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No contradiction between development and conservation

There is no contradiction between development and conservation “between looking after people, and caring for wild animals or the natural vegetation”, declared President Filipe Nyusi on 10 June.

President Nyusi was speaking at the public launch of the Foundation for the Conservation of Biodiversity (Biofund), a private, not-for-profit body, which intends to raise funds for the conservation of Mozambique’s rich biodiversity, including the consolidation of the national system of conservation areas.

Biofund has set up a Conservation Trust Fund, in order to guarantee the long term sustainability of conservation funding. As a Biofund document explains, such a Trust Fund invests part of its endowment on the international financial markets, “in order to multiply the resources made available by donors, and to guarantee funding in the very long term”.

President Nyusi declared that good governance looked after the needs of people and nature at the same time. It was a serious mistake to imagine that these needs were antagonistic, for “in reality, there can be no social well-being if there is not also a natural heritage that is well managed and well cared for”.

Because of the “false contradiction” between humanity and nature, “our natural heritage has been subjected to aggression and mistreatment”, he added. “We have to correct this situation”.

President Nyusi noted that in some countries “there is almost nothing left to protect. We don’t want to be in that position”.

He warned that “if the abuse of our wild life and of our forests continues, we run the risk of compromising our future”.

Illegal logging and poaching “are crimes against which we must fight with all our energy”, declared the President, “thus struggle must bring urgent and visible results”.

“Mozambique will be less Mozambique if we gaze passively on illegal logging and poaching. We will be less Mozambique if we are incapable of combating uncontrolled bush fires”, he continued. “We must promote effective action to repress these crimes”.

Priority should be given to the fight against poaching, and against the networks that traffic in ivory, rhinoceros horn and illegal timber. “We are

coordinating action with neighbouring countries and with international organization to combat these criminal practices”, he said

Poaching and illegal logging were crimes “not only against our fauna and flora, but also against our economy”, added President Nyusi. “They are crimes against the wealth that belongs to all of us”.

“The battle will be tough”, he said, “but we see good prospects with international involvement, including the authorities of the countries which are the destination of this illegal traffic”. He was referring to China, which is the main market for ivory and for precious hardwoods, and to Vietnam, where rhino horn is said to cure all ailments from hangovers to cancer.

An essential condition for winning the battle, President Nyusi argued, was to involve the people who live in conservation areas “for there is no good conservation policy which does not begin by prioritizing the human development of the people living in the protected zones”.

“When these people are motivated and mobilised, they will be the best wardens and defenders of our biodiversity”, he said.

To date the main donor to Biofund is Germany, which has granted ten million euros (US\$11.3 million) to the Biofund trust fund. At the launch ceremony German ambassador Philipp Schauer announced that this year Germany will donate a further six million euros to the Trust Fund.

“These pledges are not just a good base for successful work by Biofund”, said Schauer. “They also express our confidence in its work and in its professional team”.

Magda Lovei, the World Bank’s Practice Manager for Environment and Natural Resources, stressed the Bank’s support for Biofund – but warned that Mozambique is losing its resources at an unsustainable rate. She noted that every year the country loses 225,000 hectares of forest, and that the latest census of the Mozambican elephant population showed that it had declined by around 50 per cent between 2009 and 2014, largely due to poaching.

Agreement on separation of party and state

The dialogue between the government and the country's largest opposition party Renamo, now in its 108th round, on 15 June finally achieved consensus on the third point of its agenda, the separation of political parties from the state.

The heads of the two delegations, Agriculture Minister Jose Pacheco and Renamo parliamentarian Saimone Macuiana, will sign a declaration of principles on the separation of party and state on 19 June.

"This point is concluded", declared Pacheco at the end of the meeting. "The leaderships will sign the document, as we agreed, and it will be submitted to the Assembly of the Republic (the Mozambican parliament) for legislation".

The deadlock broke when mediators made a proposal, and both sides accepted it.

The change in Renamo attitude was dictated by the Party's leader, Afonso Dhlakama. Speaking at the end of a meeting in Beira of the Renamo National Council, Dhlakama gave orders to end the discussion on separation of party and state.

He said the two delegations should sign what they had agreed so far, and hand the matter over to parliament.

Speaking for the mediators, Catholic priest Filipe Couto said "today is a day when the mediators should give thanks to God, because something has really happened. We saw willingness on both sides, particularly from Renamo".

He attributed this to decisions taken at the Renamo meeting in Beira. "Renamo was willing to conclude the document, so we noted that Renamo must have had a good discussion in Beira. What emerged from the discussion is that there must be a written document which will be put into practice. That is what we, as mediators, always asked for".

As for the threats made by the spokesperson for the Renamo National Council, Jose Manteigas, that Renamo will set up its own police and armed forces, Couto dismissed these as bravado. "Manteigas talked for the sake of talking", he said. "Who will pay for all this? Who will give food to an army, arrange vehicles, find weapons and uniforms?"

Pacheco seemed to believe that the dialogue can now move onto the fourth and final point on the agenda drawn up by Renamo – unspecified "economic matters". But the clear message from Dhlakama at the Renamo National Council was that the dialogue is now over.

Menacingly, Macuiana threatened that Renamo would regroup its militia (known politely as "residual forces") in the central district of Gorongosa, where they would "await new orders". Such troop movements would be a clear violation of last September's agreement on a cessation of military hostilities, signed by Dhlakama and by the then President, Armando Guebuza.

Renamo and police clash in Tete

Renamo on 16 claimed that one of its military bases was attacked by government forces in the western province of Tete – but the police say it was Renamo who opened fire without provocation.

Renamo spokesperson Antonio Muchanga called a press conference to announce the alleged attack, which he said occurred on 14 June at Mucumbedzi, in the Zozwe administrative post, near the border with Malawi.

Muchanga said that two truckloads of soldiers and a Land Cruiser with a mounted machine gun attacked a "Renamo barracks" in Mucumbedzi.

He added that Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama has asked the government to restrain its forces in the interests of peace.

Muchanga added there had been an attack by government forces on 11 June in Funhalouro district, in the southern province of Inhambane, "but there were no clashes because the Renamo guerrillas managed to evade the attackers".

But the police have a completely different account of what happened in Tete. According to police spokesperson Pedro Cossa, it was Renamo who attacked the police.

He said a police unit had been carrying supplies to a police post. On its return it came under fire. "Armed men fired against our colleagues", said Cossa, "Two of them were injured, one of whom lost his life on the way to hospital".

Cossa put the attack in a different part of the province. He said the police came under fire at Xibabhehi in Tsangano.

Dhlakama threatens no peace without provincial autonomy

Afonso Dhlakama on 12 June threatened that there would only be peace and stability in the country, if Renamo's proposal for "provincial municipalities" is accepted.

Speaking in Beira, at the end of the Renamo National Commission, Dhlakama seemed to retreat from the threats of a return to war made the previous day by spokesperson, parliamentary deputy Jose Manteigas.

Manteigas had boasted that Renamo has men "in combat positions" throughout the country ready to respond to any attempt by the government to prevent Renamo from imposing its "provincial municipalities".

Dhlakama gave the government a deadline of three days to begin negotiations on what he called "decentralisation of the state", covering all 11 provinces.

Dhlakama seems to have backed down from the threats that Renamo will occupy government buildings in the centre and north. This fits in with a well-worn Renamo strategy, whereby other members of the Party make radical statements, and Dhlakama then presents himself as a moderate.

Dhlakama said he would be "misunderstood" if he decided to use force of arms to secure his "autonomous provinces", but he promised to put pressure on Frelimo "to stop its playing about and manipulation".

Japanese support for Nacala port development

The Japanese government, through the Japanese International Cooperation agency (JICA), is to provide US\$250 million for the second phase of the development for the port of Nacala.

This will lift the cargo handling capacity of the port to over five million tonnes a year by 2020, compared with the 1.64 million tonnes handled in 2011.

The money takes the form of a soft loan, and the loan agreement was signed in Maputo on 11 June by the Minister of Economy and Finance, Adriano Maleiane, and the Resident Representative of JICA, Katsuyoshi Sudo.

Nacala is reputedly the best deep water port on the East African coast. In addition to northern Mozambique, it is also used by Malawi and Zambia.

The loan will be used for consultancy services, engineering work and the acquisition of port equipment.

This loan is the largest support yet in a series of contributions made by JICA to renovate Nacala port and increase its capacity.

For the first phase of the development project, JICA made about US\$27 million available in 2012 for the emergency rehabilitation of the North Quay, followed by a further US\$66 million in 2013.

Study finds orange sweet potato protects against diarrhoea

A study has found that a diet of orange sweet potato (OSP) reduces both the prevalence and duration of diarrhoea in young children in Mozambique.

Orange sweet potato has been bred to contain high levels of vitamin A to combat that vitamin's deficiency in children in Africa which is running at a rate of over forty per cent.

The OSP being investigated was promoted and distributed by the non-governmental organisation HarvestPlus, which specialises in the biofortification of crops. In the central province of Zambezia the organisation worked with 144 agricultural groups composed of over ten thousand farmers.

The study, published in the monthly peer-reviewed journal "World Development", looked at children in 36 villages covered by the project in Zambezia. Based on a sample of 1,321 observations of children under the age of five, it found that an OSP diet reduced diarrhoea incidents by 42 per cent. For children under the age of three the effect was even larger, with a 52 per cent reduction in diarrhoea.

In addition, the OSP diet also reduced the duration of diarrhoea by more than ten per cent in children under five, and over 25 per cent in children aged under three years old.

According to HarvestPlus' Dr Erick Boy "the beta-carotene in OSP is converted into vitamin A the same day the OSP is eaten. This vitamin A is used by the cells lining the gut to help form a barrier to invading germs. These cells are regenerated every few days, so cells that have been weakened due to lack of vitamin A are quickly replaced by healthy cells when there is enough vitamin A".

However, Dr Boy stressed that "access to clean water and sanitation, targeted immunisation, and breastfeeding are also important in helping to prevent diarrhoea".

Almost 3,000 schoolgirl pregnancies last year

Thousands of Mozambican girls are seeing their education and future lives damaged by pregnancy, according to figures presented on 15 June by Education Minister Jorge Ferrao.

At a meeting discussing the safety of girls at school, Ferrao said that last year 2,794 girls attending primary and secondary schools became pregnant. The worst figure was in the central province of Zambezia, where 661 schoolgirls became pregnant, with 539 of them were in primary schools.

The northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa are not far behind, with 611 and 570 cases respectively. The southern province of Gaza had the lowest number of schoolgirl pregnancies – just 40.

Ferrao expressed concern at the high drop-out rate among girls, which he blamed on the violation of their rights at school. Repeatedly over the years teachers have been accused of sexually harassing girls.

Civil society representatives at the meeting demanded that the Education Ministry revoke a ministerial dispatch of 2003 which transferred all pregnant pupils to night classes. They argued that this has contributed to girls dropping out of school, and that it amounts to unjust punishment.

Ferrao agreed that it must be revised "since it is not in line with the initiatives we are undertaking to keep girls at school. Right now you have my promise to change the dispatch".

Dulce Passades, deputy director of research at the Pedagogic University, in Quelimane, argued that the Ministry, she said, should step up sex education in schools to avoid high levels of schoolgirl pregnancy. "We have to give more prominence to the component of sexual and reproductive health in the school curriculum", she insisted.

US\$467 million pledged in programme aid

Donors and funding agencies have promised the Mozambican government US\$467 million in "programme aid" for 2016. US\$305.3 million will be given in direct budget support and US\$162.1 million in support for the common funds in specific areas (such as agriculture, health or education).

The donors and agencies who give at least some of their aid in budget support are known as the "Programme Aid Partners" (PAPs). Their outgoing chairperson, Swedish Ambassador Irina Nyoni, delivered the commitments for 2016 to the Minister of Economy and Finance, Adriano Maleiane, at a Maputo ceremony on 15 June.

"These commitments are a vote of confidence in the capacity of the new government to translate its ambitions for greater economic and political inclusion into concrete reforms and programmes to fight against poverty, as well as in its determination to continue improving the management of the public finances", Nyoni said.

The PAPs, she added, believe in the government's willingness "to continue advancing reforms of transparency and management of fiscal risks, procurement, the management of public investments and the fight against corruption, in order to increase the impact of the use of public funds on the lives of the Mozambican population".

The government, the ambassador said, would now expect the PAPs to comply with what they have promised "thus making coherent and predictable planning possible". A recurrent complaint from the government has been that donors do not disburse their promised funds on time, thus forcing the government to resort to other financing options, such as the issue of high interest bearing treasury bonds.

The promises given to Maleiane come from 12 of the PAPs (the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Union, Britain, Sweden, Denmark, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Ireland and Austria). Nyoni said that commitments from Canada, Finland and Switzerland are expected later – which mean that the final promises for 2016 could well be considerably higher.

Four countries which have given budget support in the past are making no pledges for 2016. They are Germany, Holland, Belgium and Norway.

The largest promises for 2016 budget support come from the World Bank (US\$116 million), the European Union (US\$67.2 million), Britain (US\$39.8 million), and Sweden (US\$34.8 million).

Last year it had been thought that Britain was ending budget support. However, the British High Commissioner, Joanna Kuenssberg, told AIM that Britain had changed the form in which it was giving aid, but budget support was continuing. Indeed, the British pledge for 2016 is 25 per cent higher than the commitment for 2015.

In 2015 the total commitments to budget support amounted to US\$270.9 million. Thus the promises for 2016 are an increase of 12.7 per cent.

On the other hand, the programme aid promised for the common funds is down sharply, from US\$235.7 million this year to promises of US\$162.1 million for 2016, a fall of 31 per cent. The sharpest fall is in the common fund for agriculture, where commitments have declined from US\$60.4 million to US\$9.4 million.

The only increase is in the commitments to PRONOSAR, the national water and sanitation programme. The PAPs provided US\$2.2 million for PRONOSAR this year, and the pledges for 2016 are US\$6.5 million.

President Nyusi opens IDB meeting

President Filipe Nyusi on 10 June urged the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to increase and diversify its activities in Mozambique, complementing the efforts of the government.

Speaking at the opening ceremony in Maputo of the 40th session of the Council of Governors of the IDB, President Nyusi estimated that foreign direct investment in Mozambique last year was US\$8.9 billion.

Investments in the energy sector and in infrastructures were of key importance, given the potential of the discoveries of hydrocarbons and other mineral resources. The magnitude of the required investments, said President Nyusi, “involves the mobilisation of funds beyond our own financial system”.

He pointed out that the Mozambican economy has grown at above the average for sub-Saharan Africa. Its average growth rate of 7.5 per cent a year in the recent period had been achieved thanks to “the foundations of the economy and prudent macro-economic management”.

He thought it was important to strengthen Mozambique’s relations with the IDB “to achieve our strategic objectives – namely increasing employment, productivity and competitiveness, thus generating inclusive development”.

The President wanted to see the IDB establish representation in Mozambique “to help maintain the stability of the financial sector, increase access to financial services and products, constitute an alternative for the supply of capital, and support the development of our private sector”.

The IDB chairperson, Ahmed Mohamed Ali, declared that the IDB group has provided total funding to its members of more than US\$122 billion, including US\$11 billion last year.

On 11 June, the IDB formalised funding of US\$200 million to build an electricity transmission line from the Chimuara substation, on the north bank of the Zambezi River to the northern port of Nacala.

The agreement was signed by the Minister of Economy and Finance, Adriano Maleiane and Ahmed Mohamed Ali in Maputo on the final day of the Annual Meeting.

“This funding is intended to improve the security and quality of the supply of electricity to the centre and north of the country, by building a second transmission line of higher quality, bearing in mind that the current line is operating at the limit of its capacity”, said Maleiane. “This second line will cost US\$600 million, and the IDB has promised to provide US\$200 million”.

A second line should prevent repetition of the disaster that struck early this year, when the entire north of the country, apart from those institutions or individuals fortunate enough to own generators, was deprived of power for about a month.

The IDB has also accepted a request to finance a road that will link northern Mozambique to Tanzania.

The road will run for 176 kilometres between the towns of Mueda and Negomano, in Cabo Delgado province, and will connect to the Unity Bridge over the Rovuma River, which is the border between the two countries.

Mozambique declines to sign up to free trade area

Mozambique has chosen not to sign the agreement setting up a free trade area between the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the East African Community (EAC).

The free trade deal was signed on 10 June at a summit of heads of state and government from the 26 member countries of the three regional blocs, held in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm El Sheikh. The new arrangement will be known simply as the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA).

Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario, who represented President Nyusi at the summit, said Mozambique could not sign because the government still needed to check the impact the agreement could have on the economy.

If all 26 members of SADC, COMESA and the EAC sign up to the TFTA it will cover 632 million people (57 per cent of the population of the continent), with a gross domestic product of US\$1.3 trillion (58 per cent of Africa’s GDP).

Fight against HIV costs US\$350 million a year

The fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Mozambique has in recent years cost an average of US\$350 million a year.

Giving these figures on 3 June, the Deputy Executive Secretary of the National AIDS Council (CNCS), Diogo Milagre, said that more than half of this sum is spent on Anti-Retroviral (ARV) drug treatment.

Speaking at the end of a session of the CNCS Steering Council, chaired by Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario, Milagre said the most recent statistics suggested that 11.5 per cent of the population aged between 15 and 49 is HIV positive, with the prevalence rate among women at 13.1 per cent and 9.2 per cent among men. Among urban dwellers the prevalence is 15.9 per cent and in rural areas 9.2 per cent.

These figures should be treated with caution as they are drawn from the 2009 National AIDS Survey. No comprehensive survey has been undertaken since 2009.

Milagre said the country is now working on the fourth version of the national strategic plan against the epidemic. He stated that male circumcision contributes greatly to preventing infections, and so the CNCS is interested in encouraging this practice. Other measures include testing.

The health authorities also stress the prevention of vertical transmission of the virus from a pregnant woman to her unborn child. Ante-natal consultations now including testing pregnant women for HIV – those who test positive can immediately be started on ARV treatment.

The agenda for the Steering Council included a discussion on funding the response to the epidemic.

However, the meeting took no decision on finance because, according to Health Minister Nazira Abdula, the deputy chair of the CNCS, there was no concrete proposal. “We still have to discuss what are the means and possibilities of funding, since the package of measures is enormous”, she said.

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