



ML Strategies Update

David Leiter, djleiter@mlstrategies.com
Georgette Spanjich, gmspanjich@mlstrategies.com
Sarah Mamula, srmamula@mlstrategies.com

ML Strategies, LLC
701 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004 USA
202 296 3622
202 434 7400 fax
www.mlstrategies.com

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER: [@MLStrategies](https://twitter.com/MLStrategies)

MARCH 31, 2015

Africa Update

Leading the News

Nigeria

On March 27th, the Nigerian Army said it had retaken control of the northeastern town of Gwoza, believed to be the headquarters of militant Islamist group Boko Haram. The town, which is near the border with Cameroon, was captured by Boko Haram in August. Military officials reported Boko Haram has now been driven from all of the territory it previously held and insurgents have fled to border areas. The progress in Gwoza was reported [here](#).

On March 27th, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan called on the public to do its part to hold a nonviolent election. In a national broadcast, President Jonathan reiterated his position as Commander-in-Chief and said those who harbored any intentions of unleashing violence during the elections in order to advance their political ambitions should think again. Close to 800 people died as the result of post-election violence in 2011. Excerpts from President Jonathan's address were highlighted [here](#).

On March 27th, the importance of electricity shortages in Nigeria was highlighted by the media as an important issue in the country's presidential race. Current President Goodluck Jonathan, who is running against Muhammadu Buhari, has been criticized for his lack of progress on the issue during his tenure. While six additional power plants have been built and another four are in progress, output remains low as a result of gas shortages and transmission issues. The impact of electricity shortages on the presidential election was analyzed [here](#).

On March 27th, on the eve of Nigeria's presidential and parliamentary elections, United Nations (U.N.) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on all Nigerians to exercise their civil responsibility by going to the polls to vote in large numbers. Secretary-General Ban also commended the progress made by Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission on preparations for the elections and applauded both parties for their commitment to respect the outcome of the elections. Secretary-General Ban's comments on the elections were recorded [here](#).

On March 27th, U.S. Department of State Acting Deputy Spokesperson Jeff Rathke reiterated U.S. support for credible electoral processes in Nigeria and renewed the call for all candidates, their supporters, and Nigerian citizens to reject election-related violence and refrain from activities that

undermine the democratic process. He commended President Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari for their pledges against violence and welcomed their signing of a second peace accord ahead of the election. Deputy Spokesperson Rathke's comments were captured [here](#).

On March 27th, U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) issued a statement on the Nigerian elections. Congressman Royce noted he had observed the Nigerian elections in 1999 and noted the difference in 2015 is that Boko Haram is determined to mar election day with its killing. He commended the top candidates for pledging to respect the outcome of the vote and refrain from violence, and urged the winner to immediately deal with major economic challenges and the brutal violence and destabilization of Boko Haram. Congressman Royce's full statement can be read [here](#).

On March 27th-31st, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield traveled to Nigeria to lead the official diplomatic observation mission for the March 28th presidential and national assembly elections. While in Nigeria, Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield was also expected to hold high-level bilateral meetings. Her travel was announced [here](#).

On April 27th-31st, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Assistant Administrator for Africa Eric Postel accompanied U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield to Nigeria as part of the U.S. diplomatic mission for the March 28th presidential and national assembly elections. While in Abuja, Assistant Administrator Postel was also scheduled to meet with USAID staff and partners. His participation was noted [here](#).

On March 28th, U.N. Special Representative for Nigeria Mohammed Ibn Chambas disclosed the U.N. has supported the Nigerian elections with \$60 million, per the recommendation of a Needs Assessment Mission deployed to Nigeria several months ago. Special Representative Chambas reported the U.N. has been working with all Nigerian stakeholders, as well as other international partners and organizations, to ensure peaceful and credible elections. U.N. support for the Nigerian elections was detailed [here](#).

On March 28th, Nigerians went to the polls to vote in national assembly elections and to make their choice between President Goodluck Jonathan and retired general Muhammadu Buhari to serve as president. Polling stations reported long lines and at least 350 of more than 120,000 polling stations across the country were forced to reopen on Sunday to address delays caused by new electronic biometric voter card readers, tardy poll workers, and militant attacks. Reportedly, when President Jonathan and the first lady went to vote in Bayelsa state, their voter cards were initially rejected. The problems were later addressed. The full story is available [here](#).

On March 29th, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon congratulated the people and Government of Nigeria on the largely peaceful and orderly conduct of the country's presidential and parliamentary elections. While condemning the attacks reportedly carried out by Boko Haram to disrupt the polling, Secretary-General Ban said he was encouraged by the determination and resilience shown by the Nigerian people in pressing forward and exercising their civic duties in the face of unjustifiable violence. Secretary-General Ban's comments were captured [here](#).

On March 30th, vote counting began in Nigeria following a series of delays at the polls. According to reports, the opening of the polls on Saturday was met with technical glitches at polling stations, militant attacks, and calls from supporters of opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari to cancel the vote in at least one state. Early partial results showed Buhari leading President Goodluck Jonathan, but it was unclear if this trend would continue as additional votes were counted. To win, a candidate must secure both a majority and 25 percent of the vote in two-thirds of Nigeria's states. Election commission spokesman Kayode Idowu said full results could be expected on Tuesday. An article on vote counting in Nigeria was published [here](#).

On March 30th, early election reports indicated that opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari won 1.1 million votes in Kaduna, a key swing state. President Goodluck Jonathan achieved only 484,000 votes in Kaduna. In response to the large vote differential, residents of Kaduna braced themselves for possible post-election violence by staying indoors. Details on the vote count in Kaduna were shared [here](#).

On March 30th, the U.S. and Britain expressed concern over the tallying of votes in Nigeria. While early election results appear untainted, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond released a joint statement voicing fears that the final counts may be subject to deliberate political interference. The concerns included in the joint statement were articulated [here](#).

On March 30th, forces from Niger and Chad attacked Boko Haram militants on islands of Lake Chad. According to military sources, the militants had been using the islands as safe havens. Nigerian forces were not involved in the operation. For more information, click [here](#).

On March 30th, as part of a U.N. Security Council meeting convened to discuss threats to international peace and security caused by terrorism, U.N. Special Representative for Nigeria Mohammed Ibn Chambas provided a briefing on the impacts of Boko Haram's violence in Nigeria. According to Special Representative Chambas, while Boko Haram has been weakened, the group continues to commit horrendous acts against civilians, including against women and children. He said Boko Haram's recent allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is also of concern, especially as it indicates Boko Haram's agenda extends outside Nigeria. Excerpts from the briefing were highlighted [here](#).

On March 30th, CNA Corporation released a paper summarizing the outcomes of a meeting held last month in Cameroon to explore ways the U.S. can help support Cameroon's efforts to support other regional forces in the fight against Nigerian militant group Boko Haram. The paper suggests that because Cameroon has shown more political will to combat Boko Haram than Nigeria, the U.S. should continue to assist in the training and equipping of Cameroonian forces while simultaneously stressing the importance of addressing the political, economic, and ethno-religious tensions in the country that could contribute to the growth of Boko Haram within Cameroon. The paper can be downloaded [here](#).

On March 31st, with more than half of Nigeria's states declared, opposition presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari was recognized as the frontrunner in the presidential race. Garnering 14 million votes to President Goodluck Jonathan's 11 million, Buhari is expected to take control of Africa's richest country. The latest updates on the election results are available [here](#).

Libya

On March 27th, U.N. Special Representative for Libya and head of the U.N. Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Bernardino Leon, who has been facilitating the Libyan peace talks, reported that Libyan stakeholders have reached consensus on a range of issues, including the need for a unity government and security arrangements. Peace talks are expected to resume next week. In addition, Special Representative Leon noted UNSMIL was actively working to free two brothers of a Member of Parliament (MP) from the House of Representatives in Tobruk who were recently abducted. The status of the Libyan peace talks was addressed [here](#).

On March 28th, the U.N. Security Council adopted two resolutions on Libya. The first resolution calls for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and extends the mandate of UNSMIL through September 15th. The second resolution adjusts the arms embargo in the country in light of the persistent terrorist threat posed by ISIL and its supports. The votes on both resolutions were noted [here](#).

On March 30th, Libyan officials said that eight people were wounded and one was killed in a rocket attack. The rocket was likely aimed to hit a refinery, but hit the town of Zawiya instead. The incident was reported [here](#).

Somalia

On March 28th, at least 17 people were killed and at least 28 others wounded in attack on the Maka al-Mukarama Hotel in Mogadishu, Somalia, perpetrated by Al Shabaab. Somali troops took full control of the hotel more than 12 hours after gunmen stormed the building following a suicide bombing. According to Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Somali Ambassador to Switzerland and permanent representative to the U.N. Office in Geneva Yusuf Bari-Bari was among those killed in the attack. The incident was reported [here](#).

On March 28th, U.N. Special Representative to Somalia and head of the U.N. Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) Nicholas Kay joined the U.N. Security Council in condemning the terrorist attack on a hotel in Mogadishu that resulted in the death of many civilians and Ambassador Yusuf Bari-Bari. In addition to offering condolences to the families of the victims and the people of Somalia, U.N. officials applauded the Somali National Security Forces in responding to the attack and underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers, and sponsors of terrorism to justice. Feedback from the U.N. was posted [here](#).

On March 28th, the U.S. Department of State condemned Al Shabaab's attack on the Maka al-Mukarama Hotel in Mogadishu. The State Department extended condolences to the families and loved ones of the innocent victims killed in the attack and praised the Somali forces for their response. Additionally, the State Department vowed to stand with the Somali people and their government as they work to achieve stability, security, and prosperity. A statement on the attack can be read [here](#).

Tunisia

On March 28th, Secretary of State John Kerry expressed U.S. solidarity with the Tunisian people in advance of the march in Tunis in defiance of the March 18th terrorist attack at the Bardo Museum. He noted U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia Jake Walles would represent the U.S. at the event and also highlighted that Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken will visit Tunisia in early April to reaffirm strong U.S. support for Tunisia and discuss ways to extend the bilateral strategic partnership. Secretary Kerry's remarks can be seen [here](#).

On March 29th, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Tunis, Tunisia, to participate in an anti-terrorism March following the reopening of the Bardo National Museum. The march came as Tunisian authorities said they had killed Lokman Abu Sakhra, one of the prime suspects in the attack. Speaking at a ceremony held at the museum, which was attended by a number of world leaders, Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi paid tribute to Tunisian citizens' defiance. Events around the reopening of the museum were detailed [here](#).

West Africa Ebola Outbreak

On March 25th, Guinea started testing an experimental Ebola vaccine from Merck & Co. and NewLink Genetics Corp. on affected communities in the country. As part of the trials, the U.N. World Health Organization (WHO) plans to vaccinate around 10,000 people over six to eight weeks. The vaccine has already been administered to some volunteer health care workers. Over the next several weeks, health workers will also immunize high-risk contacts around Ebola patients. Details were posted [here](#).

On March 26th, the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced that an American aid worker being treated for Ebola is doing better and had been upgraded from critical to serious condition. The patient was evacuated from Sierra Leone, where he had been working with Partners in Health and arrived in the U.S. on March 13th. Others who came into contact with the patient, including more than two dozen Americans, were also transported to the U.S. to undergo monitoring for symptoms of Ebola. The full story is available [here](#).

On March 26th, the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) reported two experimental Ebola vaccines appear to be safe based on a trial with 600 people in Liberia. The vaccines were developed by the NIH and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and by the Public Health Agency of Canada and licensed to NewLink Genetics Corp. and Merck & Co. Now that the vaccines' safety has been demonstrated, the next step will be to prove their effectiveness. This may be a challenge given the decline in the number of Ebola cases in West Africa, as investigators had initially planned to enroll 27,000 people in Liberia who are at high risk of contracting Ebola. More information was shared [here](#).

On March 26th, the African Development Bank (AfDB) detailed a recent Bank mission examining Ebola response efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone led by Corporate Services Vice President Sue Wardell. As part of their visit to West Africa, AfDB officials met with government officials, investors, and NGOs to reiterate the Bank's commitment to supporting the countries until they achieve zero Ebola cases. For further details, click [here](#).

On March 27th, in recognition of the passage of one year since the start of the West African Ebola outbreak, the AfDB highlighted its role in fighting Ebola in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. In response to the Ebola crisis, the AfDB disbursed \$223 million for nine operations in the West African region, launched an Ebola Response fund, and contributed a further \$300 million to a road transport project for the Mano River countries aimed at strengthening infrastructure and the economy in the region. The AfDB's efforts to combat Ebola were highlighted [here](#).

On March 27th, Anna Cross, a British nurse who was infected with Ebola while caring for patients in Sierra Leone, was discharged from London's Royal Free Hospital. Cross is the first person in the world to be treated for Ebola with the Chinese-made experimental drug MIL 77. Cross's recovery was detailed [here](#).

On March 29th, Guinean President Alpha Conde declared a 45-day health emergency in five regions in the southwestern part of the country that have been the hardest hit by Ebola. The emergency declaration comes with new restrictions on the quarantining of hospitals and clinics where new cases are detected, new rules on burials, and new authorities to enforce lockdowns. The emergency procedures will be in effect in the prefectures of Forecariah, Coyah, Dubreka, Boffa, and Kindia. The news in Guinea broke as Sierra Leone implemented a three-day nationwide lockdown sparked by fears the virus was making a comeback in some parts of the country. Updates in Guinea and Sierra Leone were noted [here](#).

On March 30th, following the death of an Ebola patient in Liberia who was believed to have acquired the virus through sex, Liberian authorities called on Ebola survivors to extend a period of sexual abstinence or protected sex beyond an already advised three months following their recovery. Deputy Health Minister Tolbert Nyenswah noted research has shown traces of Ebola in the semen of some survivors for at least 82 days after the onset of symptoms. For details, click [here](#).

On March 31st, hundreds of potential Ebola cases were exposed after a three-day lockdown in Sierra Leone. The country's six million people were ordered by officials to stay indoors while health officials went door-to-door searching for hidden patients. The search revealed 173 patients that met the initial case criteria for Ebola. Test results for the suspected cases will be available on Wednesday. Details on the situation in Sierra Leone were shared [here](#).

United States – Africa Relations

White House

On March 30th, the White House announced President Barack Obama will travel to Kenya in July to participate in the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES), making his fourth trip to sub-Saharan Africa during his presidency. Organized since 2009, the GES has emerged as a global platform connecting emerging entrepreneurs with leaders from business, international organizations, and governments looking to support them. This is the first time the GES will be held in sub-Saharan Africa. While in Kenya, President Obama will also hold bilateral meetings. His trip will build on the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit and the work of the U.S. to work with sub-Saharan African countries to accelerate economic growth, strengthen democratic institutions, and improve security. President Obama's trip was announced [here](#).

State Department

On March 27th, State Department Counselor Tom Shannon met with U.S. Ambassador to Sudan Jerry Lanier at the Department of State. The meeting was included on the State Department's daily appointment schedule, which can be accessed [here](#).

Department of Defense

On March 26th, the U.S. Navy's joint high-speed vessel USNS Spearhead (JHSV 1) delivered wheelchairs and medical supplies to Ghanaian NGOs. The materials were delivered under the U.S. Navy's Project Handclasp program, which accepts humanitarian, educational, and goodwill donations contributed by the American private sector and transports them to foreign nations on a space-available basis aboard U.S. Navy vessels. For details, click [here](#).

On March 27th, maritime forces from Gulf of Guinea nations, Europe, South America, and the U.S., as well as several regional and international organizations, concluded the multinational maritime exercise Obangame Express 2015. Sponsored by U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), the exercise was intended to improve regional cooperation, maritime domain awareness, information-sharing practices, and tactical interdiction expertise to enhance the collective capabilities of Gulf of Guinea nations to counter sea-based illicit activity. Reflections on the exercise were collected [here](#).

On March 27th, U.S. Army Africa provided additional insights on the Malawi Sergeants Major Course, which launched in Salima in January 2014 and is now in its third iteration. The course has already graduated 47 Malawi Defense Force (MDF) senior noncommissioned officers from infantry and administrative backgrounds, of which seven will serve as instructors and managers of future courses. These MDF will work with U.S. Army Africa to write, develop, and revise current training support packages for the course. More information can be found [here](#).

On March 27th, a ceremony was held at AFRICOM headquarters to recognize recipients and winners of AFRICOM's 4th Quarter Awards. The ceremony recognized the outstanding achievements of all winners over the course of the previous year's fourth quarter. The ceremony was noted [here](#).

U.S. Trade and Development Agency

On March 27th, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) awarded a grant to the Malawian Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy, and Mining to fund a feasibility study to support the development of a hydropower plant in the Luweya River. The Ministry has selected Water Wheel International, a U.S. hydropower developer, to carry out the feasibility study. The first phase of the hydropower project will consist of a 15 megawatt (MW) run-of-river system, which could be expanded in a second phase to 35 MW using Water Wheel International's patented system. A press release was issued [here](#).

On March 30th, USTDA awarded a grant to Gigawatt Global Burundi S.A. to support the development of a 7.5 MW solar photovoltaic power plant in Mubuga. The grant will fund a feasibility study that will address key technical and economic aspects of the solar project, environmental and social impacts, and the analysis required for the developers to secure financing. Currently, only four percent of Burundi's population has residential access to electricity. The proposed solar plant project would increase Burundi's installed electricity generation capacity by an estimated 15 percent, helping to power over 60,000 households and businesses. The plant would be the first utility-scale solar energy generation facility in Burundi. More information can be seen [here](#).

North Africa

On March 27th, the journey of Tasneem Hussein, from a university student in Khartoum to an ISIL supporter, was highlighted in the press. Hussein's story demonstrates the recruitment challenges Western and Arab states face in stopping the growth expansion of ISIL. For more information, click [here](#).

On March 30th, the Muslim Brotherhood's leader and 17 high-ranking members were labelled as terrorists by Egypt's public prosecutor. This action is the first taken by public prosecutor Hesham Barakat under Egypt's new terrorism law that requires authorities to identify and list terrorist individuals and entities. An article on the list can be read [here](#).

On March 30th, a Turkish Airlines plane flying to Brazil was forced to land in Casablanca, Morocco after a bomb threat. The flight was carrying 250 passengers from Istanbul to Sao Paulo. The security incident was described [here](#).

On March 31st, an Egyptian court acquitted 68 people, including members of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, who were charged with gathering illegally and attacking security sources. The court fined each of the defendants to roughly \$6,553 on separate charges of protesting without a permit on the January 25th anniversary of the 2011 uprising that ousted President Hosni Mubarak. This rare move by the court was detailed [here](#).

East Africa

On March 27th, Kenyan security officials detained 52 people. The arrests occurred just one day after a police officer was killed in a suspected revenge killing. Mombasa County Police Chief Geoffrey Mayek said the arrests were made to track down the killers of Ibrahim Mohammed. The detentions were outlined [here](#).

On March 27th, the flight schedule of Kenya Airways was disrupted after pilots refused to take on extra shifts. So far, one flight has been cancelled. Kenya Airways has struggled to fill flights in the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak and Islamist attacks. The debt that has resulted caused the airline to ask 10 senior pilots to retire early, angering the union. Details on the situation can be seen [here](#).

On March 27th, the Australian Government warned of possible militant attacks in Nairobi, Kenya. Australia's travel advisory came just days after a similar warning was issued by the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi. No official comment has been made by Kenya's Government in response to the warnings. Additional information on the advisories was posted [here](#).

On March 30th, Kenyan officials announced that Westgate Mall in Nairobi will reopen to the public this coming July. The mall was the site of a 2013 attack by Al Shabaab that left 67 people dead. Nairobi Governor Evans Kidero said the mall will be restored to its former glory. Plans for the reopening of the mall were announced [here](#).

On March 30th, Tanzania announced plans to spend \$14.2 billion on the construction of a new rail network. Transport Minister Samuel Sitta said the project will meet the demand for the transportation of cargo to land-locked countries nearby. More information on the infrastructure upgrade in Tanzania can be found [here](#).

On March 31st, an anti-corruption watchdog in Kenya released information on graft accusations against senior government officials. So far, under the direction of President Kenyatta, five ministers have gone on temporary leave. The accusations are related to Chinese-funded infrastructure projects. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On March 31st, Joan Kagezi, a senior Ugandan prosecutor, was shot and killed in Uganda. Kagezi was the chief prosecutor in the trial of individuals charged with organizing the bombings in Kampala that killed nearly 80 people in 2010. Police suspect her death was the result of a targeted assassination. An article on the incident was published [here](#).

On March 31st, French supermarket firm Carrefour announced plans to launch a network of new stores in Africa beginning next year. Carrefour's African expansion plans are driven by the fact that the company holds the rights for more outlets than the countries in which the brand currently operates. The first Carrefour store is due to open in Nairobi, Kenya this October. More information can be accessed [here](#).

West Africa

On March 25th, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Africa Training Institute (ATI) Steering Committee met in N'Djamena, Chad for its annual meeting to discuss scaling-up action. In light of the sizeable demand for training in sub-Saharan Africa, the Committee called for an additional \$5 million in funding in support of further ATI training during FY16-FY18. Observations from the meeting were shared [here](#).

On March 25th, Senegalese Minister of Fisheries Oumar Gueye said Senegal is preparing a new code that will allow the government to impose higher fines for illegal fishing. The current guidelines have not been updated since 1998. Senegal loses about 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) each year because of unlicensed fishing, mostly by international ships off its coast in the Atlantic Ocean. While 60 percent of the fish caught annually are consumed locally, the rest is exported, mostly to Europe. The situation was described [here](#).

On March 26th, the World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors approved a \$50 million International Development Association (IDA) grant for the Cote d'Ivoire Youth Employment and Skills Development Project. The grant will build on the achievements of the project to date by providing

financial assistance to create temporary income and employment opportunities for vulnerable youth. The grant will also help support professional skills training and provide a work program for young people to gain experience in economic growth sectors to improve their employability and increase the potential for future earning opportunities. More information can be found [here](#).

On March 27th, the AfDB's Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA) approved a \$780 thousand preparation grant for the development of a first phase 40 MW of the Starsol Solar Photovoltaic Plant project near N'Djamena, Chad. The project will be the first independent power producer (IPP) scheme to be connected to the national grid. The SEFA grant will finance the costs related to technical assistance for the completion of the plant design and grid study. A press release was issued [here](#).

On March 30th, the World Bank published the results of Senegal's participation in the international PISA-D assessment, which evaluates student performance and education quality. The assessment determines whether or not students have the competencies necessary in the 21st century and allows for country comparisons. The results allow Senegal to discover and target the weaknesses of its education system. For details, click [here](#).

On March 31st, a driver with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was shot and killed in northern Mali as he headed to Niger. Head of ICRC operations in North and West Africa, Yasmine Praz Dessimoz said another staff member wounded in the attack, but was in stable condition. The identity of the gunmen is currently unknown. An article on the attack can be read [here](#).

Sub-Saharan Africa

On March 26th, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution renewing the mandate of the U.N. Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (MONUSCO) and endorsing the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report on the strategic review of the mission. Among the recommendations adopted, the Security Council voted to reduce the MONUSCO force by 2,000 troops, while maintaining an authorized troop ceiling. The resolution was detailed [here](#).

On March 26th, the World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors approved \$75 million in continuing support for the Fourth Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF IV) to help reduce poverty levels for about five million poor Malawians by providing work opportunities, cash transfers, and grants to raise household incomes. The additional IDA financing is expected to not only address household poverty, but also help create community assets, strengthen the Government's capacity to respond to vulnerability and crisis, and develop a unified registry of beneficiaries to be used by all social protection providers. A press release was published [here](#).

On March 26th, an IMF mission completed a visit to Victoria, Seychelles to conduct the 2015 Article IV consultation discussions and assess performance under the second review of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) Arrangement. The IMF team noted the resilience of the Seychellois economy continues to strengthen, with an improvement in the external sector starting late last year. In addition, the IMF mission found the outlook for 2015 remains positive, with economic growth projects at 3.5 percent. The IMF mission's findings were summarized [here](#).

On March 27th, the U.N. refugee agency condemned the recent kidnapping of Congolese refugees by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the DRC and called for the immediate release of those still in captivity. On March 21st, 15 Congolese refugees and one Congolese national were kidnapped along the border between the Central African Republic (CAR) and the DRC. While 13 victims have been released, three refugee boys remain missing. Details were provided [here](#).

On March 27th, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) welcomed Malawian President Peter Mutharika's strong statement condemning the recent spate of attacks on people with albinism in the country. Additionally, OHCHR urged that the measures outlined by President Mutharika to arrest those responsible for such attacks and to better protect albinos be launched without delay. In addition to President Mutharika's comments, OHCHR also welcomed the unveiling of a five-point plan of action to protect albinos in Malawi. More information can be seen [here](#).

On March 27th, World Bank Country Director for Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe Kundhavi Kadiresan delivered remarks in Lusaka at the official launch of the Mapping Subnational Poverty in Zambia Report. Director Kadiresan said the report is an example of the work the World Bank has done to support the Government of Zambia in making informed decisions. In addition, he noted the report finds that the poorest wards in Zambia are concentrated in the Western, North Western, and Luapula provinces, which also have the lowest rates of household education, highest numbers of individuals employed in the agricultural sector, and lowest concentrations of rainfall. Director Kadiresan's remarks were transcribed [here](#).

On March 27th, the AfDB convened a high level consultation to discuss solutions for ending the energy problem in Comoros. Comoros is characterized by an immense power deficit, which has proven to be a major constraint on the country's socioeconomic development. The country has the highest rate of energy loss on the continent and the lowest cost recovery rate. Meeting participants agreed to explore diversification of energy sources and to draft an energy master plan. The outcomes of the meeting were highlighted [here](#).

On March 27th, a South African court upheld the suspension of Tshediso Matona, the chief executive for South Africa's power utility Eskom. Updates on the case were provided [here](#).

On March 27th, an application by Westinghouse Electric Company to re-open the bidding process for a generator contract was denied by a South African court. The \$4 billion contract to replace six steam generators in South Africa's only nuclear power plant was awarded to Areva, a French rival. Westinghouse Electric Company claimed the process was flawed. The decision was noted [here](#).

On March 30th, South African comedian Trevor Noah was announced as John Stewart's successor as the host of *The Daily Show*. Noah, who has appeared on the show three times, was born in South Africa to a black mother and a white Swiss father and speaks six South African languages, in addition to English and German. Noah and his new role on *The Daily Show* were profiled [here](#).

On March 31st, COSATU, South Africa's primary trade union federation, ousted its general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi. While Vavi was popular, sources say that he had been at odds with COSATU over the decision to remove the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa from the federation for some time. The full story is available [here](#).

* * *

View ML Strategies professionals.

Boston · Washington www.mlstrategies.com