

Mozambique News Agency

AIM Reports

Report no.581, 3rd July 2019



Prime Minister calls for climate change resilience

The advent of climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of the cyclones that hit Mozambique, and hence the country is adopting various measures of adaptation and resilience to cope with the phenomenon, according to Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario.

The Prime Minister was speaking in New York, during the Fourth Special Thematic Session of the United Nations on Water and Disasters. Rosario was addressing a special session on the theme “Rebuilding better after Cyclones Idai and Kenneth (which hit Mozambique in March and April) – Lessons Learned and Actions to Reduce the Impact of Climate Change”. The purpose of the meeting was to share the experiences of the countries affected by the cyclones (Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi).

Rosario said that Idai and Kenneth, following each other in such a short space of time, led the country to draw various lessons. “We advocate that reconstruction after Idai and Kenneth should take into account the need for BBB – Build Back Better – so that the infrastructures resist the effects of extreme events”, said Rosario. Of particular importance is investment in water management infrastructures such as dams, dykes, reservoirs, protection against coastal erosion, and drainage systems.

Rosario pointed out that Mozambique lies on the downstream stretch of nine of southern Africa’s 15 major river basins, making the country vulnerable to floods in the rainy season, and to drought in the dry season.

He said the government does not want to mobilise resources simply to rebuild the same infrastructures that were destroyed in the two cyclones. Instead, it hopes to emerge from the vicious cycle that is holding back the country’s development. Among the lessons learnt, he added, was the need for government leadership to avoid the loss of human life, through early warning systems, and search and rescue operations.

Cyclones Idai and Kenneth affected directly about two million people in Mozambique and laid waste many thousand hectares of farmland. A video shown at the New York meeting left the audience incredulous at the scale of the suffering and devastation.

Rosario said that in the search and rescue operations the major challenge faced was a shortage of helicopters and boats to rescue people. Hence the government hopes to work with international partners to endow the country with the means to rescue people in good time.

He reiterated Mozambique’s desire to count on the support of the international community to mobilise resources to repair, in a short space of time, the damaged roads so as to encourage economic activity and ensure that farmers can move their surplus crops to market.

For his part, the Zimbabwean Minister of Local Government, Public Works and Housing, July Moyo, said that the death toll from cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe was 347. The disaster occurred when the country was already suffering from a severe drought that affected Zimbabwean food production for the 2018-19 agricultural year. The cyclone added a further 900,000 people to the five million who were already in need of humanitarian aid.

Government drawing up table of reconstruction projects

Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario told reporters in New York on 25 June that the government is drawing up a matrix of projects, by area and sectors, for the reconstruction of the central city of Beira, which was devastated by cyclone Idai in March.

The first disbursements, from the pledges of US\$1.2 billion made at the donors’ conference held in Beira on 31 May - 1 June, are expected in July and August, hence the need to ensure that a matrix of projects is in place.

The Prime Minister was speaking at a press conference, marking the end of a working visit to New York, where he had taken part in the Fourth Special Thematic Session of the United Nations on Water and Disasters.

“We want to divide the package that emerged from the Beira conference into various well-structured and directed projects that we can sell to our partners”, said Rosario. “There are those who want to support the health sector, others who are interested in water supply, others in housing – hence the preparation of packages for international institutions and even for personalities”.

Mozambican diplomatic representations will also play an important role, he added, because they must follow up the contacts made with individual and institutional partners who have expressed the wish to work with Mozambique.

While in New York, Rosario was also granted an audience with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and held a meeting with former US President Bill Clinton. He said that Clinton expressed great willingness to help mobilise support for Mozambican agriculture.

Rosario said he had found great awareness of the threat posed by climate change. Cyclones on the scale of Idai and Kenneth could recur, and it was urgent to work on mitigating their impacts.

Increased yields from GM maize

Maize production could increase by up to 50 per cent with the use of genetically modified seeds, according to a study held by the Agricultural Research Institute (IIAM).

Maize is one of the most important crops in Mozambique, but farmers growing maize have been faced with drought in the southern provinces, and insect pests throughout the country. The use of genetically modified seeds, however, can lead to greater tolerance to dry conditions, and resistance to pests, according to Pedro Fato, the IIAM's lead researcher on the study.

Announcing the results of the study in Maputo on 1 July, Fato said that the tests, held over two years in closed environments in the southern province of Gaza, showed that, in conditions of drought, the genetically modified seeds could raise maize yields dramatically.

"The study showed great potential for producing drought tolerant maize, which is also resistant to the pests which compromise agricultural production", he said. The purpose of the study "was to test genetically modified maize and try to mitigate the problems of climate change and of pests that the country and the region are facing".

The maize grown from the modified seeds would be twice as productive under dry conditions than normal maize. As for protection from insect pests, the genetically modified maize proved to produce 10 to 12 per cent more than unmodified maize exposed to the same pests.

This phase was only the first part of the research, said Fato, and had been done under conditions of quarantine. The second phase will take place in open conditions, where the genetically modified plants are in normal contact with the environment, marking the start of the use of genetically modified seeds in Mozambican maize production. He insisted that this will be safe since genetically modified seeds do not present any risk to human or animal life, or to the environment. He said there is no scientific evidence that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) pose any threat. "In terms of bio-safety, any study involving GMOs is accompanied with a strong study of security measures, and from the work we have done so far, we have not discovered any risk for human beings", added Fato.

As for producing the modified seeds in Mozambique, Fato explained that the studies show that the techniques can be developed on a national scale, and in principle any farmer can use them. "When the seed becomes available, any producer can have access to it, and produce genetically modified maize in any corner of the country", he said.

Mozambican and Tanzanian police step up cooperation

The Mozambican and Tanzanian police forces will undertake joint operations along the border between the two countries in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, according to a report in the newsheet "Carta de Mocambique".

The decision was taken at an emergency meeting on 30 June between the General Commander of the Mozambican police, Bernardino Rafael, and his Tanzanian counterpart, Simon Sirro, in the Tanzanian region of Mtwara.

The meeting followed an attack on 26 June against Ntola village, in the Quionga administrative post, in Palma

district. Quionga lies about halfway between Palma town and the Rovuma River which marks the boundary between Mozambique and Tanzania.

For the first time in any reported attack since the Cabo Delgado insurgency, apparently inspired by Islamic fundamentalism, began in October 2017, the majority of the victims were Tanzanian. Of the 11 people killed, nine were Tanzanian and two were Mozambican. Six Tanzanians and two Mozambicans were injured.

According to Rafael, cited by "Carta de Mocambique", the police pursued the attacking group and captured several of its members.

Cotton production hit by low prices

The oscillation of cotton prices on the world market, plus the impact of natural disasters, explains the reduction in Mozambican cotton production in the 2018-2019 agricultural year, according to Agriculture Minister Higinio de Marrule, cited in the Maputo daily newspaper "Noticias" on 2 July.

Speaking at the launch of this year's cotton marketing campaign, Marrule said the amount of raw cotton available to be sold during the campaign is around 60,000 tonnes, which is a reduction of 8.7 per cent on the previous year. He urged the cotton purchasing companies to buy the raw cotton in the hands of the producers in July and August, so as to put it on the international market by September, warning that the world price is likely to fall after this.

For this marketing campaign, Marrule said, 168 brigades had been set up throughout the country to cover 2,351 markets. 1.2 million sacks are available to bag the cotton, and 136 trucks will carry the cotton from the markets to the ginning mills. Among the actions underway to stimulate cotton production, the Minister added, are the re-opening of a ginning mill in the southern city of Xai-Xai, the inauguration of a fertiliser factory in Beira, and the installation of a cotton seed oil processing plant in Montepuez, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, which can produce 5,000 litres of oil a day.

Renamo fighters demand removal of Momade

Gunmen from the opposition party Renamo in the southern province of Inhambane have demanded the immediate removal of Ossufo Momade as leader of Renamo.

Their spokesperson, Joao Machava, cited by Radio Mozambique, warned that they will not agree to demobilisation and disarmament until Momade has resigned. "He's a tribalist, he's a regionalist, he's arrogant and he's ignorant", accused Machava. He claimed that Momade had removed from senior positions those who did not support him in the election of President of Renamo at the party's congress in January.

Machava claimed there are 280 armed men under his command in Funhalouro district. Commentators state this number is unlikely since there was little sign of any Renamo activity in Inhambane during the last flare-up of the Renamo insurgency in 2015-16.

Machava's threats follow those made by Renamo dissidents in the central province of Sofala in June. Then, Maj-Gen Mariano Nhongo threatened that, unless Momade resigned by mid-July, the dissidents would kill him.

Grindrod investments reach US\$100 million

The South African logistics company Grindrod says it has invested US\$100 million in Mozambique since the start of its activities in the country almost two decades ago. Company representative Walter Grindrod, speaking during the inauguration of the graphite logistics complex in the northern port of Nacala on 28 June said this investment was made in installations, services and human resources. Grindrod owns the logistics complex which will transport graphite mined in Balama to Nacala for export.

Twigg Exploration and Mining Ltd (TEML), a wholly owned subsidiary of the Australian company Syrah Resources is operating the Balama mine and awarded the logistics and distribution services to Grindrod. The Grindrod operation involves the transport of graphite to Nacala over a distance of 495 kilometres.

Walter Grindrod said that in Mozambique his company has provided jobs for 750 people and intends to continue working to create other opportunities to connect the country to the rest of the world.

He said the company had invested about US\$24 million in the Nacala graphite logistics complex, which has created 350 jobs. He explained that to transport the graphite from the mine to the port, Grindrod invested in a fleet of 50 trucks, and set up a packaging area of 10,000 square metres and a storage zone in the port.

During implantation of the complex, Grindrod enjoyed “excellent cooperation” with the Mozambican authorities, Walter Grindrod said, which “inspires the confidence necessary to invest in these projects”.

Moma to Nampula road to be fully paved

President Filipe Nyusi on 27 June announced that the paving of the road between the towns of Nametil and Moma, in the northern province of Nampula, will begin shortly.

Speaking at a rally in Moma, he said that cooperation partners have promised to disburse the funds required to pave the 130-kilometre stretch. The paved road south from Nampula city could not stop at Nametil, in Mogovolas district. “The road must go to the end, and the end is where it meets the sea (in Moma)”, declared President Nyusi.

Currently, work is underway to pave the 72 kilometres from Nampula city to Nametil, at a cost of US\$41 million and this should be completed in the first half of 2020.

As for the onward link from Moma, to a second coastal district, Angoche, the President said the government is currently mobilising financial resources.

On the first day of his working visit to the province, President Nyusi also inaugurated a branch of the country’s largest commercial bank, the Millennium-BIM, in the district of Lalaua, as part of the government’s drive to ensure that every district in the country has at least one bank branch.

The chairperson of the Millennium-BIM Executive Commission, Joao da Costa, said the opening of the Lalaua branch strengthens the presence of the bank in Nampula, as part of its strategy for “the financial inclusion of all Mozambican citizens”.

South Korea to finance Gaza water systems

South Korea has agreed to provide US\$3 million to finance water supply systems in the southern Mozambican province of Gaza, under an agreement signed on 27 June between the National Water Supply Directorate and the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

The project, which will take 30 months to build, is intended to supply clean water to about 40,000 people in Mapai and Chicualacuala districts in the arid Gaza interior.

According to the Deputy Minister of Public Works, Victor Tuacale, the money will be spent on building eight new small scale water supply systems and drilling 32 boreholes from which the water will be pumped.

Currently, less than 40 per cent of the population of Chicualacuala and Mapai have access to a reliable source of water, and in parts of these districts water is distributed in tanker trucks.

The cooperation between Mozambique and South Korea particularly covers the areas of energy, information technologies, and infrastructure, notably the building of bridges, roads, schools and hospitals. Mozambique is one of the priority countries supported by the Korean Cooperation Fund for Economic Development in Africa.

Mozambique and South Africa to discuss border deaths

The South African authorities have formally apologised for the incident that occurred on 16 June, near the Ponta de Ouro resort, in the southernmost Mozambican district of Matutuine, when South African soldiers shot dead two members of the Mozambican Frontier Guards.

According to a report in the Maputo daily newspaper “Noticias”, the General commander of the Mozambican police, Bernadino Rafael, on 26 June granted an audience to the commander of operations of the South African Armed Forces, Lt-Gen Barney Muntu, who came to Mozambique, representing the South African chief of staff, to deal specifically with the 16 June shooting.

Muntu promised to share with his counterparts the final results of the investigations the South African military have launched. The investigations, he said, will lead to disciplinary or judicial proceedings, depending on the level of guilt of those involved. “We came to offer our condolences for the deaths of the two Mozambican police officers”, Muntu said. “We are also guaranteeing that our relations remain good and solid. The incident embarrassed us. We recognise the error and we shall work together to ensure that similar situations do not happen again”.

Rafael, however, was unhappy that ten days after the shooting, the South Africans have still not given any preliminary information that might explain the shooting. They have not even explained what South African soldiers were doing on the Mozambican side of the border.

“We received messages of condolences, but that’s not enough to explain the cause of the incident”, added Rafael. “We are very concerned, particularly because this incident involved deaths. We continue to await the outcome of the investigations underway”. To speed up the investigations, Rafael suggested that Mozambican experts should be included in the commission of inquiry set up by the South African armed forces, while South African agents could join the Mozambican commission.

Renamo delivers Momade's nomination papers

Mozambique's main opposition party Renamo on 26 June became the third party to deliver nomination papers for its presidential candidate to the Constitutional Council, the country's highest body in matters of constitutional and electoral law.

But whereas the candidates of the ruling Frelimo Party and of the second opposition force, the Mozambique Democratic Movement, MDM, respectively President Filipe Nyusi and Daviz Simango, were present in person when their nomination papers were submitted, Renamo leader Ossufo Momade did not travel to Maputo, but remained at the main Renamo military base in the central district of Gorongosa.

It was Renamo General Secretary Andre Majibire, and the Party's election agent, Venancio Mondlane, who took the papers to the Council, accompanied by a large crowd of supporters who danced and sang in the street outside.

Like Frelimo and the MDM, Renamo gave the Constitutional Council 20,000 signatures supporting its presidential candidate. Each candidate must present at least 10,000 signatures and there is an upper limit of 20,000.

All the signatures must be of registered voters and must be recognised by a notary. Submitting many thousand more signatures than strictly necessary is a precautionary measure, in case the Council rules that some signatures are invalid (for example, because they are duplicates, because the same person has signed for more than one candidate, or because the signatures are not of voters).

Funding obtained for power line

The Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank on 20 June approved a total of US\$420 million in grants and guarantees to strengthen Mozambique's electricity transmission capacity for domestic and regional markets and increase generation capacity through private sector investment.

According to a World Bank press release, the project will also benefit from a co-financing of US\$24 million grant from a Norwegian Trust Fund.

The Temane Regional Electricity Project (TREP) will support the construction of a 563-kilometre transmission line between Maputo and Vilanculo/Temane, in Inhambane province, and private sector financing of a 400 megawatt combined cycle gas-to-power electricity generation plant at Temane. Temane is where the South African petrochemical giant SASOL has its gas treatment plant. SASOL extracts the natural gas from fields in Temane and Pande.

The Bank release says the transmission line and the new power station "would strengthen generation and transmission of power within Mozambique and in southern Africa. The project will enable private investment of around US\$750 million for generation".

"TREP is part of the transmission backbone of Mozambique, designed to integrate its disjointed northern,

central and southern power systems and strengthen regional connectivity to the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP)", the release continues. "The project is integral to the efforts of the SAPP to increase generation capacity and expand the regional transmission network, create conditions to provide access to millions of people in the region living without electricity, and reduce the carbon intensity of the Southern Africa power systems".

"It is also fundamental to developing the Mozambican domestic power system, expanding energy access, and ensuring the secure, affordable, and sustainable power supply that is one of the key drivers of Mozambique's economic and social development", according to Mark Lundell, the World Bank Country Director for Mozambique.

Final Investment Decision on Rovuma LNG project signed

The Mozambican government and the partners in the consortium exploiting the natural gas resources in Area One of the Rovuma Basin, off the coast of the northern province of Cabo Delgado, on 18 June signed the Final Investment Decision for a liquefied natural gas (LNG) project, which will be the largest foreign investment in the history of Mozambique.

The total investment is around US\$25 billion – US\$14 billion will come from bank loans and US\$11 billion from the capital of the partners in the Area One Concession.

The agreement on the Final Investment Decision was signed by the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Max Tonela, and by Al Walker, chairperson of the US company Anadarko, which heads the consortium.

President Filipe Nyusi, who witnessed the signing, declared the ceremony was "the guarantee of exploiting a resource that is fundamental for the development of Mozambique. Today the present meets the future".

The Area One LNG project involves the construction of two liquefaction plants (known as "trains") on the Afungi Peninsula in the Cabo Delgado district of Palma, producing 12.88 million tonnes of LNG a year.

The project requires the resettlement of villagers from Afungi to a new town. Minister of Land, Environment and Rural Development, Celso Correia, told reporters that the resettlement town will be inaugurated shortly.

Anadarko holds 26.5 per cent of Area One and is the operator. Its partners in the Consortium are the Japanese company Mitsui (20 per cent), PTTEP of Thailand (8.5 per cent), the three Indian companies ONGC Videsh, Bias Rovuma Energy, and BRPL Ventures (each with ten per cent), and Mozambique's own National Hydrocarbon Company (ENH – 15 per cent).

Anadarko will not be the operator for much longer since the company is being sold to Occidental Petroleum, and the French energy giant Total has agreed to buy all of Anadarko's African assets, including Rovuma Basin Area One from Occidental.

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