

AfricaRenewal

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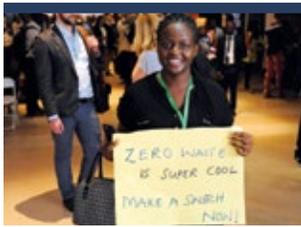


TAKING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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where students turn
waste to wealth**

**Vera Songwe on
actualizing Africa's
Free Trade Area**

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gains momentum**



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Cover photo: **Man holding up a solar panel in Cape Town, South Africa.** Gettyimages

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Address correspondence to:

The Editor, Africa Renewal
 Room S-1032
 United Nations, NY 10017-2513, USA,
 Tel: (212) 963-6857, Fax: (212) 963-4556

E-mail: africarenewal@un.org

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A Ghanaian woman shows off her locally made bamboo bracelets in Accra, Ghana. INBAR

AfricaRenewal

Acting Editor-in-Chief

Zipporah Musau

Acting Managing Editor

Kingsley Ighobor

Staff Writers

Franck Kuwonu
 Sharon Birch-Jeffrey

Research & Media Liaison

Pavithra Rao

Design, Production & Distribution

Paddy D. Ilos, II

Administration

Dona Joseph

Interns

Hugo Bourhis
 Pierre-Alain Wiayi Seya



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Medina of Fez in Morocco is a UNESCO World Heritage Site frequented by tourists. Davidlohr Bueso

Morocco tourism gains momentum

By Hugo Bourhis

The crème de la crème of Hollywood was in Marrakech, Morocco, for the wedding of British movie star Idris Elba in April this year. Mr. Elba tied the knot with his Canadian model girlfriend, former Miss Vancouver Sabrina Dhowre, at the Ksar Char-Bagh hotel, an exquisite Alhambra-style hotel.

Kenyan-Mexican Oscar winner Lupita Nyong'o, American actress Jessica Alba, soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo of Portugal and others have all embraced the glamour of the rose-coloured city of Marrakech and its plethora of tourist attractions, including the vibrant Jemaa el-Fnaa square and the picturesque Majorelle Garden.

Morocco draws tourists from the far corners of the world. They may be seen strolling along the Corniche in Casablanca—an oceanfront boardwalk lined with restaurants, nightclubs, theatres and hotels—or dining at one of the small cafés in the quiet city of Azemmour—a short day trip or overnight jaunt from the big city.

Adil El Fakir, director of the Moroccan National Tourist Office (ONMT), says that over 12 million tourists visited Morocco in 2018, of whom 2.4 million headed for Marrakech.

Morocco's tourist attractions include the spectacular beaches of Essaouira, an Atlantic coastal town included on the World Heritage List of UNESCO since 2001, and the country's mountains, particularly the Atlas and the Rif.

"Tourism is a terrific land-use tool, and our territory, from Tangier to Lagouira, is rich in its activities, its landscape, its heritage, its culture and its gastronomy," declares Mohamed Benamour, a former president of the Morocco Tourism Federation.

A cultural crossroad

The country is also a cultural hub, reflecting the diversity of its inhabitants' national origins: sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and the Middle East. This

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UN Photo/Evan Schneider

African Youth must be confident as they engage in the world. We should celebrate the many African youth who are already making meaning contributions to solving the world's problems.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, incoming President of the UN General Assembly

Getting girls into a classroom is not enough in itself; girls have to be able to stay in school and get proper education once enrolled.

Ms. Kafui Adjamagdo-Johnson, Togolese politician and former presidential candidate

With Agenda 2063, with Agenda 2030, it is my hope that the light will shine on the rural women in Africa and the potential they have to contribute to their communities and the overall development of the continent.

Bience Gawanas, UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa





The effects of climate change are being felt in Africa; countries, organisations and individuals, including young people, are taking actions to tackle these effects. In this edition, we highlight some outstanding climate action initiatives by young Africans.

Taking action on climate change

World leaders attending the Climate Action Summit at the United Nations in New York in September 2019 to bring concrete, realistic plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

BY FRANCK KUWONU

The devastating effects of climate change, from longer periods of drought, more frequent wildfires and loss of sea ice to an increase in the number, duration and intensity of tropical storms, are being felt around the

world with an intensity that underscores the immediate need for concerted efforts.

In March and April, cyclones tore through the Southern African countries of Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, taking the lives of hundreds and injuring

and displacing thousands. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the natural disaster affected more than 1.9 million people across the region, most requiring humanitarian assistance.



CLIMATE CHANGE

South African climate activists.  Ashraf Hendricks/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

In the Horn of Africa and in West Africa, droughts and flooding are frequent and intense. In the Sahel region, prolonged droughts exacerbate desertification, while the rise in sea levels in the coastal cities of West Africa, from Ghana to Benin, is ravaging farming and fishing communities.

Floods in South Asia have taken more than 100 lives, while snow has been sighted in parts of Africa. Wildfires are burning across the state of New South Wales, Australia, while storms continue to batter the Americas. In Europe and parts of the US, temperatures have reached record highs. No region is immune.

After years of discussion and debate, scientists now agree that human activities, including the burning of fossil fuels, commercial farming and land clearing, are

releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. These gases trap heat from the sun, which leads to global warming.

“Nature is saying it is time to take action,” says Inger Andersen, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

According to Ms. Andersen, annually the world is currently losing 1 million species due to climate change and pollution is causing about 2.6 million premature deaths globally.

September 2019 summit

The UN Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit 2019 follows the Global Climate Action Summit of September 2018 in San Francisco and the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, which commits parties to the agreement to act to limit global warming to 1.5 to 2 degrees C above pre-industrial levels. They were required to communicate by 2020 their plans to achieve those targets.

With this in view, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called on leaders to come to New York on 23 September with concrete, realistic plans to enhance their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) on adaptation by 2020. NDCs are action plans by governments and include climate-related targets, policies and measures for implementation. In October the International Panel on Climate Change released a special report warning policymakers that catastrophic climate change may only be avoided if states make efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Mr. Guterres in September 2018 laid out expectations for this year’s Climate Action Summit: “I want to hear about how we are going to stop the increase in emissions by 2020, and dramatically reduce emissions to reach net zero emissions by mid-century.”

Ms. Andersen adds, “World leaders in the summit will step in and step up their commitments to, for example, choosing renewable energy, decarbonizing their production and investing in nature-based solutions such as the restoration of forests and degraded lands.”

But there is urgency. “There is no more time to waste,” Mr. Guterres said. Leaders should come to the meeting “not just to

report on what they are doing but also what more they intend to do.”

He listed actions with high potential to curb greenhouse gas emissions and promote adaptation and resilience, including accelerating the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy, mobilizing finance to drive decarbonization, advancing global efforts to address and manage the impacts and risks of climate change, and engaging youth and the public in general.

During this year’s Africa Climate Week, held in Accra, Ghana, in March, a representative of YOUNGO, the official youth constituency of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), noted that African countries, which contribute comparatively little to global emissions, have focused their NDCs on adaptation.

Major catastrophes such as the recent cyclones often grab the headlines; yet largely unnoticed climate change-related catastrophes take place every week, mostly in developing countries, says Mami Mizutori, the UN Secretary-General’s special representative on disaster risk reduction. Ms. Mizutori echoes the call for global action on climate change in an interview with the *Guardian*, a UK newspaper.

The UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNDRR) estimates that from 1998 to 2017, global climate change disasters were worth \$2.2 trillion in direct economic loss; other disasters accounted for \$0.7 trillion. UNDRR also reports that in Africa, the economic impact of natural disasters in 2014 alone was \$53.19 billion.

The time to act is now

Luis Alfonso de Alba, UN Special Envoy for the 2019 Climate Summit, reminds African governments, civil society and the private sector that the time for talk is over. It is time for action, he says, adding, “We know what to do.”

At the recent Africa Climate Week, African leaders committed to acting on climate change, while individuals and communities shared the actions they were already taking.

“We the youth are calling on our respective governments to raise ambition and step up climate action to enable us to meet our targets,” youth delegates Zelda

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Young Africans create green businesses

BY FRANCK KUWONU

The youth are the driving force for action on climate and the environment. That was the message hammered home to delegates at Africa Climate Week in March 2019, the first of three annual regional climate events ahead of the United Nations Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit to be held in September this year.

Africa Climate Week was held in Accra, Ghana, and organized by the government of Ghana and partner organisations,

including the Nairobi Framework Partnership, which supports developing countries in preparing and implementing their plans to address climate change.

During the week, young local climate activists displayed colourful placards that read "Zero waste is sexy, Act now" and "Plastic or Paper = Tree cutting, Act now," among other slogans.

Many of these young Africans, who participated in the Africa Climate Week, have been launching start-ups that address

climate change, protect the environment and provide jobs.

Some of the innovative businesses showcased during the conference include a bamboo bike initiative that taps into the ecological potential of bamboo trees, a plastic recycling company, and a project that recycles used tires and denim, turning waste into shoes while at the same time combating environmental degradation. Below are some of the innovative businesses:

Koliko Wear: from used fabrics into high-fashion footwear

He had been helping a friend to turn around his shoemaking business before he delved into eco-fashion, manufacturing shoes from used materials.

"I am a banker by profession, but now I'm a shoemaker. I use recycled materials to make shoes," Peter Kweku Anowie told *Africa Renewal*.

Mr. Anowie's Koliko Wear enterprise makes shoes out of used jeans, furniture woolens, bedsheets, jute sacks, and rubber from used car tires.

For him the transition from banking to entrepreneurship happened by chance. He said, "I am from Takoradi, in western Ghana. One day I chanced upon a shoemaker friend whose business was collapsing. I told him I could assist by investing some small capital in his business, so that he can continue to operate."

Later, realizing shoemaking could be profitable, Mr. Anowie decided to go all in. "I saw that it was a cool and creative business, and I just resigned from my banking job to get involved in the shoemaking business fulltime. I am a business administration student and I majored in banking finance, so I have some knowledge of business."

Mr. Anowie also wanted to establish something that could train the youth and



"show them how to be financially independent, how to get something going so that they can improve their living standards."

Three years in, the business currently employs about a dozen people. "I am very happy because I see that other people around are being trained in the shoemaking business. They are not just earning money for themselves, they are also able to take care of their friends and extended family."

As with other eco-start-ups in Ghana,

the people involved in KolikoWear aim to scale up to have more of an impact on society. The Ghana Climate Change Innovation Centre (GCCIC) is providing support, training and other technical assistance.

"I just signed on to GCCIC last year, and yes, they've been supportive, making sure that all my books are up to date to attract investors," said Mr. Anowie.



Bamboo bikes made in Ghana a global hit

“How best can we utilise our own local raw material such as bamboo to create employment as an inclusive business model—a business that can tackle environmental issues, social and economic issues?” That was the question on the mind of Bernice Dapaah when she founded the Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative (GBBI) a decade ago.

Located in Kumasi in southern Ghana, GBBI employs about 50 workers, mostly women. It produces and sells handmade bicycles for between \$150 and \$300 a piece.

“We have different types of bikes. We have the bikes suitable for men and those suitable for women. We also have

mountain, road and city bikes, as well as cargo bikes that farmers use to carry goods,” Ms. Dapaah told Africa Renewal.

In 2018, the company manufactured about 1,000 bikes, having steadily increased production over the years. “We hope to do more this year as we are going to expand our workshop and train more youth for production,” she said. In the coming years the company intends to produce electric bamboo bicycles, electric bamboo bike ambulances, and bamboo bike pedicabs, among other models.

“Currently, the bikes are about 75% to 80% bamboo. The body is made of bamboo, but wheels and engine are the regular ones like in other bikes,” Ms.

Bernice Dapaah, founder and CEO, Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative. Bamboo bikes on display (up). Africa Renewal/Franck Kuwonu

Dapaah explained. For her, the bamboo initiative is more than a business; it is also about women’s empowerment.

Overall, Ms. Dapaah is glad that the business is not “just an environmental symbol. We are also cultivating bamboo to feed the industry. We are also creating a space for the carbon balance. That is what we are doing. We hope to do more in the future.”

Coliba Ventures: turning plastic waste to riches



“One of the things our people are not always aware of is that it takes hundreds of years for plastics to decompose in the soil. And it takes a long while before its effects are felt, and by then, the harm is so bad that it can’t be controlled—because the emissions will be very high,” Wisdom Kafui Honu told Africa Renewal.

Wisdom Kafui Honu, co-founder, Coliba Ventures, Ghana. AR/Franck Kuwonu

Mr. Honu, who is cofounder of Coliba Ventures, a plastic waste-collection venture based in Accra, Ghana, was talking about how he became an environmental entrepreneur. It all began with a personal tragedy when one of his friends drowned in a flash flood. At the root of the tragedy was plastic-clogged drainage.

“It was in June 2015. My friend was waiting for me and I was late to the

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Ugandan students turn waste to wealth

St. Kizito High School students earn money from recycling

BY MELISSA KYEYUNE

Namugongo is a lush, forested community in central Uganda where tall trees are home to colourful birds and noisy monkeys. The community has a tragic place in history: on 3 June 1886, 22 Ugandan Christian converts were publicly executed, on the orders of King Mwanga II of the Buganda Kingdom, in an attempt to ward off the influence of colonial powers with whom the Christians were associated.

The converts were elevated to sainthood by Pope Paul VI in 1964.

Ugandans today see those converts as martyrs. They commemorate every 3 June,

Martyrs Day, with weeklong celebrations that attract thousands of visitors from around the country.

During the week celebrants discard tons of waste, including plastic bottles, food and sewage, often throwing them into open channels, where they are likely to be transported by heavy rains into the premises of St. Kizito High School on the outskirts of the village.

Waste to wealth

But the students of St. Kizito have come up with ways to collect that waste and transform it into wealth. They use the silt

they collect to create and maintain the school's pavers, and they create arts and crafts from the plastic straws and bottles, which they then sell. The students also turn biowaste into organic fertilizer for the school gardens, where they learn to grow mushrooms, onions and cabbage, and they use dried briquettes made from biowaste as fuel to cook school meals.

A visit to the school reveals many recycling efforts by the students. Three large metal bed frames, refashioned by the students into a simple recycling facility, sit in the middle of the school courtyard. Here the students separate waste into paper, plastic and biodegradables.

"We get the dirty straws, wash them, and soften them. We then weave them into baskets, handbags, money purses, laptop



A student holding an SDG badge (top). Students holding vegetables from the school garden (left). Brian (WEYE Clean Energy) displays a bag of briquettes (right).  *Solomon Musisi*



bags, doormats and carpets. We sell the products to our parents and visitors,” says Patricia Nakibuule, one of the students producing the handcrafted items.

“I am responsible for ensuring that my fellow students, all 800 of them, have lunch to eat,” she says, smiling. “We use biowaste briquettes as fuel because this contributes to recycling and reduces deforestation.” The school does not need firewood and therefore does not have to cut down trees in the forest.

Aside from waste recycling, St. Kizito school equips students with skills in making soap and candles, caring for animals, landscaping and baking.

Students tell their stories

“At home, I rear poultry and grow tomatoes, so my parents do not spend a lot of money on food,” notes student Christine Nandujja, who says that she is applying

smart farming concepts learned in school back at home.

Joseph Kakande, the school’s sports prefect, enjoys vegetable growing as much as basketball. “I learnt how to grow onions and mushrooms in school, then I started to do the same at home. It started off as a small project, but now I grow enough to even supply a hotel. I paid half of my last term’s school fees using the profits.”

To train current students, the school engages former graduates as well as other young experts in waste-to-energy projects. Brian Galabuzi, CEO of WEYE Clean Energy Company, a waste-to-energy project, trains young people in waste management and clean energy and uses the school as a laboratory for his award-winning initiatives.

He told *Africa Renewal*, “When I first came to the school a few years ago, I was a young university student with crazy ideas, but the students jumped right on board. They had come from rural areas and saw my ideas as an opportunity for them to develop their own skills. I benefitted greatly from their support.”

Today Mr. Galabuzi travels the world, showcasing ways to turn waste into clean energy.

Rhoda Nassanga, an engineer and a specialist in water conservation, regularly

conducts training for the students. “My goal is to impart knowledge to the students while they are still in school and teach them about sustainable development goals,” says Ms. Nassanga. She benefits as well, as training the students allows her to use her engineering skills.

Positive effects on the community

In turn, St. Kizito students have been training Namugongo community residents to make arts and crafts out of plastic waste and, as a result, earn incomes.

Now both the St. Kizito students and the larger Namugongo community are making efforts to preserve the environment, create ecofriendly businesses, manage environmental projects and use natural resources in sustainable ways.

Frederick Kakembo, the director of St. Kizito High School, who has a background in community development, says instructively, “I believe that you must first use what you have before you look elsewhere.” 🦋

Women pastoralists feel the heat of climate change

Faced with the harsh effects of erratic weather patterns, some Kenyan women livestock farmers call for help

BY SHARON BIRCH-JEFFREY

For many people, climate change is about shrinking glaciers, rising sea levels, longer and more intense heatwaves, and other extreme and unpredictable weather patterns. But for women pastoralists—livestock farmers in the semi-arid lands of Kenya—climate change has forced drastic changes to everyday life, including long and sometimes treacherous journeys to get water.

Faced with an increasingly dry climate, women pastoralists now must spend much more time searching for water. That takes time away from productive economic activities, reinforcing the cycle of poverty.

A marginalized group

“Women are the ones who fetch water and firewood. Women are the ones who prepare food. Women are the ones who take care of not just their own children but also the young ones of their animals as well,” Agnes Leina, a Kenyan human rights activist and pastoralist, told *Africa Renewal*.

Ms. Leina established the Il’Laramatak Community Concerns organisation in 2011, because women pastoralists have inadequate land rights, are excluded from community leadership and are often not involved in decision making, despite the responsibilities they shoulder.

This year, Ms. Leina was invited to the Commission on the Status of Women at UN headquarters in New York, an opportunity she used to promote the rights of the Maasai, seminomadic pastoralists of the Nilotic ethnic group in parts of northern, central and southern Kenya. Climate change has made their situation worse, she says.

Ms. Leina’s organisation addresses the loss of earnings women incur due to climate change by creating programmes that teach them how to make and sell beads,

mats, and milk products. It also helps foster girls’ resilience by giving them the tools to set goals for themselves.

She says it used to take her about 30 minutes to fetch 20 litres of water from a river not far from her mother’s home, which was hardly enough to wash clothes and take a bath. That was until the river started receding. The time she spent fetching water increased to “one hour, then two hours because, of course, there was no water and so many of us lined up for the little that was available. Then suddenly it completely dried up.”

Now, she says, “You have to travel to another river, which is like one hour’s walk, to fetch water.”



CLIMATE CHANGE

As a result, many girls between ages 14 and 16 run the risk of being attacked by wild animals or becoming victims of sexual assault while searching for water. They have no time to do their homework and, for fear of being punished, they miss school, she explains.

Other girls, discouraged by these realities, “settle for a man in town who has water and then marry him,” Ms. Leina admits with regret.

Climate change also increases the pressure for child marriages. In pastoralist communities, livestock is a status symbol. Losing cattle because the land is too arid for them to survive may compel a father to offer his young daughter’s hand in marriage in exchange for more cows as a bride price.

Africa is highly vulnerable to climate change. The

Agnes Leina.





UN Environment Programme projects that some countries' yields from rain-fed agriculture will have been reduced by half by next year. Countries hard hit by land degradation and desertification include Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

"Most African women depend on rain-fed livelihood systems like farming and livestock keeping. Therefore, any shift in climate patterns has a significant impact on women, especially those living in rural areas," concurs Fatmata Sessay, UN Women regional policy advisor on climate-smart agriculture for East and Southern Africa Region. UN Women's mandate is to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

Globally, nearly 200 million nomadic pastoralists make their livelihoods in remote and harsh environments where conventional farming is limited or not possible, according to the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Glo.be, the online magazine of the Belgian Federal Public Service's international

development aid programme, reports that Kenyan pastoralists are responsible for up to 90% of the meat produced in East Africa. Kenya's livestock sector contributes 12% to the country's gross domestic product, according to the World Bank.

Therefore, a changing climate has serious implications for the country's economy.

In 2014, Kenya's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, with support from the International Livestock Research Institute and the World Bank, began a livestock insurance programme for vulnerable pastoralists. That programme has provided some relief to women pastoralists.

Technology to the rescue

UN Women is also mobilizing efforts to secure land tenure for women. It is working with the Standard Bank of Africa to help African women overcome barriers in the agriculture sector such as providing access to credit.

Technology is key to saving the water that disappears after a torrential rainfall,

Members of the Samburu tribe in Kenya. Samburu women pastoralists are affected by climate change. Getty Images / Kitra Cahana

says Ms. Leina. Windmill technology, for instance, could allow women to access water 300 feet underground. The snag, she explains, is that it's priced out of the reach of women pastoralists. She hopes authorities can help.

Houses in some rural areas of Kenya have thatched roofs that cannot channel water to household water tanks in the way that zinc rooftops can. Commercial water trucks can fill up household tanks for a fee of up to \$60 per tank, but most rural households cannot afford that much.

The situation for women pastoralists is grim, which is why Ms. Leina hopes raising awareness of how climate change is threatening their livelihoods may get increased attention—and support—of the Kenyan government and its international partners. 🇰🇪

INTERVIEW

Pushing for a green economy & clean energy

—Joyce Msuya, United Nations Environment Programme's Deputy Executive Director

Africa is grappling with myriad environmental and climate challenges, from drought to loss of biodiversity, cyclones and plastics pollution. *Africa Renewal's Zipporah Musau* spoke with the United Nations Environment Programme's Deputy Executive Director, **Ms. Joyce Msuya**, on how African countries can mitigate some of these challenges and the opportunities that are available.

It is about a year since you were appointed Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, and for a while you acted as the Executive Director. What has this journey been like for you?

I joined UNEP in August 2018 and it has been a fulfilling journey for me. Given the absolute centrality of environment in development, in attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it's been great to see how the UN has played a leading role in many ways. For example, we recently released the Global Environment Outlook 6, showing that we are increasingly connecting the environment to the broader development issues.

What are some of the highlights of your time at UNEP?

A key highlight has definitely been the Fourth UN Environment Assembly in March 2019, which focused on the innovations that can help us achieve sustainable production and consumption. After five days of discussions, ministers from more than 170 UN member states delivered a bold blueprint for change, saying the world needed to speed up moves towards a new model of development in order to respect the vision laid out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Member States agreed to 23 non-binding resolutions covering a range of environmental challenges, including a more circular global economy; sustainable public procurement; addressing food waste and sharing best practices on energy-efficient and safe cold chain solutions. If countries deliver on all that was agreed here and implement the resolutions, we could take a big step towards a new world order where we no longer grow at the expense of nature but instead see people and planet thrive together.

I have a strong team behind me—the staff at UNEP and the rest of the UN family. As a woman from East Africa, it is a very humbling experience to serve in the organisation, and be based at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, to work on environmental issues.

What are some of the major environmental challenges facing Africa today and how can they be addressed?

I would summarize the biggest environmental challenges facing Africa today in four categories. One is the impact of climate change, considering that most African economies still depend on the agriculture sector. The second is loss of biodiversity because this impacts food security and natural ecosystems. The third is energy, as many African economies are growing fast and require sufficient energy. Lastly, looking at the demographic



Joyce Msuya). © Natalia Mroz/UNEP

trends, there is a lot of growth in urban areas with populations moving to cities. This brings challenges, including that of waste management.

Are there any opportunities?

There are exciting opportunities. After the Paris Agreement, there was a global commitment and political will to address climate change. We are currently working with African countries to help them develop national plans in mitigation and adaptation. On nature, next year there will be a big global meeting in China on the Convention on Biological Diversity, offering African member states the opportunity to shape the global biodiversity agenda by sharing strategies that are working well and can be replicated elsewhere. Africa is endowed with many hours of unobstructed sunlight; how can we promote more usage of solar energy and other renewables to fuel Africa's economies?

UNEP has been pushing for a green economy by promoting low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive policies. How can African countries tap into this?

Push for cleaner sources of energy. We are already seeing several developments in this. If you follow what is happening in South Africa, trying to move its heavy manufacturing industrial sector from being dependent on coal to cleaner energy...it is a slow process. Transition from bad sources of energy to renewables takes time. Then we have banning deforestation and making green economy plans. Countries like Ethiopia, Ghana and South Africa are moving in this direction. It needs ministers of environment to work very closely with ministers of finance to develop these plans. UNEP is using its convening role to help member states do this.

What are some of the ways African countries can deal with the plastic menace?

Governments, citizens, the private sector and civil society all have a role to play when it comes to plastics. There are four ways that African governments and citizens can help with the menace. First is leadership and political will to actually put in place regulations to ban single-use plastics and promote reuse of smart plastics. The second is for the citizens to make smart choices, children telling their parents 'mama, papa, please don't buy plastics'. Consumer choices can influence the environmental footprint of plastics. Third, we need to celebrate and advance home-grown advocacy such as the "Flip Flopi," an indigenous innovation from Kenya where a boat has been made entirely out of plastics found on beaches. It recently sailed from Lamu to Zanzibar to raise awareness. Lastly, partnerships with the private sector. If you look at good examples of where single-use plastics have been banned, there have been engagements between governments and the private sector to encourage them to find alternative and more sustainable ways to replace plastics bags. Part of UNEP's role is to promote the sharing of these experiences. A number of countries in Africa, including my own, Tanzania, and also Kenya, are looking at how they can preserve the national parks to sustain the tourism industry and people's

livelihoods. And finally, we need to see how we can address the plastic menace by introducing more circularity into economies. This is where capacity-building support for governments will be critical.

How is UNEP helping member states in Africa to achieve SDGs and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda? In particular, how is UNEP coordinating with pan-African organisations such as the African Union to address the effects of climate change?

UN Environment supports and showcases science-informed policies that have the potential to transform humanity's relationship with our environment. We also host global platforms – from the UN Environment Assembly to international financial networks to multilateral environmental agreements – that catalyze action. And we advocate, working with citizens across the world, to inspire change. However, we cannot do it alone because the scale of the challenge is huge but there are enormous opportunities to make a difference and so partnerships are critical. For political advocacy we are engaging with the African Union through our office in Addis Ababa. We provide policy advice, technical assistance and capacity building. We are working with NEPAD and talking to the East African Community to see how we can support the sub-regional and regional initiatives. I was in Cape Town, South Africa, earlier this year, with other regional bodies, to learn how countries develop green economic plans.

 **UN Environment supports and showcases science-informed policies that have the potential to transform humanity's relationship with our environment.**

How is UNEP engaging women and youth?

We are engaging them at various levels as part of the inter-governmental process. Women and youth are a core part of implementing our programs. At the UNEA 4, we heard from many youth activists on why they are becoming impatient and demanded for action from us.

What is your message to African countries on environment?

Africa has a significant role to play when it comes to the environment. All these global challenges have an impact on the continent, hence the need to hear African voices at all levels in global forums. Also, incorporating and mainstreaming environment in all the activities at the country level is key as is translating these into actions. Partnerships are crucial: Africa is diverse, but we can build on that diversity to bring collective action. Our challenges cannot be solved individually. It takes a village to raise a child in Africa; it is going to take a village to solve our environmental problems. 🌱

Africa's free trade area: the journey begins

— Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

In July 2019, the African Union launched the operational phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) at a summit in Niger. Countries had signed the framework agreement for the AfCFTA on 21 March 2018 and last April 22 countries (the number required for the agreement to come into force) had deposited their instruments of ratification. With a combined market of over 1.2 billion people and a GDP of \$2.5 trillion, AfCFTA could potentially make Africa the largest free trade area in the world. The United Nations support for the African Union during negotiations and ratifications was led by **Vera Songwe**, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). For *Africa Renewal*, **Christabel Ligami** interviewed Ms. Songwe about AfCFTA's implementation phase, empowering African women and her vision for the ECA. The following are the excerpts.

Africa Renewal: Now that AfCFTA is in force, do you think countries will fully implement the agreement and within the set timelines?

Vera Songwe: It's a good thing that some countries are moving a step ahead. It shows how trade is important to African countries and that countries are ready to open their borders. So yes, we are hopeful countries will fully implement the agreement. Countries are realizing they need to trade more with others because of an expected increase in revenues and jobs creation, especially for the youth. Intra-African trade is expected to rise to 53.3 %, meaning that revenues will increase.

How can member states ensure that the agreement is fully implemented?

Ministers of finance of member states signing on to AfCFTA have an important role to play to help countries implement the agreement. Tax and customs, for example, which are key components of AfCFTA, are matters under the ministry of finance. It's up to the finance ministers to evaluate if, how and when revenues will increase for their countries and how these revenues will be expended. Once countries ratify the document, they have 10 years, some have 13 years, to put key policies in place to fully take advantage of AfCFTA.

We expect countries to carry out a review of their macroeconomic policies, focusing on fiscal policies that are fit for purpose, and to help us not only to adapt to, and make the most of, AfCFTA, but more broadly to achieve Agenda 2063 and the



2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The urgent action is to create the enabling fiscal space to foster both public and private investment while ensuring economic diversification.

Some negotiations are yet to be concluded. Are there contentious issues that countries have yet to agree on?

The remaining issues for discussion are matters regarding competition, provisions relating to investment, intellectual property, e-commerce and so on. Countries agreed to take more time to negotiate those issues. The issues are being discussed and will be finalized in the second phase of the negotiations. This is the same process even for other global trade agreements. Negotiations are never concluded at once; discussions on trade issues are broad and take time to be concluded. We want to avoid a situation where AfCFTA opens countries to unfair competition. Africa is leapfrogging in technology, which is why we are already discussing e-commerce. This is very important for countries that are well developed in technology. For those that are not so developed in technology, we must ensure they better understand matters around e-commerce.

The AU and African ministers of trade, having finalized the necessary instruments, formally launched the operational phase of the AfCFTA during an extraordinary summit of heads of state and government on 7 July 2019.

Digital trade in Africa is growing at an estimated annual rate of 40%. What advice would you give to countries digitalizing their economies?

If fully embraced, digital applications will help fill credit gaps, empowering women to be entrepreneurs, providing real-time market data for rural and remote farmers as well as data analytics for climate-related information. The advantage of digitalization is that it transforms the economy by reducing barriers to entry and expanding market reach for businesses, creating jobs and boosting both domestic and foreign trade in goods and services. There is also an opportunity for African countries to capitalize on these developments to positively impact public service delivery, including the efficiency and reach of social safety nets, education and health outcomes.

Already some countries are gradually embracing digital solutions for tax and expenditure policy, public financial management and public service delivery. Digital transactions could potentially reduce leakages in public spending and tax collection amounting to billions of dollars. That is money that can help fill a sizable gap in Africa's annual financing requirements.



What is your vision for ECA?

My idea is to see ECA provide ideas to transform the continent and create the conditions for economic growth and prosperity for the people. We want to be the think tank of Africa, through actions and results.

What strategy will you employ to see this happen?

I will strengthen the capacity of staff and increase human resources that will help countries focus on redefining their economies for growth. I intend to work more closely with the private sector, incorporating them in our discussions and advisory matters.

My focus will be on transboundary regional issues like water sustainability, and political issues such as the dispute between the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and Morocco. Globally, I will do more advocacy for Africa on taxation, migration, climate change, peace and security and trade.

I am restructuring ECA by introducing specialized divisions on a range of issues. We now have the private sector, macroeconomic and finance, and poverty alleviation divisions.

What is your plan for women?

Despite various studies finding that women are central to the economic growth of any country or region, African women are still underrepresented in most sectors, including technology. Starting in-house, I plan to match the number of men staffers with equally qualified women. I intend to seek women's ideas in crafting policy recommendations. Our studies have established that too few women are involved in policy discussions and decision making. We are now working on the African Women Leadership Fund that will empower African women economically.

How will you mobilize resources for ECA?

We are looking to mobilize resources from traditional partners and build new partnerships with the private sector. Also, we will deepen our involvement with nongovernmental organizations. We hope to build bridges to the universities and other institutions for their valuable input, research and other matters.

Peace through jazz music

The trumpet is a 'cool' instrument to unite people

BY FRANCK KUWONU

Each year, on 30 April, music lovers around the world celebrate International Jazz Day to “honour jazz and its enduring legacy, as well as its power to bring people together,” says Audrey Azoulay, the director-general of the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which works to promote global peace, justice and rule of law.

Jazz events held each year in different countries around the globe culminate in the International Jazz Day, a star-studded musical concert in a major city. This year it took place in Melbourne, Australia. Other cities have hosted the event since 2012, when the UN headquarters in New York City hosted the inaugural.

In 2020 it will be the turn of Cape Town, South Africa. While the selection could be a recognition of a vibrant and creative local jazz industry—the city has its own annual jazz festival—it is also a reminder of the role music played in South Africans’ struggle for equal rights, as well as the enduring legacy of jazz across Africa.

“In celebrating jazz, the world celebrates more than the music,” UNESCO’s Corine Dubois told *Africa Renewal*. “It also celebrates creativity, partnerships and collaborations as much as freedom of expression.”

According to Ms. Dubois, jazz “promotes the Sustainable Development Goals...and fosters dialogue among cultures.”

But back in 2018, New Orleans, a historically and culturally renowned American city on the Mississippi River, was honoured by a special concert as the city celebrated its 300th anniversary.

Mitch Landrieu, the mayor at the time, could barely contain his enthusiasm. “Oh man! It is so nice to be here,” he exclaimed. “You know where jazz was created? In New Orleans. Right down the street, the only place in the world it could have been created.”

As the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, a New Orleans group, ushered in the proceedings, making its way around the inside

of the city’s Orpheum Theatre hall and filling the air with a celebratory, jolly mood, in tow was a bouncing larger-than-life mascot of a smiling Louis Armstrong, also known as Satchmo, the famous trumpeter and jazz singer.

The procession evoked the image of a grinning Armstrong being feted in Léopoldville, now Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 1960. There he was triumphally carried into a stadium by local fans ahead of a concert.

Mr. Armstrong’s visit to the Congo was one of his many to Africa and was part of the US government’s Jazz Ambassadors programme, which was created in 1956 at the height of the Cold War to promote American values and culture abroad. Jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie and Duke Ellington were dispatched around the world as cultural ambassadors.

“The weapon that we will use is the cool one,” Mr. Gillespie reportedly said, referring to his famous trumpet.

The US jazz ambassadors might not have won any war on the continent, but still, from the banks of the Mississippi River to African shores and beyond, jazz music made an enduring impact on politics, art and literature. To this day, jazz enthusiasts are many in Africa.

Jazz in Accra

On a balmy Sunday evening in Accra, Ghana, the 10-man acoustic group Takashi Band is performing in an open jazz bar and grill. In an eclectic mix that also features Ghanaian highlife numbers, they perform two well-known jazz standards, “What a Wonderful World”.

Kojo Essa, the band leader, introduces himself as “a banker in the day and a musician at night.” He renders the first standard in an unmistakable imitation of Louis Armstrong, recalling the early ’60s, when Mr. Armstrong visited the city and performed with local artists.



Jazz patrons swing along slowly in their chairs until the band plays “Fly Me to the Moon,” and then almost everybody jumps up. “Agbadza style,” Mr. Essa jokes, referring to a traditional Ghanaian dance that is also popular in Togo and Benin.

Jazz and liberation struggles

South African jazz developed its own sounds, styles and expressions, distinguishing itself from its American counterpart. The common thread between the two is that the activism of South African jazz culture during the apartheid era mirrors that of American jazz culture in the fight for civil rights.

In exile, during the apartheid period and later back in South Africa, musicians such as Mariam Makeba, trumpeter Hugh Masekela (affectionally referred to as the father of South African jazz) and pianist and



composer Abdullah Ibrahim (also known as Dollar Brand or the king of South African jazz) used their performances to express a yearning for freedom and equal rights.

More in South Africa than elsewhere, music was central to the struggle for freedom. The 2002 documentary *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*, chronicles the power of music in rallying people against the apartheid regime.

The documentary features the track “Mannenberg” by Abudallah Ibrahim.

First released in 1974 to protest the forced displacement of colored people in Cape Town, “Mannenberg” would become one of the most popular songs of the ’80s in Africa.

In an interview with the Voice of America in 2012, Mr. Ibrahim said, “We had captured the spirit and the mood of the nation at that

time.” He explained how, after the Soweto uprising of 1976, in which more than 100 antiapartheid demonstrators were killed, the public “picked up the song, and it was played and sung everywhere...and in some regards, it has become almost like an unofficial national anthem of South Africa.”

According to Mr. Ibrahim, upon hearing the track in prison, Nelson Mandela once said, “This is a sign that liberation is near.”

Jazz and literature

The influence of jazz in Africa is felt in areas other than politics; just as in the US, it has inspired novelists and other writers, especially in French-speaking African countries.

“No other musical form has so consistently appeared in the Francophone African [literary] tradition,” writes Pim Higginson, a professor of French and francophone studies

Musicians perform on the streets of Maputo, Mozambique, on International Jazz Day 2019.

📷 Mauro Vombe

at Bryn Mawr, an American women’s liberal arts college, in the introduction to his 2017 essay *Scoring Race: Jazz, Fiction, and Francophone Africa*.

Jazz et vin de palme (Jazz and Palm Wine) by Emmanuel Dongala of Congo is frequently cited as an example of jazz in literature. *Mirages de Paris (Mirages of Paris)*, published in 1937 and authored by Ousmane Socé from Senegal, was the first novel to feature jazz.

Other key literary works include Togolese writer Kangni Alem’s *Cola Cola Jazz*

see page 30



HEALTH

Bringing hope to children with autism

Increased awareness and sharing of experiences help families to cope

BY STEPHEN NDEGWA

1 in 160

children globally is autistic, according to the World Health Organisation

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)—a developmental disorder that impairs one’s ability to communicate and interact—can be a great burden for parents of affected children, especially in parts of the world such as Kenya where information about this condition is insufficient or hard to find.

First identified 70 years ago, the name changed from simply “autism” to ASD to include a wider range of complex deficits and difficulties with social interaction and communication.

These autistic disorders include early infantile autism, Asperger’s syndrome, and pervasive developmental disorder. At one time in Kenya, autism was associated with mental illness, curses or witchcraft.

Autistic children were confined to their homes and young adults taken to psychiatric institutions.

The good news is that the situation for children with autism and their parents is slowly changing, thanks to increasing awareness about the disorder, complemented by the efforts of affected families to band together to share information and experiences.

Official data on autism prevalence in Kenya are not available, but the Autism Society of Kenya (ASK), a parent-driven organisation established in 2013, believes it could be up to 4%, or one autistic child for every 25 children. That is higher than the global average, which is one in 160 children (less than 1%), according to 2018 statistics by the World Health Organisation.



Key autism fact

In most cases the conditions are apparent during the first 5 years of life

Source: World Health Organization

Child with autism spectrum disorder learning to improve her speech and pronunciation in an autism rehabilitation facility in Tanzania.

© Panos / Dieter Telemans

Examples abound of parents seeking guidance from the mass of medical studies, research and popular press articles about autism.

Parents' experiences

Take the case of Alice Mundia, whose son was diagnosed with autism in 2004. Like many parents in similar circumstances, Ms. Mundia did not know much about the condition. "Although I had heard a bit about autism, I never imagined I would have to deal with the condition in any of my children," she told *Africa Renewal*.

"In Kenya there are no diagnostic facilities, and no guidelines exist on treatment or interventions, which leaves parents to ignorantly make decisions on the best interventions," notes Ms. Mundia. An occupational therapist recommended sensory integration and speech therapy for the child.

To gain more knowledge about autism, Ms. Mundia volunteered for ASK. Later, in 2014, she helped set up the Differently Talented Society of Kenya, a psychosocial support group for parents of autistic children. The organization's members share experiences on social media platforms.

Esther Njeri Mungui has a 14-year-old autistic son. She recalls complications during childbirth. Doctors later told her that her extended labour might have caused anoxia (lack of oxygen) in the child, triggering autistic symptoms.

Initially Ms. Mungui was not too worried, assuming, wrongly, that autism was a curable medical condition. She surfed the internet for information.

"Like other autistic children, [my son's] autism condition is characterised by delayed milestones. He walked at 18 months, had not uttered a word at age 3 and was extremely hyperactive," Ms. Mungui recalls.

Without access to educational facilities suitable for children with autism, Ms. Mungui started home-schooling her son. The experience inspired her to cofound the Lovewins Autism Centre in Nairobi in 2014. The centre has 16 pupils currently.

Many children with ASD grow up to excel in careers based in visual skills, music, math and art. Ms. Mungui's son is a talented musician; he will sit for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education this year.

Fifteen-year-old Nana Yaa is a fashion and beauty model. Her mother and mentor, Mary Amoah Kuffour, a DTSK member and founder of Klicks Africa Foundation based in Accra, Ghana, says she felt better after she began appreciating the uniqueness of her daughter.

She created a Facebook page, "My journey with Autism," to showcase her daughter's milestones and modelling talent. Ms. Mundia says that autistic children are unique and that parents need to embrace their uniqueness.

Early interventions

Research shows that early diagnosis of and interventions for autism are more likely to

have major long-term positive effects on symptoms and later skills. The disorder can sometimes be diagnosed in children before they are 2 years old. Some children with ASD whose development seem normal up to that point begin to regress at or just before that age.

"We made great progress through sensitivity to her dietary needs, sensory integration and biomedical interventions," Ms. Kuffour says of her daughter.

There is the Son-Rise home-based program for children with ASD and other developmental disabilities, and applied behaviour analysis, a therapy that focuses on improvement in specific areas, such as communication, social skills and academics. However, this therapy is not universally recognized.

Several Kenyan autism organizations regularly organise seminars and workshops on health and nutrition, sexuality, early intervention, law and taxation. Parent meetings and sports days also provide opportunities for autism sensitization.

Organizations such as DTSK are lobbying the Kenyan government to design a curriculum that caters to people with autism to give them access to the job market and foster their integration into mainstream society.

The Autism Support Center (Kenya) (ASCK), a nonprofit, helps those on the autism spectrum and their families find access to education, therapy, assessment and mentoring.

ASCK coordinates several programs to engage youth with autism, aimed at improving their social interaction and participation in vocational training opportunities. It produces a monthly newsletter that provides healthy, special needs-friendly recipes and useful videos and articles.

In December 2007 the UN General Assembly designated 2 April of each year as World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) and urged member states to raise global awareness of the condition. Autism and rights organizations around the world use the occasion to promote the latest autism-related research and advancements in diagnosis and treatment. The theme for 2019 was "Assistive Technologies, Active Participation."

The hope is that these efforts—and others—will alleviate the plight of autistic people in Kenya. 🌟

How I set up Liberia's first school for autistic children

Community activist debunks cultural myths about autism

BY AGNES FALLAH KAMARA

I must admit that I did not know anything about autism until 2014 when, on a visit to South Africa, a friend told me that her son has autism spectrum disorder (ASD). I quickly googled the term. Thereafter, I felt a lot of sympathy for my friend, but I was also eager to do my best to support her and the autistic children in my country, Liberia.

By coincidence, during my studies in the United States, my programme offered a course on ASD, which I happily took to further enrich my knowledge about the disorder.

When I returned to Liberia in 2018, it became clear to me that most people were ignorant about ASD. Many associate the disorder with witchcraft, curses or spells and demons. In many instances autistic children and their families are social outcasts in their own communities.

There is no data on the number of autistic children in Liberia, but my experience so far suggests there could be thousands.

My first intervention was to design and implement a radio programme to raise awareness of autism. I named the radio programme Autism Conversation with Parents. I got Capitol FM and ELBC in Monrovia to air the show at least once a week.

With parents of autistic children as guests in the studio, I used the programme to educate others on how to manage autistic children as well as on some of the early signs of the disorder, including limited eye contact, delayed speech, attention to objects rather than people, repetitive behaviors, becoming upset when routines change, delays in motor development and over- or under-sensitivity to noise.

We also debunked misconceptions about autism and explained its actual causes.

The radio broadcasts gained the interest of families with autistic children, and many called in to describe their children's



Agnes Fallah Kamara.

conditions and to ask for support. Most callers had not heard of autism before, and they were relieved to learn that the disorder has nothing to do with witchcraft or being cursed.

My next intervention was to meet families with autistic children. I met 25 such families around the country in my first two months, during which I personally



observed the children with ASD. The meetings with these families were some of the most heart-wrenching experiences I have had in my life. Some parents told me they had been insulted and kept at arm's length by other families, that their children were constantly mocked and not allowed to play with other children, that they had suffered the pain of managing an autistic child in a society with strong cultural beliefs about the disorder.

My next intervention was to open Liberia's first autism classroom with the help of my sister, Regina Fallah-Hausman, who is a special needs teacher in New York.



(Up) Liberia's Vice president, Jewel Howard Taylor, opens the country's first school for autistic children. (bottom) A desk in the classroom.

📷 Agnes Fallah Kamara



Regina traveled to Liberia to assist in conceptualizing the project and to design its curriculum. Abundant Grace, a day care and primary school in Paynesville, Monrovia, volunteered a classroom. The vice president of Liberia, Jewel Howard Taylor, generously assisted with furniture.

With the basics in place, Ms. Taylor launched Liberia's first school for autistic and special needs children on 20 October 2018. We could accept only 10 children, because I was the only specialist in the school. This is still true today. However, I am in the process of training more teachers, social workers and therapists who will

enable us to enroll many more children in the next months.

I have managed to acquire a volunteer skeleton staff of social workers and nurses. I am still a long way from getting the school into full operation, and I cannot cater to all the families and autistic children who need help.

One piece of exciting news, however, is that we are close to launching a collaboration with A Friendly Face Academy, a licensed New York-based provider of applied behavior analysis (ABA). The organization provides therapy for children diagnosed with autism and has volunteered to train our staff in ABA. The partnership was made possible by Anna Marie Dorelien, director of A Friendly Face. It will go a long way in building our capacity to support autistic children and their families.

Key autism fact

ASDs begin in childhood and tend to persist into adolescence and adulthood.

Some people with ASD can live independently, others have severe disabilities and require life-long care and support.

Globally, 1 in every 160 children has an autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Source: World Health Organization

Despite a challenging cultural environment, I am happy about what I am doing. Hopefully, we will be able to change public perceptions about the disorder and encourage the government and nongovernmental organizations to support our effort so that intervention becomes possible nationwide.

For me, giving hope to families and joy to autistic children is a fulfilling undertaking. 🇱🇮

Agnes Fallah Kamara is co-author of "And still peace did not come", a memoir of survival during the Liberian civil conflict

Africans can do business with the UN

— Christian Saunders, UN Assistant Secretary-General, Supply Chain Management

Christian Saunders is the United Nations Assistance Secretary-General in the Office of Supply Chain Management, providing institutional support for UN field offices, including peacekeeping missions in Africa. As he spearheads internal reforms to improve supply chain efficiency, Mr. Saunders would like to see more African companies do business with the UN whose procurement objectives are valued at billions of dollars. What must businesses in Africa do to win tenders from the UN? Are there opportunities for African women entrepreneurs? In this interview with *Africa Renewal's* Kingsley Ighobor, Mr. Saunders answers these questions and shares his optimism for Africa's socioeconomic future. These are excerpts.

Africa Renewal: Globally, the UN has been reforming its supply chain management. How is this expected to foster efficiency, particularly in field missions, many of which are in Africa?

Christian Saunders: When Secretary-General António Guterres was elected to lead the UN, he soon realised that the organisation needed to modernise, reduce its bureaucracy, decentralise authority, and change its culture to focus on “results and people rather than bureaucracy and process,” including its supply chain, to make it more agile and responsive. He also saw the need to give people working in the field, particularly in peacekeeping operations, better support to successfully carry out their mandates. These reforms would promote efficiencies throughout the institution.

So what impact has been made so far?

The Secretary-General's management reforms and the new supply chain organisation came into being on the first of January this year, so we're still in the early days of these reforms. As part of the new Office of Supply Chain Management, we merged procurement and logistics—previously in separate departments—into an integrated supply chain under the Department of Operational Support. And now, as a cohesive unit, we have become more responsive. We are much more agile. Is the job finished? No, not yet. We still have a long way to go, but we're well on the way to improving the support that we give to peacekeeping operations. For example we are in the process of signing long-term global freight forwarding contracts this month, which will make deliveries much faster for our peacekeeping missions.

A part of the UN agenda is gender equality and women's empowerment. With the UN system's procurement volume at about \$17 billion—more than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of many countries in Africa—how is your office enabling African women looking to do business with the UN?

I am a really strong supporter of gender equality. I think gender equality and women's empowerment is something that has been overlooked for far too long. In our UN supply chain we proactively work to ensure that opportunities are available,

particularly to small and medium-sized enterprises that are women-owned and run in Africa and in other developing countries. Women are actively encouraged to bid for UN contracts.

What are these women business owners required to do?

The UN buys a more diverse portfolio of goods and services than any other entity—purchasing about 60,000 different items. Thus, there are opportunities for many different businesses, large and small, to supply the UN. Our purchases range from stationery to food supplies, ICT, fuel, armored vehicles, aviation services, and much more.

Must suppliers be large multinational corporations to get UN contracts?

No, that's a misconception. A lot of suppliers, particularly small suppliers, shy away from conducting business with the UN and might think, “Oh, this big entity based in New York—it's too difficult for us to do business with the UN.” But the reality is that the majority of our purchase orders are below \$50,000. So as long as they can supply what we need—and with a little homework and some persistence—most small and medium-sized companies will be able to do business with the UN.

How would you measure your engagement with African businesses currently?

Last year we engaged with companies from 54 African countries for a total of approximately \$600 million in a very diverse set of goods and services—fuel, construction, catering, food rations, ICT, aviation services, and so on.

Which means you do business with many countries—not just in countries where you have large peacekeeping missions.

The entire continent, although, obviously, in those countries where we have peacekeeping operations, we tend to do more business.

How do you operate in a way that satisfies your clients who may not be bureaucracy-savvy?



\$600 million
approximate amount of
business between the
UN and companies in
Africa in 2018

When the Secretary-General was coming up with his management reforms, one of his priorities was to streamline and simplify the UN bureaucracy—to make it easier for people to undertake particular functions, but also for partners to do business with the UN. So yes, we’re in the process of simplifying our procurement procedures to enable vendors to have easier access to the UN. Now, rather than registering to do business with each entity (the UN has many entities), you can go to one single place, the UN Global Marketplace (www.ungm.org), and register to do business with the entire UN family. We often visit countries in Africa to conduct business seminars, and in those seminars, we talk about opportunities for doing business with the UN. We also train people on how to register. In the future we will train people on how to respond to an invitation to bid (ITB) or Request for proposal (RFP).

Do you have a policy on protecting the environment? If so, how do you implement such a policy?

Since 2017 we’ve had an environmental strategy, particularly for peacekeeping operations, and we have an environmental management system. This predominantly deals with areas such as energy, water, wastewater, solid waste, etc. We recognise that in the past, we could have done better in this regard, but we are committed to improving in the future. The UN needs to not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk.

Do you have a message for African youth, especially young entrepreneurs?

There is so much innovation going on in Africa. For example, there is a computer tablet that is able to monitor a person’s heart rate and read their EKG [electrocardiogram]—and the results can be sent to a doctor who may be 5,000 miles away to analyse and provide a diagnosis. Africa is also at the forefront in mobile banking, solar energy, and off-grid electrical supply. So, my message to young people is, keep innovating. The future for Africa is very bright, limitless, and extremely exciting. 🌍

Mr. Saunders has since been appointed as Acting Deputy Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).



PEACE & SECURITY

IEDs: tackling terrorists' weapon of war

Improvised Explosive Devices are cheap and easy to manufacture

BY PAVITHRA RAO

Some of the most memorable images of the late Diana, Princess of Wales, show her wearing a protective suit while touring a minefield in Angola in 1997 to raise awareness of the devastating effects of land mines.

After meeting 13-year-old Sandra Thijika, who lost her leg after stepping on a land mine, the princess told the media, “I’d read the statistics that Angola has the highest percentage of amputees anywhere in the world... that one person in every 333 had lost a limb,

most of them through land mine explosions.” She used the occasion to call for a global effort to address the problem.

Two years later, on March 1, 1999, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (also known as the Ottawa Mines Ban Treaty or simply the Ottawa Treaty) entered into force.

By 2018, 164 states, including 50 African states, had signed up, committing to

“not using, developing, producing, acquiring, retaining, stockpiling, or transferring anti-personnel landmines.”

However, 20 years since the treaty, there are still more than 50 million stockpiles of land mines, mostly in Angola, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Chad and Iraq, according to the US-based nonpartisan Arms Control Association, which is dedicated to drumming up support for arms control policies globally.

In a similar vein, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, a network of NGOs,



is upbeat about progress made so far with the Ottawa Treaty, reporting that 28 states have completely cleared and ended the use of land mines. These include South Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar, Ethiopia and Chad. Mozambique was declared free of land mines most recently, in 2015.

Non-state actors

While the treaty has proved successful with states, the bigger problem remains that of nonstate actors laying their hands on improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which include land mines.

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) IED adviser, Bryan Sand, defines as an IED anything that is “activated by the presence, proximity or contact of a person.”

“IEDs can be broken into three broad categories,” Mr. Sand says. “The first category consists of victim-operated IEDs—these

meet the definition of a land mine; the second category are timed devices that are set to detonate at a specific time; and the third category is command devices, which can be operated when one either presses a button or steps on a switch, etc.”

While land mine use is decreasing, Mr. Sand says there is an upswing in the number of IEDs being used by nonstate actors. “IEDs are a huge problem, because individuals who do not have access to state munitions resort to improvised devices.”

Mr. Sand adds that terrorist groups such as the Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabaab in Somalia are using IEDs as instruments of terror. “They are using these devices to circumvent what has been largely a very successful Ottawa Treaty on land mines.”

In a broader sense, IEDs are unpredictable, as they are not manufactured within the same set of specifications as regular

In Torit, South Sudan, the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) carries out mechanical and manual demining exercises.  UN Photo/Martine Perret

land mines. Most IEDs are also cheaper and easier to manufacture.

How much impact can an IED have?

In an interview with *Africa Renewal* in his New York office, Mr. Sand points to a suicide vest on the table, saying, “Creating IEDs like this is a \$20 problem requiring a million-dollar solution,” underscoring the devastating effect of the device.

He elaborates: “When you look at the cost of an AK-47 vis-à-vis its effect, it is limited compared to the cost of an IED that can destroy many more lives and several hundred

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Reshaping the forces

Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula

South Africa's defence and military veterans minister

BY KINGSLEY IGHOBOR

South Africa's Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Nosiviwe Noluthando Mapisa-Nqakula, remembers the day she walked into a conference of defence ministers, confident and ready for deliberations, and realized that her counterparts, mostly men, thought she was just an aide to a defence minister. Their surprise grew when she sat in the chair reserved for the minister from South Africa.

"Their reaction was like, 'Oh, OK, you are the defence minister of South Africa?'" Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula recalls in an interview with *Africa Renewal* at the UN headquarters in New York.

The lady minister is soft-spoken, chatty and charming, but she's toughened by years of courageous activism during the apartheid era and the storied actions that led to her becoming head of key government ministries.

Cabinet positions

Since 2004 successive South African presidents have appointed her to key cabinet positions. Thabo Mbeki appointed her minister of home affairs in 2004; Jacob Zuma appointed her minister of correctional services in 2009 and minister of defence and military veterans in 2012. She retained the defence portfolio under current president Cyril Ramaphosa: first after he took over from Mr. Zuma in 2018 and then in May 2019 following his election to a full term.

On issues relating to women's empowerment, Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula's steely resolve comes to the surface. "Women must take their rightful place," she says emphatically. "Women don't want to be patronised, they want to be recognised for what they do."

Ministerial positions

- 2004—Minister of Home Affairs
- 2009—Minister of Correctional Services
- 2012—Minister of Defence and Military Veterans.
- 2018—Minister of Defence and Military Veterans

South African women, like women in other African countries, face many obstacles, including income inequality and cultural practices that discriminate against them. But Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula is optimistic about women's march toward equality, believing that her success despite myriad obstacles, and the successes of others like her, may begin a domino effect that will ultimately lead to a positive social change.

"South African women are assertive and are rising to the challenge. Women all over the world are taking their rightful place," she points out.

Of her views on women's empowerment, she favours a focus on women's abilities, which is why she draws attention to her substantive accomplishments.

"For me, the proof is in the pudding. I think I have earned [the South African people's] respect," she says.

Key accomplishment

A key accomplishment of her ministry is making the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) attractive to "men and women [who will] enlist and be deployed." Women are particularly encouraged to join the forces, she adds.

The minister is also laser focused on SANDF's promotion process, and she insists on fairness and balance. So far, the results are impressive: five major generals and 38 brigadier generals are women. "They earned their ranks," she points out. Just two decades ago, there was only one female major-general in the SANDF.

One of the current female major generals is Mandisa Mfeka, the country's first black woman combat pilot.

"The generals know I will scrutinize any promotion list before approval. They know the minister will ask the question, 'Any women on the list?' It's a politically conscious process, and I let the generals know why it must be done that way," she says.

Political consciousness in this context is rooted in South African history. The struggle against—and victory over—apartheid transformed the notion of equality, including racial and gender equality, into an economic and social necessity. The post-apartheid constitution and other legal structures enshrine that necessity.

Section 9 of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa espouses equality and discourages discrimination based on race, gender

or disability. Other women-empowering legislative mechanisms include the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, (2000), the Employment Equity Act (1998) and the Domestic Violence Act (1998).

By June 2019, women made up half of the government's cabinet, making South Africa one of four African countries (the others are Rwanda, Seychelles and Ethiopia) to achieve gender parity in the cabinet.

Current legal provisions on equality strengthen Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula. "I let the spirit of the constitution manifest in the vision and work of my ministry," she explains.

South African peacekeepers

The United Nations recognises South Africa's peacekeepers for their sacrifice and service, and the minister is keen for South African troops to earn an unblemished record while on missions. More than 1,000 South African peacekeepers are currently serving in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan.

While there have been cases of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) involving South African peacekeepers, Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula's goal is to reach zero cases. "I take it personally. Even a single incident of SEA, I become emotional," she says.

In conversations on SEA with troops on peacekeeping duties, she injects the sensitivity that only a woman and a mother could.

"One embarrassing thing to a man is when a woman minister asks him, 'Why do you have to do that? Why do you need to lose everything you have invested in over the years?' Much as I am a minister, I am also a mother."

The defence ministry is implementing several measures to instill discipline in troops. "All South African troops going on peacekeeping missions must undergo a rigorous SEA training. There is not a single soldier who does not know what sexual exploitation and abuse is and what the consequences are," she insists.

In addition, Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula says that South Africa has established military tribunals in countries of deployment to expedite adjudication of SEA cases involving its troops. Offenders face stiffer penalties now than in the past: they could lose their jobs and benefits or be sentenced to long jail terms.

Just recently, she says, three soldiers were dismissed, and they all will lose their benefits.

By the time she became a minister, Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula was already familiar with military ethos. In the apartheid days, with an active role in the African National Congress, she undertook military training in Angola and the Soviet Union. "That was in my younger life. I was quite adventurous then," she reminisces.

These days, Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula's actions and achievements speak louder than old and worn-out expectations of women. 🇿🇦



The generals know I will scrutinize any promotion list before approval. They know the minister will ask the question, 'Any women on the list?'



A legacy of youth empowerment

Mohamed Orman Bangura

Meet 33-year-old Sierra Leone's youth affairs minister

BY OSMAN BENK SANKOH

Orman Bangura's life journey has been a remarkable one. The death of his father when he was a toddler devastated the family's finances. At the time, his widowed mother thought her son's best shot at a good life was becoming a tailor or a baker. At just 11 years old, Mr. Bangura enlisted as an apprentice in a tailoring shop.

Fast-forward to 2019, and the 33-year-old Bangura is Sierra Leone's minister of youth affairs, the youngest minister in the cabinet.

He credits his mother for ensuring his focus on education. "She made all the sacrifices for me," he says. After his secondary school education, Mr. Bangura received a government grant to attend Fourah Bay College, the University of Sierra Leone, where he graduated in 2011 with a bachelor's degree in accounting.

His professional career includes finance and accounting positions with different institutions in his country. These were the Standard Chartered Bank, the London Mining Company and the Total Global Steel Company. Before his ministerial appointment, he was the chief accountant at the Sierra Leone branch of eHealth Africa, an organization with headquarters in Washington, D.C., that supports health systems in poor communities.

By appointing Mr. Bangura as minister, Sierra Leone's current president, Julius Maada Bio, in part fulfils his promise to appoint young people to top positions in government. Other key appointees in Mr. Bio's administration include Francis Ben Kaifala, 34, head of the Anti-Corruption Commission; David Moinina Sengeh, 32, a technological whiz kid from MIT and Harvard, the country's chief innovation officer; and Yusuf

Keketoma Sandi, 32, Presidential Spokesperson and Press Secretary.

Mr. Bio himself was a military head of state in March 1996 at just 31 years of age before handing power over to a civilian government that same year.

Mr. Bangura's popularity in Sierra Leone comes in part from his youth and his unconventional personal style, but also from the policies he is developing.

He sometimes goes to cabinet meetings in khaki trousers, sneakers and rolled up long-sleeved shirts. As well, he regularly visits popular cafés known locally as "ataya bases" to engage young people in lively, sometimes heated discussions about political, economic and social issues. The minister also finds time to go to simple restaurants in the impoverished neighborhoods of the capital, Freetown, where he mixes freely with the people. On weekends he is usually seen running or playing football on the beaches with local youths.

While his personal style has captivated a society not accustomed to having easy access to top government functionaries, the policies Mr. Bangura is formulating and implementing have further endeared him to the public.

One of his first tasks as minister was to resuscitate the moribund National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS), which was first set up in 1961 but failed miserably at that time. In 2016 the scheme was reestablished by an act of Parliament. Mr. Bangura is hopeful that this time, young graduates will be able to undertake a year of compulsory national service. He has recruited 200 youths as part of a startup strategy.

"The NYSS will encourage volunteerism, foster patriotism and national cohesion," he says.

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An 'ambassador' for people's rights

Benedict Faustine Kikove

31-year-old Tanzanian mobilizing for positive social change

BY BENEDICT FAUSTINE KIKOVE

I was born in 1988, a time of economic hardship in my country, Tanzania, which was going through a structural adjustment programme.

During this period, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund required countries experiencing economic difficulties to withdraw subsidies for social programmes before obtaining new loans. It was also a time of multiple global crises, of wars and coups d'état in many African countries, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The UN was deeply engaged in resolving many of these crises.

I am a child of the new world order. I believe in democracy and multilateral diplomacy—working together for the common good of humanity. In my country they call me Balozi—a Swahili word for “ambassador.”

I helped establish UN clubs in many secondary schools in Tanzania. I am currently the vice president of the UN Association (UNA) in my country. I am also on the board of directors of Msichana Initiative, a girls' rights advocacy initiative founded by activist Rebecca Gyumi.

High court suit

In 2016, Msichana Initiative filed a suit in the High Court of Tanzania to challenge articles in the Law of Marriage Act, 1971, which allowed girls to be married off—with their parents' and a court's consent—at just 14 or 15 years of age.

In 2017 the court ruled in our favour, declaring that the marriage law must be revised so that the minimum age for marriage is the same for girls as for boys. This raised the minimum age for girls to 18. It was a victory we are proud of.

My interest in development and human rights advocacy began 16 years ago, while I was still in secondary school, when I and

other students were introduced to UN clubs and the Model UN (MUN) assembly. The MUN is a simulation for hundreds of thousands of students around the world who meet to discuss global issues.

I also had the opportunity to meet UN staffer Eshila Maravanyika, who was then in charge of the UN Information Centre in Tanzania. Through Ms. Maravanyika and further visits to UN offices, I learned a lot about the organization.

Then I decided to establish a UN club in my school. Our club members embarked on a tree-planting program in the school and organized monthly debates on the Millennium Development Goals. During my senior year of high school, I brought friends together to establish 27 more UN clubs in as many schools.

I graduated high school with distinction and went on to study political science at the University of Dar es Salaam. During my undergraduate years, I was regularly invited to events in schools and other places to speak, especially to young people. In the process I met distinguished leaders, including former Tanzanian presidents Ali Hassan Mwinyi and Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete and former South African president Thabo Mbeki. They continue to inspire and support me.

This year, for the first time, I was invited to the UN headquarters in New York to represent Tanzanian civil society at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, during which our country presented for the first time a Voluntary National Report, a report on a country's implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The UNA, of which I am vice president, coordinated civil society inputs to the national report and co-convoked the Tanzania Sustainable



Development Platform, which brought together 500 civil society organizations from 14 regions, including 70 youth organizations.

In the future I would like to go into national politics. I would also like to one day address the UN General Assembly on behalf of my country.

In the meantime I will focus on pushing for meaningful youth engagement in development, in Tanzania and globally, and continue to advocate for the rights of girls.

My message to African youth is, “We are the present and the future. We must engage ourselves in nation building—no one will do it for us.” 🇳🇪

Celebrating jazz

from page 17

and Cameroonian Mongo Beti’s *Trop de soleil tue l’amour (Too Much Sun Kills Love)*. Léonora Miano, also Cameroonian, wrote *Tel des astres éteints (Like Dying Stars)* and *Blues pour Elise (Blues for Elise)*, while Fiston Mwanza Mujila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo authored *Tram 83*.

The plots of these works are different, yet the writers all use jazz music to express their main characters’ culturally diverse identities and struggles with modernity.

For most of these writers, “the biggest influence comes from the structure of jazz compositions,” Mr. Kangni Alem, a Togolese writer, told *Africa Renewal*, citing *Misterioso-911*, a play by Ivorian writer Koffi Kwahulé. The title of the play appears to be a nod to *Misterioso*, a 1958 album by jazz pianist Thelonious Monk.

These literary works are celebrations of cultural diversity as represented through freedom of expression and creativity—the kinds offered by jazz.



These writers “repeatedly turn to jazz as an idea, a contested site, a formation, through and around which they negotiate notions of race and identity, resistance and expression,” notes Mr. Higginson.

“In celebrating jazz, the world celebrates more than the music,” UNESCO’s Corine Dubois sums it up, adding that jazz fosters creativity, partnerships and freedom

South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela performs at the inaugural International Jazz Day Concert at UN Headquarters in New York.

📷 United Nations Photo/JC McIlwaine

of expression. “It promotes the Sustainable Development Goals...and fosters dialogue among cultures.” 🇳🇪

Mohamed Orman Bangura ...

from page 30

The young minister is also implementing the Youth in Entrepreneurship Project, which, according to him, “will place cash and training in the hands of young Sierra Leoneans with innovative and groundbreaking ideas for the development of the country.”

He is helping set up youth projects in the agricultural and fisheries sectors, and a youth village where young people will learn vocational skills to increase their social mobility.

Mr. Bangura also proposes what he calls the Youth Empowerment Fund, from which young people will be able to draw financing for business ideas. He says the fund will allow “the country to reap demographic dividends,” adding that youth

employment “is a security and development challenge that should be addressed effectively and immediately.”

David Sombie, technical adviser for the proposed Youth Empowerment Fund, says, “The minister brings to the ministry a wealth of financial accounting background. Quite recently, he was able to detect and forestall an incidence of financial malfeasance, saving the country hundreds of thousands of dollars.”

Chernor Bah, an international girls’ champion and cofounder of Purposeful Production, a movement-building hub for adolescent girls in developing countries, works closely with Mr. Bangura. Mr. Bah is helping to review the country’s national youth policy. He says, “Being a minister has not changed Mr. Bangura. He remains just as he has always been, maintaining his circle of friends and caring for the underprivileged members of society.”

Mr. Bangura has set his sights on building a legacy of youth empowerment. “We must be determined to do the needful for young people and for national development,” he says. 🇳🇪

Climate Action: Young Africans ... from page 7

rendezvous. It started raining and the junction he was standing at quickly flooded, turning into a deadly torrent, destroying properties, sweeping cars away and drowning passersby in the process,” he said.

More than 50 people were killed that day.

“The rain was torrential,” Mr. Honu remembered. “But the drainage system was clogged by plastic waste.”

Devasted by the loss of his friend, Mr. Honu said he asked himself, “Instead of just mourning, why not do something about the situation? Why not solve the problem now, why not recycle the plastics that take so much time to decay?”

He went on to cofound Coliba Ventures, a company he described as “a complete plastic recovery and collection service.” It also educates people used to lumping plastics and other wastes together on how to separate them.

“It has been one of the toughest initiatives ever because this is a behavioral pattern that people have lived with for

so many years and it is very hard to ask people to change their minds and ways,” he said.

The company offers rewards of vouchers for fuel or for mobile internet credit to households that are willing to be part of the recycling movement. Mr. Honu said they tell people, “Give us your plastic waste and we give you a voucher to fuel your car.”

Mr. Honu added that “people who earn less than \$5 a day give us their plastic waste and we give them money or data. The only thing you have to do is to make sure you present your plastic waste to us or you make sure we pick it up from you. Then you decide which rewards you want.”

The company then deliver the collected plastics to recycling companies.

According to Ghana’s Environmental Protection Agency, about 2.58 million metric tonnes of raw plastics are imported annually, of which 73% ends up as waste, while 19% percent is reused. Yet less than 0.1% of the waste is recycled.

Recognising that only a tiny fraction of plastic waste is being recycled, Mr. Honu said: “We have to start changing



Landfills such as this one in an impoverished neighborhood of the main Ghanaian seaport of Tema, are littered with plastic wastes.

📷 Africa Renewal/Franck Kuwonu

the trend somehow.” It may take a long time, but he continues to be motivated by his desire to make sure his friend did not die in vain. 🇬🇦



Mo Ibrahim
FOUNDATION

Ibrahim Leadership Fellowships Programme

Identifying and
supporting African
leaders of the future

Invitation for Applications

The Ibrahim Leadership Fellowships offer the opportunity to work in the executive offices of either the African Development Bank (Abidjan), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (Addis Ababa) or the International Trade Centre (Geneva) with an annual stipend of \$100,000.

The Executive Management office of each organisation will host an Ibrahim Leadership Fellow for a 12-month period. The Fellowships are open to young professionals, mid-career and new executives up to the age of 40 or 45 for women with children. The Fellows will be nationals of an African country with 7-10 years of relevant work experience and a Master’s Degree.

The application process opens on 12 August 2019 and closes on 14 October 2019.

For more information about the Fellowship programme, eligibility and application process please visit:

mo.ibrahim.foundation/fellowships





Tourism in Morocco on an... from page 3

crossroads attracts fashion designers, artists, filmmakers and other cultural tourists. In 2017, for example, a museum on the international luxury fashion house Yves Saint Laurent opened in Morocco.

“Marrakech taught me colour. Before Marrakech, everything was black,” Mr. Saint Laurent once noted.

Over 50 Hollywood motion pictures have been shot in the country, including Alfred Hitchcock’s *The Man Who Knew Too Much*; *Lawrence of Arabia*, directed by David Lean; Orson Welles’ *Othello*; *Jesus of Nazareth*, directed by the late Franco Zeffirelli; and the latest James Bond movie, *Spectre*.

The country is also becoming a major hub for international conferences due to its proximity to Europe, Middle East, the Americas and the rest of Africa. The country recently hosted the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which brought about 20,000 participants to Marrakech.

Last year, the Global Forum for Migration and Development and the conference on the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration were held in Marrakech and attracted representatives from most UN member states and nongovernmental organizations.

In March the city hosted the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development on “fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in the digital era: a strategy for Africa”, which was organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

This year, UNESCO’s first

A fish market in Essaouira!, Morocco. 📷 A. Chan

International Forum on Artificial Intelligence in Africa and the Africa Youth Leadership Summit, among other events, will take place in Marrakech. These international conferences shine a spotlight on the country while contributing to the economy.

Yet less than a decade ago, the Moroccan tourism industry stalled following a terrorist incident in a well-known tourist café in 2011. The government responded, strengthening security nationwide, particularly at sites popular with tourists. In fact, Morocco is the only North African country to have reached a low-risk rating, according to the 2019 Travel Risk Map, published by International SOS and Control Risks, an organization that conducts risks assessments for people going abroad for business.

Tourism revenues account for 11% of total GDP, according to the tourism ministry. Industries in the sector, such as air and land transport, food service and hospitality, generate significant employment opportunities for young people. Morocco was the most visited country in Africa in 2016, with 10.3 million tourist arrivals.

Despite the potentials in the tourism sector, climate change effects threaten to put a dampener. In 2015, for example, Morocco’s economic growth nosedived to 1.5% due to drought, according to the World Bank. To address the situation, the country is constructing the world’s largest desalination plant, which turns seawater into drinking water, in Agadir, near the Atlantic coast.

It has also set ambitious goals that focus on, among others, generating 52% of its electricity needs from renewables

by 2030 and improving coastal zone management.

Regulatory reforms introduced in 2010 are bringing Morocco closer to its goal of making the country one of the world’s 20 leading tourist destinations by 2020. Its 10-year plan, dubbed Vision 2020, is aimed at creating eight new tourist destinations and 470,000 new jobs while doubling tourist receipts.

That goal is within reach, it seems. The country has set its sights on a good slice of the 1.4 billion global tourists traveling abroad annually, many of whom are Chinese. Following Moroccan king Mohammed VI’s visit to Beijing in 2016, the number of Chinese arrivals in Morocco skyrocketed to 180,000 in 2018, up from 42,000 in 2016. By 2020 Morocco hopes to reach the 500,000 mark, according to the Moroccan National Tourist Office, a wing of ONMT.

Investing in tourism

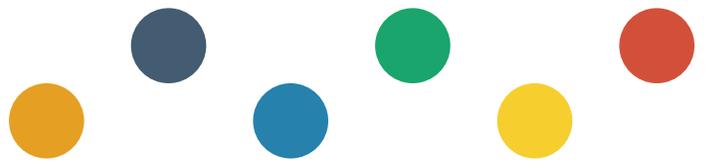
Massive investments in new infrastructure, such as new airport terminals, roads and railways, and the relaxed visa requirements for citizens of some countries, such as China, are two factors in Morocco’s success.

Thanks to the new airport terminal in Casablanca that was opened earlier in 2019, the airport can now handle up to 14 million passengers a year, up from 7 million. Another newly built terminal in the Rabat-Salé Airport can now handle 4 million passengers a year, up from 1.5 million.

Investments in airport infrastructure have had a domino impact on the broader economy. For example, the Rabat airport expansion is transforming the neighbouring city of Kenitra into a fast-growing industrial hub, attracting international companies such as Groupe PSA, the French company that manufactures Peugeot and Citroën.

“[The economic growth of] Kenitra has exceeded our expectations,” says Moulay Hafid Elalamy, minister of industry, investment, trade and the digital economy.

With improving infrastructure, safety and security, Morocco is on its way to becoming a premier destination for an increasing number of tourists. ●



Artificial intelligence offers benefits for Africa

By Hugo Bourhis



Google AI



When some people think of artificial intelligence (AI), they think of humanoid robots turning against their creators in an apocalyptic science fiction movie. In reality, AI is already playing an increasing role in many existing and evolving technologies, from driverless cars to translation software, virtual assistance devices and monitoring agriculture and biodiversity.

Satellite images provided by AI can assist policymakers in finding solutions to problems of hunger, drought and climate change, to name only a few.

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), says that promoting AI in Africa is a top priority for the organization.



“Artificial intelligence can help us advance more rapidly towards the achievement of the SDGs by allowing better risk assessment, enabling more accurate forecasting and faster knowledge sharing, by offering innovative solutions in the fields of education, health, ecology, urbanism and the creative industries and by improving standards of living and our daily well-being,” Ms. Azoulay explains.

Currently, most AI experts and innovations are in North America, Europe and Asia; however, Africa is potentially a fertile ground—the continent has the youngest and fastest-growing population on earth, financial resources are becoming available to investors and international corporations are showing interest in the continent.

Last April, tech giant Google opened its first African AI research laboratory in Accra, Ghana, to address the many economic, political and environmental challenges of the continent.

“Africa has many challenges where the use of artificial intelligence could be beneficial, sometimes even more than in other places,” said Moustapha Cisse, Google’s head of AI in Accra, during the opening of the laboratory.

UNESCO organized its first-ever major international conference on AI in Morocco in December 2018.

At that conference over 400 participants, including experts and high-level representatives from the public and private sectors, examined ways to use AI to catalyze development in Africa. To reduce the current

Moustapha Cisse, head of Google’s AI centre in Accra, Ghana. The centre is Google’s first in Africa.

Moustapha Cisse

gap between developed and developing countries, they explored the opportunities and challenges presented by AI.

Despite rising expectations for the diffusion of AI in Africa, a lack of adequate, readily available technological infrastructure holds back progress. Also, most colleges on the continent do not offer AI-related courses.

Still, given the importance of technology in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, experts believe African states will soon begin to invest in the development and application of AI. ●

BOOK REVIEW

Sustainable Development Goals: Hope for humanity

Africa in Fact, the journal of Good Governance Africa

The 50th journal series of *Africa in Fact*, the journal of the nonprofit Good Governance Africa (GGA), is a compilation of 23 well-researched essays on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)..

Written by experienced writers and experts on the subjects, the essays highlight progress and challenges in the achievement of SDGs in Africa.

In the preface GGA executive director Alain Tschudin emphasizes the theme of sustainability: "The 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services devastatingly indicates that one million species of plants and animals face extinction and that without 'transformative changes,' we are doomed. We are literally facing a real and present cataclysm."

Generally, writes Osita Agbu in the overview, countries in Africa appear to focus, to varying degrees of success, on SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 13

(Climate Action) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). The selective emphasis reflects Africa's development priorities.

Region-by-region assessments of success in SDG implementation show that North Africa has made the most progress, particularly in tackling poverty and providing energy access, while Central Africa has made the least. However, North Africa has not performed well on gender equality (SDG 5).

The main development need for East Africa is infrastructure development, followed by health (SDG 3); in Southern Africa it is health, followed by poverty reduction (SDG 1). Poverty remains a significant challenge for all regions.

To achieve SDGs, Africa will have to rely on three pillars: political will, cooperation and partnerships, and investment in reliable data, Mr. Tschudin writes.

Published in July 2019 by GGA, this compilation of essays includes



illustrations, photos and colorful infographics that make the 128-page text a quick and enjoyable read.

GGA operates in Johannesburg, Harare, Accra and Lagos, and, through its research, promotes good governance in Africa. 🌍

— Pavithra Rao

APPOINTMENTS



MINURSO

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has appointed **George Conway** of Canada as Acting Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). Most recently, Mr. Conway served as Resident Representative for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). He succeeds Peter de Clercq of the Netherlands.



Leiden University

Denise Brown of Canada has been appointed as Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission in Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Most recently, Ms. Brown served as Director of Policy and Programmes at World Food Programme (WFP). She succeeds Najat Rochdi of Morocco.



UN

Parfait Onanga-Anyanga of Gabon has been appointed as Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. Most recently, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga served as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).



UN Photo/Rick Bajomas

Workneh Gebeyehu Negewo of Ethiopia has been appointed as Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON). He succeeds Hanna S. Tetteh of Ghana. Most recently, Mr. Gebeyehu served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia and Member of the Addis Ababa City Council.



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