



Kingdom of the Netherlands

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The FEC assesses damage for compensation after clashes in Kinshasa

The Congolese Business Federation (FEC) deplors the significant material damage its members have endured as a result of the events of 19 and 20 September in Kinshasa. During a press conference, the chairman of the FEC, Albert Yuma Mulimbi, said it is in the public's interest to restore private sector activities. "The economic situation is very difficult due to the low prices of raw materials and certain economic and political difficulties. If we destroy the few remaining activities, traders will be the first victims. Beside the deaths, which I deplore, it is the future lives of citizens and economic activity that are in danger", announced Albert Yuma. "We want to express our sympathy to our members, and we will accompany them in assessing the damage as far as possible, and where possible assist with," said the FEC's chairman. (Source: MCNTEAM/ mediacongo.net. Photo: theatlantic.com)

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2 From the Netherlands

First asphalt with toilet paper laid in the Netherlands



Because processing toilet paper in the sludge streams is an expensive endeavour for the Dutch water boards, KNN Cellulose, together with several other companies, has been looking at ways to use this paper as raw material for other industries. The asphalt industry turned out to be a good match, because cellulose, a fibre partly consisting of wood, is used as a material for drip inhibitors, making the asphalt stronger and more durable. A pilot project, a bike highway between Leeuwarden and Stiens, was started in September.

The project's partners STOWA, contractors Jansma and Roelofs, supplier Esha Infra Solutions and the Province of Friesland aim to extend the initiative and implement the new asphalt composition in the RAW 2015-system for civil engineering. To do so, three separate projects have to prove their utility, hence two other projects are sought to complement the bike highway. (Source: rvo.nl. Photo: www.duurzaambedrijfsleven.nl)

CBI launches Interventions Program



A new programme has been launched by the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI) in response to the difficulties faced by many SME-exporters, business support organisations and governments in developing countries with regard to exporting and doing business with the EU. The programme provides short-term interventions to analyse and/or lift export obstacles through trainings on EU-export related subjects, short-term development projects for business support organisations and strategic conferences for public and private sector on value chain analysis and exporting to the EU.

Its objectives are the improvement of the local business climate through the identification and dismantling of obstacles on trade and investments; increasing possibilities for trade and investments between Dutch companies and the local private sector, and contributing to the creation of more impact and better results within RVO-programmes and other Private Sector Development partners. For more information, please contact Catrijn.schipper@rvo.nl/tel: +31 88 602 4362. (Source: cbi.eu. Photo: collinsnweke.eu)

2017 Budget Memorandum: the Netherlands is on the way up



While the government deficit amounted to 5% in 2009, it is expected to drop to 0,5% in 2017. Public debt has decreased to 62% of GDP. Because of improved government financing, € 1,1 billion is structurally made available from 2017 onwards to increase purchasing power. Moreover, € 1,5 billion will be allocated to security, education and healthcare.

Hence, public services such as schooling, healthcare and social security remain affordable. Economic growth is expected to continue at a rate of 1,7% in 2017. Consumer confidence is increasing and businesses dare to invest again. Before its termination, the cabinet is set out to decide on ways to further boost the Dutch business climate.

These decisions do not only concern facilities for businesses but also address major societal challenges, such as energy transition, sustainability, infrastructure and education. (Source: Rijksoverheid.nl. Photo: vng.nl)

Scottish MPs demand action to improve poor NS railway service

Since April 2015, Abellio (the international arm of the Dutch railway company NS and 100% owned by the Dutch government) has taken over ScotRail, the railway service provider in Scotland. Since then, NS has been criticised due to its poor services.

24 out of 75 services were late more often than they were on time, and 1 out of 5 services was cancelled in September, which amounts to about 45 cargo trains. Scottish opposition parties are calling for a termination of the contract, as they are of the opinion that profit that is currently going overseas should rather be invested in services and rolling stock in Scotland.

The Scottish Minister of Transport has stated the government demanded ScotRail for a plan of action to address the problems. (Source: Dutchnews.nl)

First Big Data Hub in the Netherlands opened in the Arena



At the Big Data Hub in the Amsterdam ArenA, entrepreneurs can, from now on, develop their innovative ideas with their own or existing data. It is a platform for entrepreneurs to connect to governments and academics, share data and work on related innovations.

These concern media and entertainment, mobility, security and sustainability. The concepts and applications can immediately be tested in the operational area, which has been set up in the Amsterdam ArenA. With the 2020 European Championship in mind, the stadium aspires to become the most innovative in the world.

Moreover, the project could lead to innovative solutions for other places dealing with large visitor flows or security challenges. (Source: dutchdigitaldelta.nl. Photo: ledmagazine.nl)

Thambwe Mwamba: "The DRC will solely fund the electoral process"

The DRC is committed to solely fund the entire electoral process, affirmed the co-moderator of the Presidential Majority (MP) for political dialogue, Alexis Thambwe Mwamba. "Today, the MP and his government believe that the elections are the top priority. I point out that the DRC will, single-handedly, finance the complete electoral process and will utilise all its means to do so", Thambwe Mwamba assured. He stressed: "it is a challenge for our country. Our partners often promise but do not live up to their promises."

The co-moderator of the MP in the political dialogue denies accusations of "blackmail". "We are adults, and we do not wish to blackmail. We will therefore review the set of national priorities. We will block the road construction, the re-development of the railway, and reduce the number of new schools and hospitals", he added. (Source: Radio Okapi)

Two candidates remain for Inga III



The offers from two remaining bidders competing for the Inga III project have been received by the agency for the promotion, development and implementation of the Grand Inga project (ADPI). The two competing consortia are a Chinese consortium led by Three Gorges Corporation (manager of the gigantic Three Gorges Dam in China) and the Spanish construction group ACS. Both bidders are contracted to assist the government to develop phase A of the project great-Inga, known as "Inga III".

According to Bruno Kapandji, coordinator of ADPI, "Each candidate has 5 or 6 companies associated with them." The Inga III project was resurrected in 2013, following a promise made by South Africa to buy more than half of the electricity produced by the future dam (2500 MW), thereby ensuring the financial sustainability of the project. (Source: Xinhua. Photo: fahamu.org)

National railways announce alliance

The Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority, TAZARA, has agreed with the Zambian and DRC railway operators to review the operations among the three railways in order to facilitate movement of goods across the adjacent national boundaries. "Due to inefficiencies and other challenges that used to characterise the railways, many customers have abandoned our railway services and now there is an urgent need to re-assure customers that things have changed, and win back their confidence," the CEOs of the three railway announced in a joint statement.

"In order to remain competitive, it is necessary to share some of our challenges with our governments, where possible." The companies also agreed to come up with strategies to raise traffic volumes, according to statement. The Tanzanian and Zambian governments hold the shares of TAZARA on a joint and equal basis. (Source: AllAfrica)

Foreign exchange reserves fall by more than 30% in eight months



The continuing decline of the level of international reserves has surpassed \$1 billion and is now exactly \$998,78 million – enough to cover 4,41 weeks of imports of goods and services – which was 6 weeks in January this year. The Strategic Troika announced the news of the red line on September 12th.

In plain terms, it means the country has failed to establish sufficient reserves to fall back on during times of crisis, like those faced mid-September. The reserves are limited and there is need to restore and preserve a safety margin to cope with other shocks. The Troika members claim to have examined different options to ensure its recovery; these measures concern both the real as well as the monetary economic sectors. (Source: Zoom Eco. Photo: africareview.com)

Depreciation of the franc continues

During its monetary policy committee on the 5th of September, the Central Bank of Congo (BCC) announced the continuation of the depreciation of the Congolese franc. While the BCC speaks of "relative stability" on the foreign exchange market, in another statement it admits the Congolese franc depreciated 2,6% against the dollar and 1,1% on the parallel market.

The exchange rate is now at 1,024 Congolese francs to the dollar on the interbank market and an average rate of 1,078 Congolese francs is maintained on the parallel market. In April, the government had already admitted a decrease of -2.4% as a parallel of the national currency since the end of 2015, while the decline had been limited to -0,008% over the previous 5 years, since the end of 2010. The Congolese authorities attempt to curb the on-going phenomenon since the end of last year. (Source: Jeune Afrique)

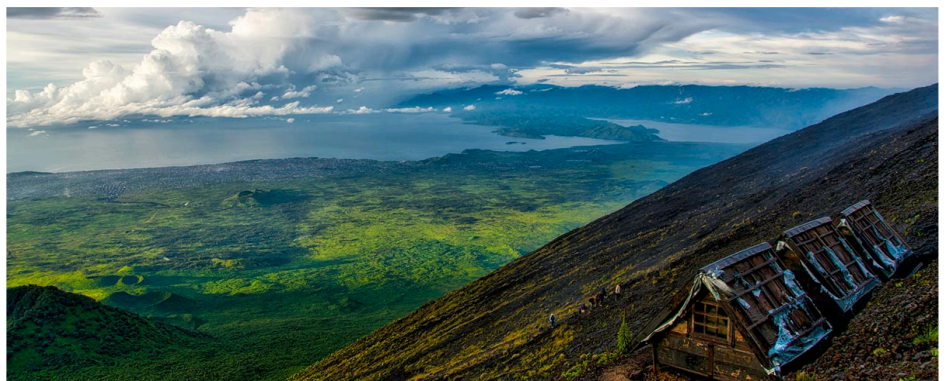
Fuel prices at the pump: rising because of tax reasons?

The price of a liter of petrol has risen from 1440 to 1490 Congolese francs. As for diesel prices now surpass 1200 FC per liter, compared to the initial 1130 FC.

The principle of revising price structures takes into account a tolerance threshold of more or less 5% in of one of the following 3 parameters: the average frontier price (AFP), the geographical area volume structure and the exchange rate.

Yet, all the 3 parameters have seen deviations beyond the established threshold: +13% for AFP, -45% for geographic volume and +12% for the exchange rate. By retaining fuel prices at their former level, the state suffered a monthly loss of around \$17 million, or 46% of its oil taxation. (Source: Adiac Congo)

Virunga National Park registered over 4000 foreign tourists in 2015



In 2015, Virunga National Park has registered and welcomed nearly 4000 tourists from outside the DRC. The director of tourism of the park, Julie William, shared this fact during the celebration of World Tourism Day.

The figure shows an increase in the number of visitors compared to 2014, she explained. Foreign tourists pay \$300 (per person) to hike the volcano Nyiragongo and \$400 for a trek to see the mountain gorillas in their natural habitat. However, William added, the security challenge remains an obstacle for growth in this sector.

Balthazar Kanyamanza, the provincial minister of tourism, says preferential prices are offered to Congolese citizens to motivate them to visit the special sights the province has to offer. To visit the volcano Nyiragongo, for example, a Congolese citizen pays \$90 (per person) and \$25 for those under the age of 18. (Source: ?. Photo: www.nkuringowalkingsafaris.com)

Brazzaville reduces debt of 25 billion FCFA towards Bangui



The Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic signed an agreement on the reduction and timeframe of the payment of a debt of 25 billion FCFA, contracted by Bangui and granted by Brazzaville. With this agreement, the Central African Republic will no longer pay its debt with an interest rate of 5% as originally planned and, in addition, it now has a 6-year payment period.

Reduced by 25%, the debt was incurred by the transitional government in 2013, led by Nicolas Tinagaye under Michel Djotodjia. Following the difficulties the country has endured after the seizure of power, the Central African government had requested financial assistance from its neighbors. Because of its very high interest rates, this particular debt has been much debated within the Central African region. (Source: APA. Photo: www.cbc.ca)

UBA nearly doubles its profits in the Republic of Congo in the first 2016



The United Bank for Africa (UBA), present in 18 African countries, said it has almost doubled its profit in the Republic of Congo during the first half of 2016. "I am particularly proud of the performance of our operations in Congo-Brazzaville, where we have almost doubled our net income, mainly due to financing transactions," said Kennedy Uzoka, CEO of the banking group.

The bank's various operations in the country were reported to amount to 3,41 billion naira (\$10 million) over the period referred to, against operating expenses of 1,6 billion naira. An adjustment on financial loss of 227 million naira and a tax burden of 123 million naira led to a total net profit of 1,58 billion naira (\$5 million).

This performance was the second best of the group outside of its core market Nigeria, and is just behind Ghana, which reported a net profit of 1,6 billion naira. (Source: Agence Ecofin. Photo: newsroom.mastercard.com)

Bolloré electric buses operational in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire



Already deployed during the 2015 All-Africa Games, the electric buses are officially in use in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. They are virtually silent, and do not emit any CO2 thanks to a special lithium based LMP-battery, developed by Blue Solutions, a subsidiary of the Bolloré group that develops clean energy solutions.

Owned by Vincent Bolloré, the group's presence on the African continent is ensured by his subsidiary Bolloré Transport & Logistics. Altogether, 7 bus lines are operational in Brazzaville. The transportation cost is set at 150 CFA, or 0,22 Euros: the average price of diesel buses in the Congolese capital. Aside from Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, the 100% clean energy electric buses can be found circulating in the streets of many other African countries where the Bolloré group is developing these alternative transport solutions. (Source: Jeune Afrique. Photo: www.journaldebrazza.com)

Government rejects all allegations concerning the disposal of toxic petroleum products

"The government completely rejects allegations made by the NGO 'Public Eye' (...) and reassures the Congolese people of strict adherence to hygiene regulations, food safety and import requirements of end-products", said Thierry MOUNGALLA, the spokesman of the Congolese government during a press update together with the Minister of Hydrocarbons, Jean Marc Thystère Tchicaya.

According to MOUNGALLA, 2015 and 2016 statistics, 70% of the fuel available to consumers across the national territory is derived from Congolese refinement (CORAF), and 30%, as an extra source, from imports.

He stressed: "the Congo is in the process of implementing the most stringent standards (5 AFRI 2020), which are identical to those of the United States and the European Union". (Source: Xinhua)

Score Congo opens first superstore in the country in Brazzaville



The local subsidiary of Mercure International of Monaco has opened its first superstore in Congo-Brazzaville – a revolution in the Congolese retail sector. With its opening in mid-April, the Géant Casino Brazzaville is the first superstore in the country, a mastodon of 2500 m2. Yet, the novelty does not end there.

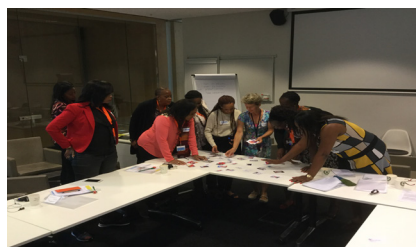
The store is part of a large mall of 10.000 m2, the centre commercial Grand fleuve shopping center, where shops are already allocated and functional. Once finalised (construction will be completed by the end of the year), the center will also host fashion brands (Celio, Kiabi, City Sport, I Am, etc.), perfumeries, restaurants and a Fnac store.

"It is our parent company [Score subsidiary of the Monegasque group Mercure International of Monaco (MIM)], who negotiated with these brands which were already present on the continent", said Alphonse Missengui, deputy director of Score Congo. (Photo & Source: Jeune Afrique)

POST SCRIPTUM

Photo report : Congolese women entrepreneurs visit the Netherlands

The Embassy of the Netherlands, in collaboration with the Dutch Agency RVO.nl, organised a visit to the Netherlands from 18 to 22 September 2016 for 10 women entrepreneurs. The aim of this visit was to promote Congolese female entrepreneurship in the Netherlands by connecting the entrepreneurs with various Dutch organisations, private and public alike. The following women took part in the visit: Patience Barandenge (Rawbank) ; Espérance Belau (Belpes) ; Félicité Bossiky (FIDI Groupe) ; Thérèse Izay (Women's Technology) ; Monique Kandolo (Bolimo) ; Sandra Lukusa (Mapapa's) ; Nadine Lydabeke (Le Choix de Nadine) ; Betty Mulanga (Paumubert Business) ; Josée Odia (Bellissima Magazine) ; Huguette Samu (Congo Call Center).



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