedom ranking

Mozambique has risen by over 30 places on the Press Freedom Index compiled by the Paris-based organisation Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF).

In the index Mozambique is rated 66th out of 179 countries. In the 2010 index it was in 98th position.

The RSF index assigns points for violations of media freedoms. The fewer points a country is awarded, the freer its press. For this purpose, RSF uses a questionnaire that enquires about such matters as the murder, torture, imprisonment and harassment of journalists, censorship of media, impunity of those responsible for such violations, self-censorship, the ability of the media to investigate and criticise, the legal framework for the media, and financial pressures on the media.

The questionnaire is sent to 18 other freedom of expression organisations across the globe, to RSF's own network of 150 correspondents, and a variety of journalists, researchers and human rights activists.

Mozambique outranks several European countries, including Greece and Bulgaria.

Brazil opens \$97 million credit to Mozambique

The Brazilian government is to open a credit line of \$97.59 million for Mozambique to purchase agricultural machinery and equipment made in Brazil. The credit is part of the Ministry of Agrarian Development's "More Food Programme" and will be supported by technical assistance.

The funds will come from the Foreign Trade Board (Camex), and will take the form of concessional loans. The loans will be paid off over seventeen years with a five year grace period, and incur an interest rate of two per cent.

The programme began in 2008 as a mechanism for supporting the small scale farming sector in Brazil. Last year the scheme was extended to African nations, with Zimbabwe and Ghana being the first to benefit.

So far, the More Food Programme has invested \$2.3 billion in farming in Brazil. It has a budget of \$640 million for 2011 - 2012 for supporting farmers outside of Brazil.

EU formalises fisheries agreement

The European Union on 23 January ratified a new fisheries partnership agreement with Mozambique.

Under the agreement, which actually came into force on 1 January 2012, 75 European fishing boats will be allowed access to Mozambican waters. Of these boats, 43 are tuna purse seiners and 32 are surface longliners.

The three-year agreement sets a quota of 8,000 tonnes a year, with the European Union paying the Mozambican government €980,000 per year in compensation. This includes €460,000 annually to support the development of the fisheries sector and the country's maritime policy.

Spanish boats will receive 38 licences, covering 22 tuna purse seiners and 16 surface longliners. France will receive 28 licences for 20 tuna purse seiners and 8 surface longliners. Portugal will be allocated seven surface longliners licences, whilst Italy will have a permit for one tuna purse seiner and Britain will receive one licence for a surface longliner.

The new agreement has a smaller quota than in the previous agreement. This is because several boats have pulled out of the area due to the increased risk of piracy.

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