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Campaigning ends for municipal elections

Campaigning for the municipal elections has come to an end with the main political parties urging voters to turn out for the vote on 10 October.

The mayor of Beira and leader of the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), Daviz Simango, on 6 October urged the citizens of Beira to re-elect him so that the work the MDM has done in the city can continue. Addressing a large rally that wound up the MDM's Beira campaign, Simango accused the ruling Frelimo Party of neglecting the city in the period between independence in 1975 and the first time he was elected as mayor, in 2003.

He stressed the work Beira Municipal Council has done in improving the city's drainage and launching housing programmes. Simango admitted that many roads in Beira are in poor condition but added that under the MDM many new roads had been built in the city "which didn't even exist in colonial times".

Simango has been in office as mayor for 15 years and is standing for an unprecedented fourth term.

Frelimo and its mayoral candidate, Augusta Maita, ended their Beira campaign with a motorcade through the city's streets, ending in Independence Square, where the closing rally was held.

The spokesperson for Frelimo, Manuel Severino, stated "Frelimo members have shown maturity and party discipline, in not responding to provocations from opposing parties. We focused on publicising our message and did not get involved in clashes".

In the northern city of Nampula, Frelimo's mayoral candidate, Amisse Cololo, asked for votes from the main religious communities of the city.

He held separate meetings with Muslim and Christian leaders, asking them to cast their votes for Frelimo. He urged them to use their influence among religious believers to persuade them to support Frelimo

At both meetings he promised that, in the event of a Frelimo victory, he would fight against corruption and would set up a specific department in the Municipal Council to deal with religious matters.

Cololo urged that "the mistakes of the past be forgotten" and that a new stage should open in relations between all citizens of Nampula.

In Sussundenga in the central province of Manica the opposition party Renamo marched through several neighbourhoods promising better municipal management.

Eduardo Leite, a member of the Renamo National Council, urged the voters to believe in the Renamo programme for governance, and vote for the party and its mayoral candidate, Paulo Tafura.

Leite told the residents "don't be deceived. For many years your lives have not changed. The time has come to think about change. Try another party, try Renamo because it always fought for the welfare of Mozambicans".

He said Renamo will guarantee jobs for the youth of Sussundenga, will provide more drinking water, electricity and better transport and improve the access roads.

Driver sentenced for using state bus for campaigning

The Zambezia Provincial Court in central Mozambique has sentenced a driver from Quelimane Central Hospital to four days imprisonment for using a state vehicle in election campaign activities.

A report on Radio Mozambique said the driver was campaigning for a political party whose name was not mentioned. While the court spokesperson, Mauro Chitsondzo, who announced the sentence, may not have revealed the party's name, it has been widely reported on social media that it was the ruling Frelimo Party.

The driver, Abibo Martins Albino, was also fined ten days of the minimum wage in the public administration (about 1,400 meticaís – US\$23 at current exchange rate).

It has always been illegal to use state assets such as vehicles in political party election campaigns, but in most past cases nobody has been prosecuted, even though the media has sometimes published the number plates of the vehicles used.

President Nyusi launches demilitarisation of Renamo

President Filipe Nyusi on 6 October launched the process to demilitarise the opposition party Renamo. The demilitarisation covers the demobilisation and disarming of the Renamo militia, and integrating its members, either into the defence and security forces, or back into civilian life.

The Maputo ceremony was attended by government and Renamo representatives, and by the international facilitators requested by Mozambique. These experts come from Tanzania, Zimbabwe, the United States, Switzerland, Germany, Norway, Ireland and India, and will be coordinated by Argentinian general Javier Perez Aquino, who supervised the disarmament of the guerrillas of FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces) in Colombia.

President Nyusi asked all involved to do everything in their power to make the demilitarisation a success and to “solve definitively the problem of the Mozambicans”.

He urged the Mozambican people and the international community to give their full support and thanked the interim coordinator of the Renamo Political Commission, Ossufo Momade, for his collaboration.

Frelimo condemns threats of violence

Frelimo has strongly condemned the threats by Renamo that it will send armed men to the polling stations during the municipal elections to block alleged Frelimo fraud.

On 4 October, in a message sent from the Renamo military base in the central district of Gorongosa, the interim coordinator of the Renamo Political Commission, Ossufo Momade, claimed that Frelimo had hatched a plan to steal the elections, and that the Renamo militia (whom he called “rangers”) could intervene to stop it.

This alleged plan involved bussing in people from outside the municipalities to vote en masse for Frelimo. These people would not only come from Mozambique but also from Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Reacting to these accusations, the Frelimo Central Committee Secretary for Mobilisation and Propaganda, Caifadine Manasse, speaking in the northern city of Nampula, said they lacked any sense and were absolutely groundless. They were of great concern precisely because they came from the Renamo Coordinator and were made on the “Day of Peace” – the 26th anniversary of the signing of the General Peace Agreement between the Mozambican government and Renamo in Rome on 4 August 1992.

On the anniversary of the Peace Agreement, said Manasse, it had been hoped that Momade would say something in line with the speech of President Filipe Nyusi who had spoken of the efforts to secure a definitive and lasting peace. Instead, Momade had lost an opportunity to build his own identity as someone leading a peace process in Mozambique.

Prime Minister promises new dam in Niassa

Prime minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario declared on 1 October that the construction of a new dam on the Lucheringo River will stimulate the economic and social development of the northern province of Niassa.

Speaking at a meeting in the provincial capital, Lichinga, with state employees, Rosario said the dam would make enough drinking water available to supply 120,000 households. It will take about a year and a half to build the dam, he said, and would solve the current defective distribution of water in the Lichinga area.

Vale suspends mining following protests

The Brazilian company Vale has suspended its coal mining operations in Moatize, in the western province of Tete, following protests by residents against dust and noise.

“We are tired”, declared one resident cited on 6 October by the television station STV. “Vale is mining near the village, and the explosions they make are damaging people’s health”.

A company spokesperson interviewed by STV, said, after the company met with representatives of local residents behind closed doors on 4 October, that “right from the beginning we knew that the question of dust would be a great challenge for us. Note that we are in an area with little rainfall, and where the climate is very dry”.

Residents want to be resettled away from the mine and are threatening drastic action if Vale resumes mining without solving the pollution problems. One resident interviewed by STV said they would set the Vale equipment on fire and sabotage the mine.

There is no date for the resumption of mining, and Vale has not said how much it is losing because of the suspension.

This year Vale forecast that it would export 13 million tonnes of coal. The exports all reach the Indian Ocean port of Nacala-a-Velha via a railway that Vale financed from Moatize to Nacala across southern Malawi.

In May, Vale-Mozambique announced that in 2017, for the first time since starting operations in 2012, it ran at a profit. It is a major employer in Tete, with around 6,400 workers, the great majority of them Mozambican, on its payroll.

Due to an improvement in the international coal price, the coal from Moatize has overtaken the aluminium ingots produced at the Mozal smelter just outside Maputo as Mozambique’s largest export.

Vegetable processing centre inaugurated

President Filipe Nyusi on 4 October inaugurated a vegetable processing centre (CEPHOL) in Xai-Xai, capital of the southern province of Gaza.

This centre was financed by the African Development Bank (ADB), to the tune of over US\$3.175 million.

According to Armando Ussivane, the chairperson of the Lower Limpopo Irrigation Company (RBL), the new processing centre is part of the Lower Limpopo Irrigation and Climate Resilience Project. It is intended to encourage farmers to increase their production and productivity, to boost food security and to promote agro-processing.

The centre was built on an embankment which should resist any future floods in the Limpopo Valley. The area is half a metre above the maximum level reached by the waters during the enormous Limpopo floods of 2000.

“This centre has been set up in an area of three hectares, where it is possible to install greenhouses in the future, to produce seedlings, and demonstration fields for crop varieties”, said Ussivane.

CEPHOL buys from local farmers a range of vegetables, fruits, root crops and beans, which it washes, selects, calibrates, packages, stores and conserves.

Ussivane said that, through this type of business, CEPHOL hopes to contribute to vegetable production, by linking farmers to the markets, reducing post-harvest losses through good conservation techniques, and ensuring that vegetables are available on the market throughout the year.

Rehabilitation of Nacala port begins

Transport Minister Carlos Mesquita on 3 October laid the first stone for the rehabilitation of the northern port of Nacala.

It is financed by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and is budgeted at US\$273.6 million.

At the inauguration ceremony, Mesquita noted that “there will be direct job opportunities for 400 Mozambicans, and businesses in Nacala will be stimulated since the work will require the provision of a variety of services”.

The Bay of Nacala is regarded as the best deep-water harbour on the east African coast and it never needs dredging. It contains two ports – the mineral port at Nacala-a-Velha, used mostly for coal exports, and the much older general commercial port of Nacala.

Nacala underwent emergency rehabilitation between February 2014 and September 2015, through a Japanese grant of US\$32.6 million. Mesquita said that with the new rehabilitation the port will be able to handle 250,000 containers a year rather than the current 170,000. Ships of up to 120,000 tonnes could dock at the port.

Mesquita predicted that Nacala would become a nodal point on maritime transport routes facilitating access to the markets of eastern and southern Asia and of the Middle East.

JICA representative Hirokaki Endu expected the project to strengthen Nacala’s role among the main ports of sub-Saharan Africa.

Trial begins of terrorist suspects

The Cabo Delgado provincial court on 3 October began the trial of 189 people suspected of involvement in terrorist activities since the outbreak of an Islamist insurgency almost exactly a year ago.

The accused are 152 Mozambican citizens, 29 Tanzanians and three Somalis. 42 of them are women.

Because there are so many accused, the opening session took place in the three prisons where they are being held, and in each place the prosecutor, Rodrigo Munguambe, read out the charge sheet.

According to the summary in the Maputo daily “Noticias”, the prosecution states that on 5, 6 and 7 October 2017, the accused took part in armed attacks against the district police command in the town of Mocimboa da Praia, and the barracks of the Forestry Resources Protection Unit in Oasse. In these attacks, the insurgents killed two police officers and injured a further five.

In November and December 2017, the same group seriously injured other policemen and the Nanshemele neighbourhood secretary in Mocimboa town. In their attacks on police units, the insurgents stole 34 AK-47 assault rifles, and 7,200 rounds of ammunition. They also vandalised three police vehicles.

Munguambe said members of the group were recruited in local mosques by Tanzanians, who promised them large sums of money if they successfully incited people in Cabo Delgado to disrespect and disobey Mozambican state institutions.

The Mozambicans come not only from various districts in Cabo Delgado, but also from Memba and Nacala, on the coast of the neighbouring province of Nampula, from Mopeia, in Zambezia province, and from the central city of Beira.

The Tanzanian accused come from Zanzibar and from the mainland provinces of Songea, Mtwara and Massassi. The Somalis are from the Kismayo area.

The charges they face include first-degree murder, use of banned weapons, membership of a criminal association, and instigation of collective disobedience against public order.

President lays first stone of Mueda – Negomano road

President Filipe Nyusi on 2 October laid the first stone for the rehabilitation and paving of the 165-kilometre road from Mueda to Negomano, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

The paving is financed by the African Development Bank (ADB) and will cost US\$40.6 million. The work will be undertaken in two phases. The first is tarring the road from Negomano, on the Tanzanian border, to Roma, a distance of 70 kilometres. The second phase, from Roma to Mueda, should be undertaken in 2019.

The purpose of this project is to ensure a good, tarred road between Tanzania and Mozambique. The border between the two countries is the Rovuma River, and in 2010 the “Unity Bridge” across the river was inaugurated by the Mozambican and Tanzanian presidents of the time, Armando Guebuza and Jakaya Kikwete.

The bridge has remained underused, largely because of the lack of good road connections on the Mozambican side.

President Nyusi told the inauguration ceremony that the road will be the final piece in the country’s main north-south highway, running from the Rovuma River to Ponta de Ouro, on the border with the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal.

According to President Nyusi, “the Mueda-Roma-Negomano road will facilitate ecotourism since it crosses the buffer zone of the Niassa Reserve” (the largest wildlife conservation areas in the country).

President Nyusi said the road will create investment opportunities benefitting people living in the north of Cabo Delgado and will “promote formal cross-border trade with Tanzania, contributing to economic growth and poverty eradication”.

An ADB representative, Joao David, justified the bank’s financing, on the grounds that the Mueda-Negomano road falls within the bank’s focus on infrastructures to stimulate the sustainable development of the economy.

“It is no accident that currently more than 60 per cent of the bank’s operations in Mozambique are aimed at the transport sector”, he said. “This partly reflects the role Mozambique plays on the regional chessboard, as a country providing services to landlocked countries”.

Work on the road should take 30 months and includes a drainage system to protect the road against flooding and ensure resilience in the case of heavy rains. The contractor is the Chinese company, the Anhui Foreign Economic Construction Group (AFECC).

The job will include three reinforced concrete bridges replacing the current flimsy river crossings which sometimes make the road impassable in the rainy season.

At a Mueda primary school, President Nyusi announced the distribution of 30,000 desks to the province’s schools. Since two pupils can sit at each desk, and each school generally handles two shifts, these desks will cater for 120,000 pupils. This distribution is part of the government’s plans to ensure that by the end of this year no pupil has to sit on the ground during classes.

Of the 30,000 desks, 2,750 have been allocated to Mueda district, 100 of them to the school where President Nyusi made the delivery.

Speaking to the pupils, the President said “we want you to look after these desks properly. These desks can last for years and years. We want to end this problem, and in the next cycle, we shall invest in the construction of more classrooms”.

Grant from ADB for priority projects

The Mozambican government and the African Development Bank (ADB) signed a grant agreement in Maputo on 1 October, under which the ADB is to donate US\$22.3 million to two projects that the government regards as priorities.

The agreements, signed by the Minister of Economy and Finance, Adriano Maleiane, and by the resident representative of the ADB, Pietro Toigo, cover the emergency rehabilitation of the Massingir Dam, in the southern province of Gaza, and a project on “the agricultural value chain and youth empowerment”.

The Massingir Dam, on the Elephants River, the main tributary of the Limpopo, has long suffered serious structural problems, particularly with its bottom dischargers, so that it has never fulfilled the expected irrigation potential.

Maleiane said that the ADB funding will allow the dam to function at its maximum capacity, allowing an increase in agricultural production and productivity in the Limpopo Valley.

Once working properly, the dam will also play a key role in flood control in the Limpopo basin. Maleiane believed that improving the management of water resources will reduce the impact of climate change on the lower Limpopo.

Most of the grant (US\$15.4 million) will be spent on the Agricultural Value Chain and Youth Empowerment project. Maleiane said this will help implement the government’s vision of making agri-business more competitive and inclusive.

It will be focused on Moamba and Namaacha districts in Maputo province, and on Chokwe and Chonguene in Gaza and well strengthen the value chains for the production of vegetables and red meat.

“With this initiative, we are sure that we will contribute to stimulating agricultural and livestock production, and in creating an environment conducive to improved functioning of the market, and an increase in income from agricultural activities”, said Maleiane. “This will boost economic activity in rural areas, with job opportunities for women and for young people”.

Bank robbers sentenced

The Sofala Provincial Court, sitting in the central Mozambican city of Beira, on 28 September sentenced two men, Moniz Bambo and Ibraimo Dias, to 16 years imprisonment for their part in a spectacular robbery in May 2017 in which 29 million meticais (about US\$482,000) was stolen from the Beira headquarters of Mozambique’s largest commercial bank, the Millennium-BIM.

According to the report on the trial in the Maputo daily “Noticias”, the court found that Bambo had acquired uniforms of the private security company G4S which the two men used when they robbed the bank. He was assisted by his cousin Ismael Macorreia, who is now on the run. He was sentenced, in absentia, to a jail term of one year and eight months.

The robbery was planned in the house belonging to a further suspect, Fernando Abubacar, who is also on the run.

The court found that Bambo used some of the stolen money to purchase two vehicles, which were sent to his brother-in-law in Zambezia province.

At the time, eye-witnesses to the robbery said it was committed by five men wearing uniforms and masks, who attacked a truck carrying money just as it arrived at the Beira BIM headquarters. The cash had been collected from other BIM branches in the city.

Ibraimo Dias confessed to the robbery, but Bambo protested his innocence and plans to appeal. His lawyer admitted that he had made contacts to obtain G4S uniforms “but didn’t know what they were to be used for”.

Bambo, Dias and Macorreia were also sentenced to compensate the bank to the tune of 12 million meticais.

President launches water supply programme

President Filipe Nyusi on 1 October launched a new water supply programme, known as Pravida (Water for Life Programme), an investment that will cost the Mozambican state about 4.8 billion meticais (US\$80 million).

Pravida is intended to rehabilitate and expand water systems in towns and cities across the country, including the Greater Maputo region, Beira, Pemba, Nacala, and Cuamba. Smaller towns and districts covered include Chibuto, Massangena, Chigubo and Chicualauala in Gaza province, Mabote, Jangamo, Homoine and Morrumbene in Inhambane, and Mueda in Cabo Delgado. Over a million people are expected to benefit from the programme.

President Nyusi launched the programme in Mueda, where there has been a chronic shortage of water for many years, due to the complex hydrogeology of the region.

The President stressed that the programme will be implemented with funds from Mozambique’s own state budget. “We are doing this proudly in order to increase the availability of water in both rural and urban areas”.

He added that this is an integrated programme, which should have multiplier effects on health, education and agriculture.

In health improved supply of clean drinking water should reduce the incidence of water-borne diseases, while in agriculture it will guarantee the irrigation of over 1,800 hectares of crops and provide drinking water for over 73,000 head of livestock.

In education, it is expected that the programme will provide drinking water to schools but will also cut the distance pupils (mostly girls) have to walk in order to obtain water for their households. Pupils often miss classes or are delayed because they have been fetching water. In some semi-arid areas this can involve walking for over ten kilometres.

“Pravida will be added value for speedily achieving the dream of our government of making enough good quality water available to meet the challenges of the sustainable socio-economic development of Mozambique”, said the President.

He said that Pravida cannot respond to all the country’s water needs and so the government will continue to mobilise investments from its cooperation partners or through public-private partnerships for projects to guarantee the availability of water.

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