

June 30, 2026

Med-Or Monthly  
**AFRICA REPORT**

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

This month Washington and Tehran signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cease hostilities. The central question is how new US-Iran détente reshapes the broader Middle East - and with it, the web of relationships that Gulf states have carefully woven across the Horn of Africa region, where they spent the better part of a decade extending their economic and political reach. The picture is uneven. States whose economic lifelines run through the Strait of Hormuz, including the UAE and Qatar, find themselves newly exposed. Saudi Arabia, by contrast, holds a structural advantage: the ability to redirect trade flows through the Red Sea.

That strategic reality is already reshaping Saudi priorities. The pivot away from capital-intensive vanity projects - NEOM chief amongst them - toward Red Sea critical infrastructure, signals a reorientation with direct consequences for Africa's eastern coastline. This increases the urgency for increased security and better integration. The early signs are visible: Washington's move to lift sanctions on Eritrea, brokered in no small part by Riyadh, and the possibility of Sudan peace talks returning to the Saudi capital with American backing.

Israel, meanwhile, is pursuing its own interests in this region. Its recognition of Somaliland — and this month's official visit by President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi to Tel Aviv — has very little to do with Somaliland's quest for independence. This move has angered Mogadishu, Djibouti, the African Union and the broader Arab and Islamic world alike. Tellingly, neither the UAE nor Ethiopia, both close Israeli partners, have followed suit. The calculation instead is squarely strategic: Somaliland's position commands the approaches to Bab-el-Mandeb, mere miles from Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen. This is why many observers worry that, with Israel's setbacks in its confrontation with Iran and mounting US pressure to wind down operations in Lebanon, Tel Aviv may seek to use its new foothold in Somaliland - not merely to bolster the local government, but as a platform to be able to confront the Houthis directly should that be necessary.

Meanwhile, as with the war against Iran, the world's attention remains focused on the Strait of

Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb's importance cannot be overstated. Hormuz is narrower and deeper, and through it passes the world's largest concentration of energy trade. The Bab-el-Mandeb, on the other hand, is broader but shallower yet accounts for twice the share of containerised goods traded through Hormuz. The underwater data dimension is equally consequential: the cables transiting through the Bab-el-Mandeb carry roughly 18% of the world's internet data. Sixteen cables connecting Asia to Europe pass through these waters, landing at Djibouti, the most concentrated submarine cable hub in Africa. Here lies a critical asymmetry: disruptions to data cables in the Strait of Hormuz affect primarily the GCC and Western Asia - damage in the Bab-el-Mandeb reverberates across Africa, Europe, and Asia simultaneously.

The Hormuz closure has also left a slower, quieter wound on the continent that deserves equal attention. Roughly a third of the global trade of fertilizer raw materials passes through the strait, and the disruption sent urea prices soaring by some 46% between February and March alone — arriving at the worst possible moment in Africa's agricultural calendar. Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and several landlocked Sahelian states have been amongst the hardest hit. The reopening of the strait, while welcome, is unlikely to salvage the 2026 planting season: pricing remains elevated, and farmers have already made irreversible decisions. What the crisis has clarified, with uncomfortable precision, is that fertilizers are as strategically consequential as oil - and that Africa's food security is as exposed to geopolitical shocks in the Gulf as its energy supply.

These compounding vulnerabilities make the energy transition imperative all the more urgent. The lessons of this turbulent period reinforce what we argued last month: with the exception of the continent's energy exporters, African nations can insulate their energy systems from external shocks through accelerated investment in renewables. Pakistan offers the most instructive global model; within Africa, Ethiopia is emerging as the continent's own benchmark together with Kenya. The challenge remains the borrowing costs in Africa, which run three times higher than in advanced economies - a structural inequity that is hampering renewable energy investments.

These compounding vulnerabilities point to a single conclusion: transformative infrastructure must become the organizing principle of cooperation and integration on the continent. This conviction shapes our daily work at Med-Or. Just this June, we concluded an in-person training in Italy for 30 cyber officers from nine African countries, delivered with Italy's National Cybersecurity Agency and Leonardo's Cyber Academy. We took part in the Africa Finance Corporation-Italy Forum, working alongside Zambian, Italian, and European institutions to advance mining partnerships along the Lobito Corridor. And, mindful of Djibouti's outsized role as Africa's submarine cable hub, we traveled there to engage with stakeholders on the future of its maritime and underwater infrastructure.

The task ahead is to build Cybersecurity Operations Centers within Africa, where trained officers

can operate with increased efficiency and effectiveness; to support new undersea infrastructure that can help diversify Africa's digital and electrical connections (while also requiring protection in turn); and to help Africa develop its own AI data centers. Africa cannot risk becoming a mere consumer of AI built elsewhere. It must act as an active participant in shaping AI that reflects African needs. Capacity-building and soft power alone have proven insufficient - past experience shows as much. Alongside capacity, there must be real infrastructure: a far more daunting undertaking, but an essential one. This is why Med-Or's focus extends beyond training, with an eye on the larger goal: helping to design and bring together public-private tools, together with African countries, to create investments that can bring real change across the continent.

## **Umberto Tavalato**

Executive Director,  
Med-Or Italian Foundation for Africa

# UPDATES

## NORTH AFRICA



ALGERIA

### Algeria pursues rapprochement with Niger.

As insurgents gain ground throughout the Sahel, Algeria is reaching out to Niger. The two countries have rekindled efforts to build a trans-Saharan pipeline with Nigeria, while Algiers has put itself forward as an alternative export corridor for Nigerien uranium. Algeria's ties with Niger had soured after the Niamey junta rebuffed Algerian offers to mediate between it and ECOWAS after the 2022 coup. As Niger struggles to stem jihadist advances, however, its need for alternative partnerships may soften its stance.

LIBYA

### Tuareg rebels find safe haven in the Fezzan

The National Front for the Liberation of Azawad (FLA) is reportedly using southern Libya as a staging ground for its campaign against the government of Mali. FLA fighters have set up bases in the vast reaches of the Fezzan as part of a logistics chain straddling Libya, northern Niger, and Mali. The FLA and its jihadist allies profit from weak State control in the area, which has become a refuge for Sahelian and Libyan rebel groups.

LIBYA

### EUNAVFOR IRINI loses security council mandate

The EUNAVFOR IRINI naval mission lost its UN mandate after the Security Council failed to renew its authorisation under Resolution 2780, which allowed participating member States and regional organisations to conduct inspections on vessels suspected of smuggling arms in Libyan waters. As penholders on the issue, Greece and France did not request renewal within the due date. The mission will continue operations under a parallel European Union mandate.

TUNISIA

### Anti-Migrant sentiments grow throughout North Africa

Hundreds of Sudanese refugees were arrested at Tobruk, al-Butnan and other eastern Libyan cities by order of the Government of National Stability (GNS), who transferred them to the Kufra detention centres where approximately 193,000 Sudanese nationals are already held. In Tripoli, meanwhile, several associations and grassroots movements staged anti-immigration protests and called for the expulsion of UNHCR from Libya. Xenophobic sentiments are also rising in Tunisia, where president Kais Saied has been actively voicing fears of "ethnic substitution" of North African Arabs by black Africans.

# UPDATES

## WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL



### Deadly attack at Niamey's airport

On June 18, a coordinated attack struck Diori Hamani International Airport in Niamey. Niger's defence ministry reported 22 attackers, 11 soldiers, and two civilians killed; JNIM, al-Qaeda's Sahel affiliate, claimed responsibility. The strike, the second such incident in under five months, hit a critical national infrastructure and signalled once again JNIM willingness and ability project force into urban centres, threatening the credibility of the military junta's capacity to ensure safety in the capital.

#### CAMEROON

### U.S. Forces Return to Cameroon

The U.S. military is finalising plans to redeploy troops to the Salak base in Maroua, ending a seven-year absence. Under AFRICOM's direction, the contingent will focus on intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance in support of Cameroonian units tracking ISWAP and Boko Haram factions - with no direct combat role. The move fills the surveillance gap left by the 2024 closure of the Agadez drone hub in Niger, and complements a parallel deployment of personnel and drones already operational at Bauchi Airfield in northeastern Nigeria. Taken together, the Maroua and Bauchi deployments reveal a coherent AFRICOM strategy: rather than a large footprint, Washington is rebuilding its ISR architecture across the Lake Chad Basin through smaller nodes.

#### BENIN

### Benin and Niger Advance Reconciliation Process

Following high-level talks, Benin and Niger released a joint communiqué this month affirming their commitment to reopening their shared border, closed since the July 2023 coup in Niamey, and to rebuilding broader bilateral cooperation. The rapprochement carries significant weight: restoring the border would partially ease Niger's landlocked vulnerability, reopen a key trade and transit corridor, and test whether ECOWAS-aligned states can rebuild pragmatic relationships with the junta governments.

#### GHANA

### Ghana's President on a State Visit to Belarus

In early June, President Mahama travelled to Minsk for a state visit focused on deepening bilateral ties, with agreements signed covering economic, agricultural, and technical cooperation in line with his industrialisation and food security agenda. Ghana is also the only West African country having signed a Defense and Security Partnership with the EU, which grants it access to military equipment through the European Peace Facility. This confirms Ghana hedging international strategy vis-a-vis the West and Russia.

# UPDATES

## EAST AFRICA AND THE HORN

### ETHIOPIA

## The Expected Victory of Prime Minister Abiy's Party in Ethiopian elections

Ethiopia held general elections on 1 June, confirming the dominance of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party. Despite concerns that prevented voting in Tigray and disrupted polling in parts of Oromia and Amhara, regional organizations such as the African Union and IGAD praised the overall conduct of the election. By securing a parliamentary majority, the ruling party reinforced its political mandate and positioned Abiy to remain in office for another term. Nevertheless, questions persist on the future balance between central authority and Ethiopia's federal system, particularly in Tigray. Meanwhile, the US imposed sanctions on some high-profile members of the TPLF, which shows how Addis Ababa is effectively isolating the Tigrayan leadership in the international arena.

### KENYA

## US-backed Ebola infrastructure in Kenya

Amid the Ebola outbreak in the DRC, the US and Kenya agreed to establish an Ebola quarantine facility at Laikipia Air Base for evacuated American citizens. In return, Washington pledged \$13.5 million to strengthen Kenya's Ebola preparedness. The agreement triggered protests and legal challenges, with critics questioning its implications for sovereignty and transparency. The deal comes along with another preliminary agreement with Kenya on rare earths, particularly niobium, reflecting broader US efforts to deepen strategic partnerships in East Africa through health and economic cooperation amid geopolitical competition with China.

### SOMALIA

## Israel–Somaliland Relations and Regional Repercussions

The meeting between Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu underscored the strengthening ties between the two sides following Israel's recognition of Somaliland in 2025. Discussions focused on economic and security cooperation, while Somaliland denied reports of talks on hosting an Israeli military base. The growing relationship has been strongly criticized by Somalia, which considers Somaliland part of its territory. Beyond the bilateral dimension, closer Israeli engagement in the Horn of Africa could alter regional alignments around the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, adding a new layer of complexity among regional and external powers.

# UPDATES

## CENTRAL-SOUTHERN AFRICA & THE GREAT LAKES



**MOZAMBIQUE**

### Mozambique tightens control on mining projects and export.

Mozambique enacted a law to acquire a 15% stake in domestic mining operations and bans companies from exporting raw, unrefined resources, unless directly authorised. Mozambique ranks as the world's third largest graphite producer — a key material in battery manufacturing — and holds substantial reserves of technologically-critical minerals, like copper, titanium and tantalum, which are critical for electronics producers and the global energy transition. Mozambique joins 13 other African countries which have enacted export curbs on raw materials since 2023. This growing continental movement is impacting global mineral supplies, creating opportunities for Africa (and Europe) to reshape mineral value chains.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

### Anti-migrant protests escalate in South Africa

A wave of violent protests targeting African migrants are sweeping South Africa, killing seven and displacing thousands. Fueled by a rooted xenophobic sentiment and high unemployment rates, anti-migrant attacks have been recurrent in Africa's richest economy, which hosts about 3 million immigrants, mainly from other southern African nations. After multiple failures to rein in violence, police forces are tightening controls ahead of 30 June, the deadline set by the March and March xenophobic movement for all migrants to leave, while several African governments —including Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe — have coordinated the evacuation of thousands of nationals. Anti-migrant violence continues to heighten economic risks and undermine South Africa's leadership in African diplomacy.

**RWANDA**

### The US increases pressure on Rwanda over Eastern DRC conflict

The US increases pressure on Rwanda over Eastern DRC conflict. The US Treasury has imposed a new round of sanctions on Kigali, this time targeting four minerals trading companies based in Rwanda, including a major gold refinery. These companies are accused of fuelling the war in Eastern DRC by smuggling minerals from Rwanda-backed M23/AFC's territories. After the designation of part of the M23 leadership and the Rwandan army for sanctions in the past months, the move confirms how Washington is increasing pressure on Kigali to comply with the peace agreement signed in December. It also signals that the US-DRC security-mining partnership is bearing fruits for Kinshasa.

# ESSAYS

## Why the Underwater Domain Matters for Africa

BY: VIERI CANESCHI

When most people picture Africa's place in the global economy, they think of oil and minerals - and they are right. But a growing share of that wealth, and almost all the data that moves it, now depends on a single hidden layer: the seabed. Much of its oil and gas comes from offshore fields, while roughly 99% of intercontinental data traffic - banking, government, cloud, defence - travels through submarine cables. For Africa, these cables are not a convenience: they are the nervous system of a digital economy estimated at some \$180 billion.

The past two years have made that dependence painfully visible. In March 2024, near-simultaneous breaks on four Atlantic cables - WACS, ACE, MainOne and SAT-3 - degraded or severed connectivity across thirteen West African countries. Weeks earlier, anchor damage in the Red Sea had cut three systems and disrupted roughly a quarter of all traffic between Asia, Europe and the Middle East; further cuts followed in September 2025.

Nowhere is this clearer than Djibouti. A nation of barely 1.2 million people, it stands at the Bab el-Mandeb strait, the gateway to Suez, and has made itself East Africa's digital heart - a hub for major submarine cables including AAE-1, EASSy, DARE1, SMW5 and 2Africa, and the lifeline for landlocked Ethiopia's 120 million people. Rarely does so much of a continent's connectivity pass through so small a space. Mombasa anchors the southern routes - EASSy, DARE1 and others - but no node carries Djibouti's weight. Cable concentration creates value, and demands protection.

Money is now flowing into protection - but unevenly. Since 2024 Europe has committed close to €1 billion to securing its cables, moved to pool emergency repair capacity, and sent African waters lie outside them all. Public debate focuses on vulnerability - sabotage, anchors, geopolitics. The harder truth is capacity. When a cable breaks off Abidjan or KwaZulu-Natal, Africa waits on others to repair it. Yet sovereignty here was

never about owning cable ships - even Europe is moving to pool its handful into a shared reserve. It lies in the layer a state can realistically hold: the means to see, inspect, protect and respond. Survey and hydrography, ROV operators and divers, seabed awareness - these remain largely in foreign hands. That is the gap Africa can close.

This is why resilience cannot be reduced to laying more cable. Redundancy matters, but redundancy without sovereign capability still leaves a region blind to its own seabed. Real resilience is operational and human: the ability to see, understand and act on what happens below the surface. It is built through trained personnel, embedded maintenance capacity, and a maritime-security culture that treats the seabed as national territory rather than an abstraction.

For Africa - and for partners invested in its stability - this reframes the agenda around one word: sovereignty. A state that cannot see, protect or repair the infrastructure beneath its own waters does not truly govern its economy or its security, however much cable lands on its shores. To depend on others to defend and restore it is to build on foundations one does not own. The advantage in the coming decade will belong to those that turn hosted infrastructure into sovereign capability - the trained people, the tools and the seabed awareness to act for themselves. For Africa, the seabed is not a frontier to be guarded by others - it is the ground on which its sovereignty will be won.

# Africa's Fertilizers Crisis Before and After Hormuz

**BY: MATILDE VECCHIONI**

In the night between 17 and 18 June 2026 the United States and Iran signed a deal authorising the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. For global markets, the announcement brought immediate relief. For others, such as Africa's farmers, the picture is far more complex.

In recent months, the Strait's closure has severely disrupted Africa's agricultural calendar. Approximately a third of the global trade in raw materials for fertilizers passes through Hormuz, with Gulf countries being important exporters to Africa. The disruption quickly translated into delays and higher prices: between February and March 2026 urea prices rose by approximately 46 percent. As a result, the current season has become both delayed and unaffordable for many African farmers. Unlike oil, fertilizer supply chains have limited strategic reserves and less readily available alternative routes, particularly for small-holders.

The shock hit an already fragile food system, potentially exposing African communities to further food insecurity and subsequent instability. Landlocked West African countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have been particularly exposed due to their dependence on imports through coastal states. In East Africa, the situation is also concerning. Sudan has been the continent's most exposed country, with over half of its seaborne fertilizer imports originating from the Gulf. Tanzania, Somalia, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique have also been facing challenges given their reliance on foreign suppliers and rising costs. Other countries, including Ethiopia and Zambia, while developing their fertilizer manufacturing and blending capacities, struggle to meet domestic demand.

Yet the disruption has also accelerated existing trends and created opportunities for alternative suppliers. Some actors within the continent could act as regional stabilisers, at least temporarily. Nigeria, for instance, is emerging as an important player thanks to the Dangote urea facility – which just secured \$600 million from the African Finance Corporation for its expansion plan – and the enlargement project of Indorama Eleme Fertilizer and Chemicals. Additional supplies may

also come – and are already coming – from the Maghreb. Morocco's large fertilizer industry and export infrastructure make it a key actor within African supply chains. Algeria is also well positioned thanks to its natural gas reserves and capacity to produce nitrogen-based fertilizers.

Internationally, Russia is a major fertilizers exporter that has benefited from recent disruptions. With export infrastructure independent of Hormuz, Russian suppliers have become increasingly attractive to African buyers: importers in countries such as Nigeria and Ghana have already been placing orders for later in 2026. Europe, by contrast, has emerged from the closure on the losing side of the equation. While the EU exports specialised and high-value fertilizers, it remains structurally dependent on external supplies of nitrogen-based inputs. As a result, the EU has been more exposed to Gulf-related shocks – including gas shortages – than positioned to leverage them for greater influence.

Now that the Strait has reopened, restoring supply chains may take much longer than the signature of a diplomatic agreement. Confidence in shipping markets is recovering slowly, given residual and potential transit fees. More importantly, the reopening may come too late to save the 2026 planting season: fertilizer prices are likely to remain high in this phase, and African farmers have already made irreversible decisions on input use and planting.

The fertilizer crisis has intensified existing challenges by worsening food insecurity across Africa, expanding Russia's influence in a key export market, and exposing Europe's reliance on external inputs. While it may encourage greater intra-African trade and reduced import dependence, one thing is clear: fertilizers are as strategic as oil, with far-reaching impacts on livelihoods, food security, social stability, and security across the continent.

# After Hormuz: the chokepoints of Africa's energy transition

BY: VALERIA ZANINI

The deal signed by Washington and Tehran on 17 June has led to the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. Yet the arrangement remains fragile, and analysts warn that markets may take months to rebalance even if shipping resumes without further disruption. The conflict produced what the IEA described as the largest supply shock in the history of the global oil market. Africa absorbed it from a position of structural vulnerability, characterised by dependence on imported refined fuels, limited strategic reserves, macro-economic fragility and shrinking external finance.

Its impact has nevertheless been uneven. Hydrocarbon exporters - including Nigeria, Angola, Ghana and Algeria - as well as newer LNG producers such as Mozambique, Senegal, Mauritania and the Republic of the Congo may benefit from higher prices and stronger demand from Europe and Asia. Yet these windfalls also risk delaying economic diversification and fiscal reform, reinforcing the vulnerabilities the crisis exposed. For import-dependent economies, the disruption has underscored the importance of resilience and supply security. This comes as the global energy transition accelerates, with falling technology costs strengthening the economic case for electrification and renewable energy.

The key lesson may therefore be to reduce exposure to external shocks through investment in domestic renewables. Pakistan's rapid solar expansion, for example, contributed to a 40% decline in oil and gas imports between 2022 and 2024. Similar trends are emerging across Africa. Chinese solar panel exports to the continent rose by 48% in 2025, more than doubling in Egypt and increasing sixfold in Algeria. The Hormuz disruption coincided with a further acceleration: in the first quarter of 2026 alone, fifteen African countries imported more than \$400 million worth of solar equipment, compared with \$650 million during all of 2025, while Chinese panel exports to Africa increased by 120%.

Momentum is also building in electric mobility, with higher oil prices boosting demand for electric motorcycles and buses across East Africa. Ethiopia provides the clearest example.

After banning imports of internal combustion engine vehicles in 2024, its EV fleet grew from around 7,000 vehicles in 2023 to a projected 115,000 by the end of 2026. In May 2026, the government adopted the Ethiopia E-Mobility Strategy 2025–2030, linking fleet electrification, charging infrastructure and local manufacturing to the broader objective of reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels through its largely renewable power system. The principal constraint, however, remains finance. African countries added 11.3 GW of renewable capacity in 2025, up from 4.2 GW in 2024, yet still accounted for only 1.6% of global additions despite possessing around 60% of the world's best solar resources. Borrowing costs remain up to three times higher than in advanced economies, constraining investment.

The Hormuz shock also coincided with a sharp contraction in concessional finance. Official development assistance fell by 23.1% in 2025, while private climate finance remained concentrated in lower-risk markets. Of the nearly \$2 trillion mobilised globally in 2024, less than 2% reached least developed countries, around three quarters of which are in Africa. These constraints have renewed calls to reform Africa's financing architecture, reflected in the African Development Bank's New African Financial Architecture for Development, launched in May, which proposes measures including expanded guarantee platforms.

The Hormuz crisis has therefore acted less as a turning point than as a stress test. It exposed the fragility of Africa's energy systems while reinforcing the economic imperative of diversification. Whether this leads to lasting structural change will depend on aligning financing frameworks with the continent's broader development and industrialisation ambitions.

## Somaliland: a pivot of Israel's fight against Iran and Türkiye?

BY: CORRADO ČOK

While Hormuz risks to become an Iranian strait, Israel is shoring up its position around Bab El-Mandeb through Somaliland. Israel's engagement with Somalia's breakaway republic is taking off. On June 14-17, President Abdirahman Irro made his first official visit to the Jewish state, about six months since the two nations entered an agreement of mutual recognition which was condemned by the African Union and the League of Arab States. During his visit, President Irro inaugurated the first Somaliland embassy abroad in Jerusalem and met with PM Benjamin Netanyahu, with whom he signed a cooperation declaration spanning security, investment, technology and economic development. While President Irro reaps the low-hanging fruits of relations with Israel, no other country has shown propensity to recognise Somaliland now, including close partners as Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates.

Israel and Somaliland have already made strides in their relations, starting from security. Several reports indicate that Israel already deploys a small military-intelligence presence in the breakaway republic to support security capacity building and monitor its foes in the Gulf of Aden, chiefly Iran and Yemen's Houthis, but also Türkiye. Additionally, a small contingent of Somaliland special forces has recently returned home after undergoing advanced training in Israel. Despite strong speculation on the issue, Israel has not yet set up a military base in Somaliland and seems more interested in a less visible presence. Meanwhile, on the economic side, Israeli players have not announced any relevant investment in Somaliland so far, but development cooperation has progressed nonetheless through technical consultations and the opening of a chamber of commerce.

The implications of Israel-Somaliland relations for the region are multiple and multifaceted, especially in light of the Iran war. In the Red Sea, Israel and Iran have waged a shadow intelligence war targeting respective naval assets since at least 2019. Iran was striving to rebuild its strategic depth in the region even before the war it might

feel even more the urgency now to deter future US-Israeli attacks, after the Saudi oil terminal in Yanbu has profoundly boosted Red Sea's energy centrality. Meanwhile, Israel remains committed to eradicate all Iranian proxies and allies from its near abroad, including the Houthis. On June 8, the Houthi rebel group announced a new blockade to all Israeli vessels seeking to cross the Strait of Bab El-Mandeb increasing the risk of escalation. In fact, its interest in Hargeisa rests primarily in the latter's proximity to Bab El-Mandeb and Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen.

Türkiye is the other regional rival that Israel aims to keep at bay through Somaliland. After the recognition agreement, Ankara has deepened its security engagement with the government of Somalia. Hargeisa and Mogadishu currently compete for the control of Sool and Sanaag, with the latter strategically located on the Gulf of Aden, attracting Turkish interest in the local port of Las Qoray. Should the confrontation between Somaliland and pro-Somalia forces over Sanaag intensify, Israel and Türkiye might step up their support to their respective allies, possibly intensifying the conflict and entering a dangerous collision course, as seen in Syria. Last but not least, Somaliland's recognition of Israel has galvanized Somali jihadi groups, especially Al-Shabaab, which have openly threatened to target Hargeisa, possibly exploiting the divisions within the Isaaq clan ruling Somaliland. A recrudescence of jihadist attacks in northern Somalia would increase the risk for navigation in the Gulf of Aden and spread insecurity to neighbouring Djibouti and Ethiopia.

Overall, the war in Iran and Lebanon has largely kept Israel occupied on other priority fronts, but a US-Iran ceasefire could rapidly change the equation in the Red Sea. A recent poll showed that 92% of Israelis believe Iran has emerged as winner from the war, creating pressure on PM Netanyahu to claim a success. The agreement reached in early June makes no mention of Yemen or the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden, where Israel and Iran might resume low-key hostilities. Israel-Türkiye competition in northern Somalia might also heighten as otherfronts freeze. All these scenarios would be highly detrimental to a country, and a region, already fraught with conflict and external interference.

# Ebola's turning point: health, security and global cooperation

BY: CHEPKORIR SAMBU

On 14 May 2026, the Ministry of Public Health, Hygiene and Prevention in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), reported a resurgence of Ebola, specifically the Bundibugyo strain, emerging from Bunia in Ituri Province. More cases were subsequently flagged, a majority concentrated in the Eastern Congo regions of Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu, and one case in Kinshasa. Uganda has also recorded 20 cases of the virus in the capital, all imported from the DRC.

Internationally, France is the first European country to confirm an imported case in a French doctor also arriving from the DRC. More than 1,000 cases and about 279 deaths have so far been recorded, and no vaccine has so far been officially approved. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared the Bundibugyo virus disease (BVD) a public health emergency of international concern: the highest level of alert reserved for outbreaks with the risk of spreading globally and therefore requiring a coordinated international response.

WHO and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) have also classified the levels of risk for DRC as very high; Uganda and neighbouring countries as high; and the rest of the continent as low. The DRC and Uganda are coordinating their response to the outbreak, drawing from seasoned and prior experience. Yet, various factors complicate this latest outbreak, making it more challenging to contain the virus.

First, the epicentre of the outbreak is an active conflict zone. Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu host hundreds of non-state armed groups, including the M23 and the Allied Democratic Forces, in addition to government troops from the DRC, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda fighting them in different capacities. Coupled with the resulting displacement and poor infrastructure, insecurity and high mobility from displacement create difficulties in contact tracing and administering medical and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Secondly, the environment within IDP camps makes them highly susceptible to the transmis-

sion of the virus. Food insecurity in the region, already classified as acute by the IPC, further complicates treatment; there have been reports of some patients escaping quarantine in search of food. On the other hand, community mistrust around the virus itself and its treatment measures adds a further complication. Finally, border closures by neighbouring countries threaten to hinder the supply and delivery of essential goods.

At the macro-level, the DRC, Uganda, Africa CDC, and WHO have undertaken a coordinated approach, whose progress is so far promising, despite immense challenges. Further, Africa CDC and WHO have jointly formulated a six-month Continental Response Plan requiring \$1.4 billion in funding. In a 16 June AU High-Level Emergency Meeting on Ebola, an overall \$910 million was pledged to this fund, out of which \$80 million was collectively committed by African states. This meeting coincided with the G7 Summit, where states in attendance committed over \$1 billion and emphasised a coordinated international response.

On the other hand, the U.S. has announced the construction of an Ebola quarantine camp in Kenya to host Americans exposed to the virus in the DRC. This step, in collaboration with the Kenyan government, has faced opposition in Kenya and resulted in a court order halting the construction. Kenya does not directly border the DRC and has so far not reported any Ebola case.

As international response is shaping, this new outbreak comes with various implications. It worsens an already devastating humanitarian crisis. Further, border closures restrict movement and trade, upsetting particularly the supply of goods from Kenya and Tanzania to landlocked Uganda and DRC. Despite these restrictions, the spread of the virus to neighbouring South Sudan, Rwanda and Burundi, some of which are experiencing conflict, remains a possibility. Finally, sectors like tourism, including in Kenya, risk suffering losses.

Going forward, an actual ceasefire in Eastern DRC is crucial to facilitate medical assistance. Equally essential is international cooperation, especially in mobilising the funding needed to fight the virus. It is important that the international community take lessons from the COVID-19 experience and exercise vigilant cooperation.

# Brussels rings the alarm against Chinese-Moroccan EV Partnerships

**BY: FRANCESCO MERIANO**

The European Union is increasingly worried by the acceleration of Chinese investments in Morocco. The EU Commissioner for trade and economic security, Maroš Šefčovič, voiced fears that Chinese investments in Morocco may work as a backdoor for Chinese carmakers to circumvent European anti-dumping tariffs and announced investigations on Chinese-Moroccan EV partnerships, a primary focus of Rabat-Beijing cooperation. Morocco, which enjoys virtually zero tariffs thanks to a free trade agreement with the Union, has become an ideal location for assembling factories, where minimally processed components are turned into cars ready for export to the EU market). In the last few years, China invested up to 10 billion dollars in the Moroccan electric vehicle sector, including batteries and components.

Morocco, which already hosts factories run by Stellantis and Renault, is Africa's chief carmaker, with South Africa as its only competitor. Being virtually devoid of fossil resources, it has already developed a robust clean energy pipeline, aiming to cover 52% of its energy mix through renewables by 2030. Morocco can also count on a skilled and still relatively cheap workforce that other African countries still struggle to grow. These are optimal conditions for Chinese EV champions as they help them comply with EU carbon regulations, such as the Carbon-Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which imposes tariffs on extra-EU imports based on the product's carbon footprint. Last year, Hailang, Shinzoom and BTR New Materials Group announced plans to build three components' factories in Tangiers, while CNGR Advanced Materials is building a fourth at Jorf Lasfar, south of Casablanca. Gotion High Power is also building an EV gigafactory in Kenitra, where Stellantis operates its key Moroccan hub. In 2023, Morocco officially became the largest automotive exporter to the EU. These investments are set to expand this trend further.

A Moroccan backdoor to Europe would further undermine the trade barriers devised by Brussels to stem Chinese overproduction. Chinese EV imports to Europe have grown by 26% between 2024 and 2025, widening the trade deficit in Beijing's favour. Last March, the EU Industrial

Acceleration Act introduced further limits for European procurement and strengthened origins and assembly requirements for imported products. However, the EV battle is exposing fault lines across Europe: France spearheads the drive for economic protectionism, while Germany – heart of the European automotive industry – remains largely dependent on imported Chinese components and advocates for a softer approach. Hence, fears that the China-Morocco industrial partnership accelerates the demise of the car industry in Europe grow.

# Senegal: Crisis, Institutional restructuring and the beginning of a long electoral campaign

**BY: LUCIANO POLLICHIENI**

In a region characterised by unpredictability and abrupt shifts, the Senegalese institutional crisis was long-awaited. It was just a matter of time before the differences between President Diomaye Faye and his prime minister (and mentor) Ousmane Sonko exploded. Since the legislature's start, the internal crisis within Dakar's ruling PASTEF party had highlighted the difficult political coexistence between Diomaye's and Sonko's visions. On one side, Faye seeks to maintain—albeit recalibrated—pragmatic relations with traditional partners, including France and the West; on the other, Sonko advocates for a decisive pivot toward new allies such as the BRICS, China, and Russia. The key driver of this political fallout is the country's spiraling debt crisis, which is pressuring on the government to cut on spending.

It's one of the most recurring dilemmas in African politics: when anti-system parties gain power, they often struggle to deliver what they promised and, above all, to remain united while in power, especially when confronted with financial hurdles. In the case of Senegal, this incompatibility started to affect the government's daily work, as clearly surfaced over the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dossier. The president favoured continuing negotiations to secure a credit line supporting Dakar through its debt crisis, while the prime minister was determined to break with the Fund and seek alternative financiers. Following months of contradictory announcements, internal divisions, and political stalemates, the definitive rupture occurred: the president formally revoked Sonko's mandate. However, Sonko's dismissal from the executive branch has merely shifted the political battlefield. In a rapid institutional counter-manoeuve, Sonko was subsequently elected President of the Parliament (National Assembly) and formally reconfirmed as the leader of the PASTEF party. This dual victory consolidates his grip on the legislative branch and his grassroots political base, transforming the national political landscape into an even more difficult 'cohabitation' between the Presidency and the Parliament.

What to expect now for the future of the country that was the fastest-growing in Western Africa until three years ago? Faye is now effectively isolated from the parliamentary majority.

To bypass potential legislative obstructionism led by Sonko, the president will likely be forced to govern via executive decrees. This precarious dynamic could last until Faye has the constitutional window to dissolve the parliament and call for new elections. From his new position as President of the Parliament and reconfirmed leader of PASTEF, Sonko is actively organizing his presidential campaign. Having secured his eligibility to run via a recently passed parliamentary law, he is framing his platform around anti-establishment, anti-IMF rhetoric, galvanizing the youth and students.

The timing of this crisis is highly detrimental. The immediate effect is a surge in financial uncertainty. International investors and institutions question the state's capacity to implement the structural reforms required by the IMF to underwrite the public debt financing program. The political climate remains volatile. Following Sonko's initial dismissal from the government, numerous PASTEF supporters—including university students already mobilized against the executive's recent cuts to scholarships—took to the streets, signalling that the electoral campaign will be contested both in the halls of power and in the streets. Political and financial instability are likely to keep investors away from the country, hindering growth and job creation perspectives. Youth protests over harsh economic conditions could soon come back to the fore.

As investors and observers hold their breath, West Africa's most resilient democracy is bracing for a protracted and highly tense electoral season and economic cycle.

# PHOTO GALLERY



Closing ceremony of the cybersecurity training for 11 African countries in Rome led by Med-Or Italian Foundation, with experts from Leonardo's Cyber Academy.



Executive Director, Umberto Tavolato, visiting the headquarters of Djibouti Telecom to discuss submarine cable security with a Med-Or Africa team.



Med-Or Africa Executive Director, Umberto Tavolato, with Dr Sixtus Chileshe Mulenga, CEO of Musamu Resources, a leading Zambian mining company, and representatives from Zambian and EU authorities at a business forum organised by the Italian government and Africa Finance Corporation (AFC) in Rome.-



A Med-Or Africa team conducted a visit to Kilifi, Kenya, to inspect rescue boats and safety at sea procedures in preparation for a blue economy project.



Executive Director, Umberto Tavolato, leads a Med-Or Africa team during a visit to the datacenter at a submarine cable landing station in Djibouti.

## PHOTO GALLERY

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*Meeting at Cassa Depositi e Prestiti with Zambian representative of mining sectors together with Piano Mattei for Africa team, European Commission DG INTPA, and Med-Or Africa.*



*Med-Or Africa's adviser Corrado Čok and team visiting the 11th Our Ocean Conference in Mombasa, the first of such summits held in Africa.*

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