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The Continent

Glencore guilty of grand corruption in Africa

But the West collects the fines

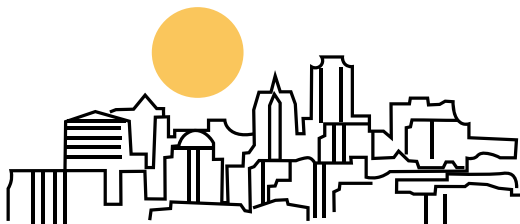
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Cover: Glencore is one of the world's biggest traders of commodities like oil and coal (as pictured above at the company's Goedgedvonden mine in South Africa). It is fabulously profitable, with over \$3-billion already banked by the Swiss and British company this year. Those profits, by its own admission, are thanks to deals around the world that have been lubricated with bribes. The company is now paying over a billion dollars in fines to western regulators. But none of that fine money is going to the African countries where the crimes were committed (p18).



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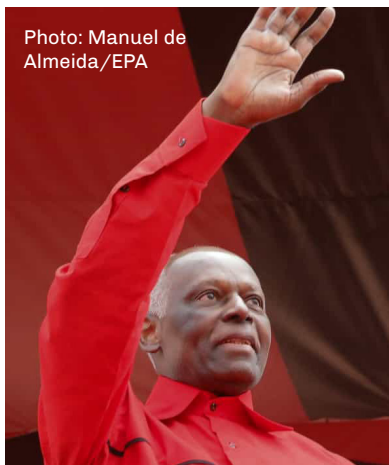
FOOTBALL**Club vs country – here we go again**

Citing weather concerns, the Confederation of African Football has announced that the next edition of the Africa Cup of Nations, which will be hosted by Côte d'Ivoire, will take place in January and February of 2024. That falls in the middle of the European club season, splitting star players' loyalty between country and club. It was originally scheduled for June and July next year, but Sodexam, the Ivorian meteorological agency, has predicted that there will be heavy rainfall next June in the parts of the country where the stadiums are situated.

TECHNOLOGY**Kenya sends unicorn to the glue factory**

Last year, Nigerian payments company Flutterwave achieved “unicorn” status – a market valuation of more than \$1-billion. It did so faster than any other African company. But now Kenyan regulators have frozen the company's 62 Kenyan bank accounts, containing \$52.5-million, saying that it has reason to believe that these accounts are being used for fraud and money laundering. The company has strongly denied these allegations, saying that it has been the victim of a “disinformation campaign”.

Photo: Manuel de Almeida/EPA

**ANGOLA****Past president passes on**

José Eduardo dos Santos, the former president of Angola, died on Friday in Spain. He was 79. Dos Santos ruled Angola from 1979 to 2017. Under Dos Santos, the country became Africa's second-largest oil producer, but this failed to translate into meaningful development for the majority of the population. Meanwhile, the president and his family amassed enormous wealth, much of it corruptly earned. One of his daughters, Welwitschia dos Santos, has requested that an autopsy be performed on the body to rule out foul play. Dos Santos was the second former world leader to die on Friday, after ex-Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated earlier in the day.



Photo: Leon Neal/WPA Pool/Getty Images

UNITED KINGDOM

Pathological liar booted from power

Boris Johnson, the prime minister of the United Kingdom, announced that he is stepping down from office following a revolt within his Conservative Party. He indicated that he will remain in power until a new leader is chosen by the party, which might only be in September. Johnson, whose tenure was characterised by relentless scandal, lied repeatedly in office – most recently telling Parliament that he knew nothing about sexual harassment allegations made against a close ally, when in fact he was fully aware. He was also criticised for seeking to roll back civil liberties, and is implicated in multiple corruption allegations.

SIERRA LEONE

Is this your first time fixing a match?

The Sierra Leone Football Association has launched an investigation after two matches in the country's second division ended with peculiar score lines. Kahunla Rangers defeated Lumbebu United 95-0 and Gulf FC beat Koquima Lebanon 91-1. Even more peculiar is that the score lines stood at 2-0 and 7-1 respectively at half-time. The association suspects the players of (embarrassingly obvious) match-fixing and its president, Thomas Daddy Brima, said that those found guilty will be handed over to the country's anti-corruption commission.

NIGERIA

Convicts on the run

More than 900 prisoners escaped a prison in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, on Tuesday night, following an attack allegedly by Islamist militants. At least 300 of the escapees have since either turned themselves in to police or were recaptured. "Very determined rebels attacked the Kuje maximum prison in Abuja on Tuesday night with very high-grade explosives, killing one guard on duty," said secretary of Nigeria's ministry of the interior, Shuaib Belgore. According to *The Cable* newspaper, more than 4,300 inmates have escaped from prison since 2017.

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ZAMBIA**The bucks start here**

Progress Zulu, the manager of foreign reserves at Zambia's central bank, says that the country's reserves now stand at \$3-billion. This is the highest since 2014. At their lowest, the reserves were just \$1.2-billion in 2020. That year, Zambia defaulted on its sovereign debt. In mid-June, the country met its creditors to make a case for debt restructuring, a condition set by the IMF to receive a \$1.4-billion bailout.

SRI LANKA**Insane inflation prompts petrol SOS to Vladimir Putin**

Sri Lanka, which declared itself bankrupt this week, has asked Russia's President Vladimir Putin for a fuel credit line. The country is buckling under a record rise in food prices (80%) and monetary inflation (54.6%). The crisis was triggered by a foreign exchange shortage that means the country cannot import essentials like fuel. This week the state halted the sale of fuel to non-essential vehicles and asked citizens to work from home. The country imports \$3-billion more in goods than it exports, which dried up its forex reserves leaving it unable to repay debt. Earlier restrictions on import of fertilisers caused crop failure and the current food price crisis.

MOZAMBIQUE**The rhinos are back**

Forty years after they were wiped out in the country, a conservation group, Peace Parks Foundation, plans to bring 40 black and white rhinos into Mozambique. Some of the endangered animals were trucked in this week from South Africa in what was the longest-ever rhino road trip. Mozambique's wildlife population was severely reduced by the country's 15-year civil war that ended in 1992 and has continued to be threatened by poaching. Peace Parks Foundation has in recent years imported other types of animals to populate the country's 400,000-hectare Zinave National Park.



Photo: Peace Parks Foundation

Uganda

Kiswahili is having a moment

**Do say: Hongera!
Don't say: Hakuna matata**

On 7 July 1954, Julius Nyerere – then a young opposition firebrand – founded the Tanganyika African National Union. Immediately afterwards, he made Kiswahili the party's official language, describing it as one of the party's main weapons against colonialism.

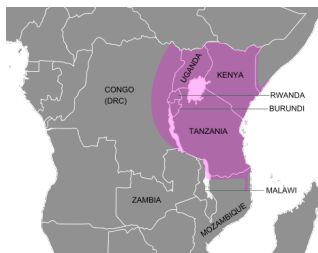
The party went on to win independence, and continues to rule Tanzania today, albeit under a different name. Tanzanians are still speaking Kiswahili. Astonishingly, Even now, Tanzania is one of just two African countries that uses an indigenous African language as the country's official mode of communication, according to Professor John Mugane, who studies African languages at Harvard University. The other is Ethiopia, with Amharic.

Kiswahili is one of the world's 10 most popular languages, with an estimated 200-million speakers spread across 15 African countries (although, unusually for such a popular language, most of these speak it as a second language). This year,

its enormous influence is being celebrated for the first time by the United Nations. It has designated 7 July – or saba saba (seven seven) – as World Kiswahili Language Day, in Nyerere's honour.

And its influence is growing. This week, Uganda's cabinet approved the adoption of Kiswahili as the second national official language, after English. It will be taught in schools, with the intention of giving every Ugandan child a working knowledge of the language.

This decision is not without controversy. In Uganda, Kiswahili was historically a tool of oppression rather than resistance – it is widely associated with the brutal dictatorship of Idi Amin, whose soldiers communicated in the language. And the country's most spoken indigenous language is Luganda, leading critics to ask why it was not given official recognition instead. ■



Language barriers: Kiswahili's geographical spread is concentrated in the countries of East Africa

Côte d'Ivoire

Abidjan to Jo'burg, direct

Following South African Airways' collapse, other carriers are now bridging the Francophone divide

Kanya Kali in Johannesburg

At the end of June, a plane in Air Côte d'Ivoire's distinctive green and orange livery took off from Abidjan and headed south. Eight hours later it landed at Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport, where it was greeted by senior government officials and a water salute – the traditional welcome for an inaugural flight.

This was the Ivorian national carrier's first direct flight between the two cities, and the launch of its first regular route outside of west and central Africa. Flights will depart four times per week, with a short stopover in Kinshasa.

The flight is significant because it adds another direct flight connecting South Africa, the continent's most industrialised economy, with Francophone Africa. Currently, the only other direct connection is between Johannesburg and Kinshasa, and is run by South African

Touchdown: The inaugural flight descends into Johannesburg.
Photo: Kanya Kali



Airways – the national carrier which went bankrupt in 2019, and now operates a much reduced route network.

Previously, to get to Abidjan required travelling through another African air hub, such as Addis Ababa, or even having to leave the continent entirely, flying via Paris or Dubai. ■

DRC

Photo: Al-hadji
Kudra Maliro/
The Continent



‘De-escalation’ peace deal greeted with scepticism

The Luanda Agreement is supposed to de-escalate tensions in the eastern DRC – but few in the conflict-torn region believe it will make any real difference.

Al-hadji Kudra Maliro in Beni

After several months of conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, President Felix Tshisekedi met with his Rwandan counterpart, Paul Kagame, in Luanda this week. In a deal brokered by Angolan president João Lourenço, the two presidents agreed to a “de-escalation process”. Lourenço later described it as a “ceasefire”.

The conflict has pitted the M23, a rebel group, against the Congolese army. M23 has occupied several major urban centres in the region. The Congolese government, and many international observers, have claimed that M23 is directly supported by Rwanda. The Rwandan government denies this allegation.

But to residents of the region, including more than 117,000 people who have been displaced since mid-May, the deal struck

in Luanda seems far away from their current reality – and unlikely to make any difference on the ground. Even as the three presidents were shaking hands, the fighting continued.

“For us, it is unacceptable to see our president negotiate once again with Rwanda,” said Ghislain Muhiwa, a Goma resident and member of Lutte Pour Le Changement, a civil society movement. “The ideal for us Congolese is to provide our army with sufficient means to hunt down and end once and for all with the M23 rebels.”

The spokesperson for M23 was equally dismissive. Major Willy Ngoma told *The Continent* in a telephone interview that the Luanda agreement does not bind the rebel group, and he encouraged the Congolese government to negotiate with them directly. “We are not Rwandans or Angolans. We are Congolese, having duly signed agreements with the government. It is the M23 and the Congolese government that can sign the ceasefire.”

At the same time, Ngoma confirmed that M23 had resumed fighting with the Congolese army in Kanyabusoro in the north-east of the country, as of Wednesday at 7am.

In Bunagana, a town on the border with Uganda that is occupied by M23, the head of the local civil society association said that the Luanda deal was unlikely to change anything.

“I don’t believe that the M23 will listen to this request because they have been here for a long time and they continue to fight against the Congolese army,” said Innocent Ndagije. “In my opinion,



Trilateralising: Presidents Paul Kagame (Rwanda), João Lourenço (Angola) and Felix Tshisekedi (DRC). Photo: Jorge Nsimba/AFP

this Luanda agreement is purely political and the population will not benefit from that... These games of hide and seek must end quickly between the Congolese government, the M23 and Rwanda.”

Bunagana has been under M23 control since 13 June. The once-bustling border town is a shadow of its former self, with many residents having fled into Uganda. The Congolese government has prevented any goods from entering the town, leaving the remaining residents entirely dependent on petty trade across the border.

The rising tensions in the eastern DRC have raised fears of a wider conflict that could draw in other countries. There is already a strong United Nations peacekeeping mission in the area, including troops from South Africa, Morocco, Malawi and Tanzania. The East African Community, meanwhile – which counts both the DRC and Rwanda among its members – has mooted the deployment of a stabilisation force to the region. ■

Sierra Leone

New money, old problems

Critics argue that the country's shiny new banknotes are only a cosmetic solution to Sierra Leone's dire economic crisis

Abdul Brima in Freetown

Sierra Leone, like almost everywhere else in the world, is suffering from the effects of the global cost-of-living crisis. Fuel is more expensive, food is more expensive, and the economy is contracting thanks to the pandemic.

This has put President Julius Maada Bio under immense public pressure to come up with a solution. The World Bank has told the government its best option is to expand agricultural productivity. Instead, the government chose a different path with its own flagship economic policy.

Last Friday, the central bank released the first “new leone” bank notes, unveiling shiny new designs and stripping three zeroes off the currency – memorably described by the central bank governor as “zeroes of shame”. The old 20,000 leone



Zeroing in: One new leone is worth 1,000 of Sierra Leone's old currency.

Photo: Abdul Brima/*The Continent*

note (worth about 15 US cents) will be replaced by the new 20 leone note (about \$1.50), for example, and citizens have 45 days to make the swap.

“My fellow citizens, this is your money, the legal tender meant to be used by all Sierra Leoneans. Let us demonstrate a distinguished and heightened sense of responsibility in handling this new currency,” President Bio said at the launch.

The new notes are intended to curb inflation – running at 24.87% year-on-year as of May – and make the currency easier for citizens to handle. Previously, shoppers sometimes took bags of banknotes to pay for groceries.

**No free rides: A busy
minibus station in Freetown,
Sierra Leone.** Photo: Abdul
Brima/*The Continent*



Paper doesn't solve inflation

Not everyone is convinced the new notes will make a meaningful difference. Just days after the launch, the capital Freetown woke up to a stay-home strike by commercial taxi drivers and a protest by women's groups who said that enough is enough.

The whole city and parts of the country were brought to a standstill, with shops closed and commuters stranded. Protesters described the economic situation as unbearable, and demanded that the government take action.

Police responded by summoning opposition leader Femi Claudius Cole for questioning, accusing her of inciting the protests. She was subsequently released after days in detention.

Santos Koroma, a taxi driver in Freetown, joined the strike. "Fuel prices are so high we struggle to survive. I have not seen anything like this in 10 years of

driving," he tells *The Continent*.

In March, Koroma and his fellow drivers were paying 15,000 leones per litre of fuel. Today they are paying 22,000 leones (or 22 new leones, about \$1.68).

"We spend so much money buying fuel that we return home to our families emptyhanded," Koroma laments. "I have a wife and two children. Now I really struggle to provide for my family because of this fuel situation."

'Difficult times'

The skyrocketing prices of food, fuel and other consumer items is not a uniquely Sierra Leonean problem – and nor is the angry response.

In recent weeks, there have been protests across Africa (in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Libya, Mozambique, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe) and the world (including in Argentina,

Belgium, Chile, Cyprus, Ecuador, Greece, Indonesia, Ireland, Iran, Israel, Palestine, Pakistan, Peru, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom).

The cost-of-living crisis is being driven by sluggish post-pandemic economic growth and compounded by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has directly affected the prices of grain and oil.

But that does not mean that Sierra Leone's government should be given a free pass, argue civil society groups. Alphonso Gbani, head of the Human Rights Defenders Network of Sierra Leone, says that reckless and unreasonable government expenditure has exacerbated the economic shock – and it needs to find a solution beyond a redesigned currency.

“While the government is crying foul of international price control and that they don't have what they will export to generate foreign currency, we believe that the government equally has a responsibility to respond to the needs of

the citizens even though things may be challenging,” Gbani says.

One of these responses should be tax breaks for the poor, he argues.

For his part, President Bio has accused private sector players of extorting money from poor people by creating artificial scarcities, but has also acknowledged that “these are difficult times”.

Mariama Bangura knows just how difficult these times are. She displays her wares on a makeshift stall on a busy road overlooking Lumley roundabout in Freetown. She sells carrots, apples, cabbages, onions and other vegetables. Not long ago, Bangura could make enough profit from the sale of her fruit to feed her family of 10, but now she barely makes enough to survive. “Now, I cannot even raise enough money to pay for my child's graduation,” she says.

And when there is no money coming in, it doesn't really matter whether the bank notes are old or new. ■



Red flag: Protests in Ghana against the soaring cost of living. Sierra Leone has reworked its currency to make runaway inflation more manageable. Photo: AFP

Mozambique

The collapse of cotton may unravel the fragile social fabric of Cabo Delgado

First came the insurgency. Then the humanitarian crisis. Now the remaining residents of Cabo Delgado are facing economic ruin.

Luis Nhachote

The insurgency in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province could be entering into a new, dangerous spiral, as cotton farming – a major source of income for ordinary people across the province – finds itself at risk, with thousands of farmers facing the prospect of being unable to sell their harvests.

The cotton business in Cabo Delgado has been precarious for some time already. British company Plexus Cotton, which holds the biggest concessions in the province, needed a \$2-million

government bail-out in 2020 to allow it to pay farmers and its striking workers. But now the company says the insurgency in the region, inspired by fundamentalist Islam as well as by poverty and inequality, is making conditions too dangerous to work, and banks will no longer lend to businesses in the province.

“We have a farming base in Cabo Delgado of about 165,000 farmers, all of whom have about seven dependants,” said Nick Earlam, Plexus’ chief executive, at a meeting in London late in June. Pointing out that the company services about 900 villages in the province, he lamented that banks in Maputo, Mozambique’s capital at the opposite end of the country, do not want “to fund agriculture in Cabo Delgado, or the security capability to protect the crop.”

“In a few days we are going to close down,” Earlam warned.

A former agricultural banker in Mozambique confirmed to *The Continent* that, as far as he was aware, “Mozambican banks do not provide any loans or overdraft to companies in Cabo Delgado.”

Three of the areas where Plexus operates, Ancuabe, Meluco and Chiure, have seen “frightful insurgent attacks,” Earlam said. “Our staff are reluctant to go out without proper security” he said, adding that their intelligence suggested that the problem will continue to get worse. But if Plexus can’t buy this year’s



**Displaced:
Families flee
their homes in
Cabo Delgado.**
Photo: Alfredo
Zuniga/AFP

harvest, that will create “50,000 angry farmers and their families to add to the discontent”.

‘All that’s left is Al Shabab’

In some quarters, Earlam’s statement has been seen as an attempt to hold the government hostage.

“It smells of blackmail,” wrote Marcelo Mosse, editor of the important online news site *Carta de Moçambique*. The English-language service of state news agency AIM described Earlam’s comments as “less than honest”, pointing out that most of the cotton in Cabo Delgado is in the province’s southern districts, which have been the least affected by Islamist militants. “Plexus is in serious financial difficulties, which have nothing to do with security,” AIM wrote.

Wherever the blame lies, farmers in the province are worried. Artimiza Fernando, 39, has always farmed the land, selling the cotton she grew as part of an association in Balama, one of Cabo Delgado’s southern districts. “It was worth getting paid late,

but now that they are going, as I heard, will they pay what they still owe us?” she asked. “What will become of our children? The government has to help us otherwise we will starve to death.”

While farmers will still have their subsistence crops to live off, the loss of income from Plexus might be felt even more keenly in other parts of the provincial economy.

“The small shop owners that sprang up in all the production areas will not have a market,” said one big farm owner in Mozambique. “Wholesalers in town will lose substantial part of their sales. We already see a drastic decline in buying power all over the north.”

Badru Selemangy, 45, is also desperate at the news of the company’s departure. “Cabo Delgado is cursed,” he said. Plexus might pay what it owes, even after months of delays, but if the company leaves, he said, “all that’s left is for Al Shabab to come and cut our necks”. Or they might be compelled to join the insurgency – which could now spiral further out of control. ■

Enough with the African proverbs

Our wisdom needs to be properly credited

Kanya Kali

There's no denying that good proverbs can be incredibly insightful and unifying. And, let's be honest, this continent produces some pretty great ones. They are thought-provoking and a source of collective African pride. Proverbs offer wisdom, motivation and often-times hope in situations and times when these are needed most.

Too often, however, this wisdom is lumped under the generic label of "African proverbs". But what, exactly, is an African proverb? This lazy collective referencing does not credit or respect Africans for their intellectual property, or make any effort to distinguish between our myriad cultures and languages. The work of many African writers and intellectuals has been dumped into the "African proverb" hole – and many of these so-called proverbs are not nearly as ancient as they are portrayed.

Take this one: "In Africa, when an old man dies, a library burns down." All over the internet, this dictum is simply referenced as an African proverb. In fact, it is a quote from Amadou Hampâté

Bâ (1901-1991), a Malian writer and ethnologist. The quote is taken from a speech in 1960, when Hampâté Bâ was the head of Mali's delegation to the Unesco General Conference.

By failing to credit Hampâté Bâ, we are erasing his contribution, and stripping it of honour and dignity. It is an awful injustice to incredible African minds to have their work not fairly recognised.

This tendency towards keeping Africans nameless persists today: perhaps as a form of passive aggression, or the result of an automatic pattern of behaviour. Just a few days ago, the *New York Post* published an article about social media star Khaby Lame with the headline "Laid-off factory worker unseats Charli D'Amelio as top TikTok star with 142.8M fans". Only the white American gets a name.

This tendency towards keeping Africans nameless persists today: perhaps as a form of passive aggression, or the result of an automatic pattern of behaviour.

Names exist as a marker of individuality; they transform strangeness into familiarity and dignify our individual autonomy. It is a form of love and respect that everyone who has earned it deserves. So, enough with the "African proverbs" already – let's give credit where credit is due. ■

Kanya Kali is a South African vlogger based in Abidjan

How old is too old to lead?

Paul Biya of Cameroon is 89 years old. Namibia's Hage Geingob and Côte d'Ivoire's Alassane Ouattara are 80. Equatorial Guinea, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana, and Uganda all have presidents pushing 80. (As does the United States, let's not forget.)

If the majority ruled (doesn't it?), none of these men would be in office.

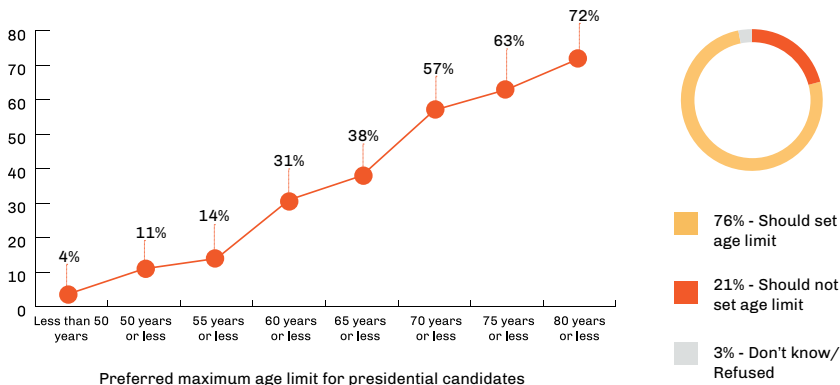
Across 34 African countries that Afrobarometer surveyed in 2019/2021, fully three quarters (76%) of citizens say their country should set a maximum age limit for presidential candidates. (Eswatini is the only country where the vote is close: 50% to 49% in favour of an upper age

limit.) A majority (57%) say a presidential candidate shouldn't be more than 70 years old. Only 28% want someone over age 80 to stand for president.

And yet ... In Uganda, 64% would set the maximum age at 75 or below; only 36% would allow a 76-year-old to stand for office – as Yoweri Museveni did last year, successfully, after making sure that existing constitutional age and term limits had been removed.

At the other extreme, three quarters (74%) of Africans would set a minimum age limit; only 32% would permit presidential candidates who hadn't yet celebrated the big 4-0.

Views on maximum age limit for presidential candidates | 34 African countries | 2019/2021



Source: Afrobarometer, a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.



Pay to play:
Glencore's head
office, Switzerland.
Photo: Glencore

African governments are silent after one of their biggest business partners pleaded guilty to grand corruption

Glencore, the Swiss mining, energy and commodity trading giant, pleaded guilty in the US and UK to grand corruption across several African countries. But on the continent, little has been done to investigate the company, or the local officials involved.

Lydia Namubiru, Assad Mugenyi in Kampala, Pelumi Salako in Lagos and Clifford Tankeng in Yaounde

For crimes that mostly happened in Africa, Glencore will pay the United States, Great Britain, Brazil and possibly Sweden, \$1.1 billion. It's a fine the company can easily afford, given that it expects to make a record \$3.2 billion in the first half of 2022 alone. Those most affected – Africans – have little hope for reparations, or for consequences for their own officials who were complicit. Even if some regulators are starting to investigate the corrupt practices.

Glencore buys and sells commodities, like oil. It has specialised in doing this with any country, regardless of its politics, and is enormously profitable as a result.

Before a US court in late May and a British court in late June, Glencore pleaded guilty to bribery of over \$100-million in the DRC, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria and South Sudan. It also pleaded guilty on charges of market manipulation in the US and additional bribery offences in Brazil and Venezuela.

In the month since the initial bombshell plea, most African governments whose officials were pointed at are silent. In Cameroon and South Africa though, investigations have started.

The truth started to emerge when a former Glencore senior trader in charge of West Africa, Anthony Stimler, turned into a witness for the prosecution in the US. He threw light on a bribery scheme that



Ship stain: Glencore got improper oil access in Nigeria. Photo: Glencore

allowed the company to illicitly make a profit of \$124-million by getting improper advantages in access to Nigeria's crude oil. The company is one of the world's biggest marketers of crude oil. Stimler said Glencore traders often pulled the bribery off by making unofficial "advance payments" on the oil cargoes it bought. One of those "advances" was a \$300,000 contribution to the re-election campaign of a Nigerian official, earlier reported to be former petroleum minister Diezani Alison-Madueke. Nigeria dropped Glencore from its list of oil trading partners in May 2021 and in absentia charged Alison-Madueke, who now lives abroad.

But the US case implicates many other officials, including those at the Pipelines Products Marketing Company who once asked for \$90,000 for "newspapers" – one



CU soon: Glencore copper operations in Katanga. Photo: Glencore

of many code words the conspirators used for bribes. Last week *The Continent* contacted the country's anti-graft body to ask if there would be investigations into others pointed to in the case

There was no response.

Those implicated include officials at the Pipelines Products Marketing Company who would ask for \$90,000 for “newspapers” – one of many code words the conspirators used for bribes.

In the DRC, the company owns two copper and cobalt mines: Katanga and Mutanda. In its guilty plea, Glencore admitted to making payments of \$27.5-million that its officials knew would in part be used to bribe authorities. In one example, \$500,000 was paid to a judge to make a \$16-million lawsuit against

Glencore go away.

DRC officials have said that they want some of the \$1.1 billion fine by the US court to go to their country, for the damage this corrupt conduct did to it. But they have made no indication that they will independently investigate the crimes. One example of the damage is DRC's 2009 loss of \$445-million when notorious Israeli billionaire Dan Gertler negotiated for Glencore to get the right of entry into the Katanga mine business for \$140-million, even though the price had earlier been officially set at \$585-million.

In Cameroon, Glencore admitted to paying nearly \$10.9-million in bribes to officials in both the national oil company, SNH (Societe Nationale des Hydrocarbures) and the national refinery company, SONARA (Societe Nationale de Raffinage). The company holds a stake in Cameroon's Bolongo oil block and is a major buyer of the country's crude oil.

This week, the country's anti-



Ore-able: Glencore's Magareng chrome mine in South Africa. Photo: Glencore

corruption unit told a local lawyer who petitioned it weeks ago, that it had opened an investigation.

Glencore officials admitted that between 2007 and 2010 they paid bribes of \$4-million in Côte d'Ivoire, where it buys crude oil. It made over \$30-million in profits on the deals enabled by that corruption. The bribes in Equatorial Guinea and South Sudan were also for the company to get preferential access to those countries' crude oil. Officials in all three countries have shown no indication that they will take any action against Glencore or investigate who received the bribes on their end.

In South Africa, where the company runs 12 mines and three coal energy plants, the state has also said it will launch an investigation.

Meanwhile in Uganda, Glencore is still in the running to take over the country's

largest copper mine in Kilembe. Bwesigye Don Binyina, the Executive Director of the thinktank Africa Centre for Energy and Mineral Policy, compared inviting Glencore to participate in Uganda's mineral sector to "mixing bleach and ammonia", given that the country has "consistently fallen short of the principles of good governance" and Glencore is "a self-confessed bribery agent."

Irene Batebe, the top accounting officer at the country's energy and mineral development ministry dismissed such concerns, saying: "As part of the selection process, due diligence will be done on the companies and those found to be non-compliant based on a set criteria will be eliminated."

For its part, Glencore says it has a new CEO and has gone through a process of reformation. It declined to respond to specific questions from *The Continent*. ■

Hoop dreams and family rise above red tape

Wilfred Okiche

The journey of Giannis Antetokounmpo from undocumented status in Greece to his reign as one of the most decorated players in basketball has, by virtue of its contours, been screaming for a Disney adaptation: underdog characters, unwavering family support, grass to grace arc, serendipity, perseverance. And don't forget the unbeatable destiny-altering role of the American Dream.

Giannis may be the entry point into *Rise*, the wholesome biopic directed by Akin Omotoso but the film is a triumphant celebration of his family, the first one to ever produce three NBA champions. *Rise* opens with young couple Charles and Veronica making a painful sacrifice and then enduring a difficult journey from Nigeria to Turkey. They eventually settle in Greece, unwittingly placing three of their kids – Thanasis, Giannis and Kostas – on the path to basketball greatness. The film eloquently documents the family's struggles, before climaxing with the 2013 NBA Draft where Giannis was picked to join the Milwaukee Bucks.

The story may be familiar, but Omotoso approaches it with sincerity and conviction, marshalling an appealing



onscreen team – including new entrants Uche and Ral Agada, who play Giannis and his brother Thanasis. Dayo Okeniyi, Yetide Badaki and Lala Akindoju round out an international cast composed mostly of actors with some Nigerian origin.

Omotoso is able to mould Arash Amel's conventional sports-drama screenplay into an authentic and colourful depiction of the Nigerian immigrant story. No stranger to such stories, Omotoso has lived in South Africa since 1992 and in his earlier works such as *Man on Ground* and *Vaya*, has explored different facets of the migrant's journey. Because of his grip on the material and familiarity with the themes, *Rise* retains the intimacy of a modest Nigerian film even when it must deliver on the spectacle that earns it a place in the Disney pantheon.

Keep the tissues handy. ■

Rise is streaming on Disney+



Photo: Yasuyoshi Chibaya/AFP

Kisumu City is a place of many wonders

**The home of the Luo has
a vast commercial and
political history – and
plenty for visitors to see**

Barack Oduor

Perched on the shores of Lake Victoria, Africa's largest lake by area, Kisumu is Kenya's third-largest city after Nairobi and Mombasa, with a population of about 400,000 people.

Known as Port Florence during colonial times, the modern city was founded in 1901 as the main inland terminal of the Uganda Railway. The word Kisumu comes from the Luo

word Kisuma, meaning a place of barter trade. Culturally, Kisumu serves as the capital of the Luo-speaking people.

Kisumu is also a political hub. Political leaders from the region – such as Kenya's first vice-president, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, and his son Raila Odinga, who is running for president again this year – have made the city a bastion of opposition politics. The current governor, Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, is one of Odinga's key allies – as well as being the father of Hollywood actress Lupita Nyong'o.

Attractions to the lakeside city include Dunga Beach and Wetland, Kibuye Market, Kisumu Museum, the Impala Sanctuary, Hippo Point and the nearby Kit Mikaye rocks.

The Dunga Beach and Wetland is known for its unique eco-cultural attractions due to its biodiversity and



Photo: Visit Kisumu

cultural rich and diverse papyrus wetland ecosystem.

Hippo Point is a 240-hectare viewing area on Lake Victoria. It is an incredible viewing point for the lake and its hippos especially during sunset. It also boasts an unobstructed view of the lake thanks to its raised topography. Hippo Point is located near the villages of Dunga, just a few kilometres southwest of the city, where one can fish and camp.

Kit-Mikayi is an impressive boulder with three other large rocks stacked upon it, located off Kisumu Bondo Road towards Bondo Town in Siaya County. Kit-Mikayi means "First Wife's Rocks" in Dholuo, a Luo language. It is a weeping rock; myth has it that Mikayi (literally, "the first wife") went up the hill to the stones when her husband took a second wife, and has been weeping ever since.

The city's signature cuisine is fish, prepared in any of these three ways: boiled, smoked or roasted. This is then served with "kuon" (ugali in Kiswahili — a type of stiff porridge — made from



Photo: Kenya Wildlife Service



Photo: Twitter/SpiritOfKisumu

corn flour, sorghum flour, cassava flour, millet flour or a mixture of any two flours). Other accompaniments would be fresh vegetables ("alot" in Dholuo) both wild and grown such as dek, apoth, mito and osuga.

Musically, the city is home to ohangla and benga music. Benga is a genre of Kenyan popular music that evolved between the late 1940s and late 1960s, while ohangla is a traditional dance used to celebrate weddings, parties and funeral ceremonies among the Luo community. ■

Barack Oduor is a Kisumu-based journalist



Do you want to show us around your town or city?

Send an email to letters@thecontinent.org and we'll be in touch!

In Senegal, we don't talk enough about postpartum depression

The baby blues can often overshadow maternal joy, but there isn't enough support for mothers who are scared and confused.

Azir Momar Lo in Dakar

Two months after she had a baby, Thiore Gning left Dakar and moved to Ziguinchor in the south of Senegal. Then her mental health took a nosedive that, at the time, she just couldn't explain. "I would go through mood swings for no reason," she says.

At first Gning buried her pain in silence, but eventually she consulted a psychologist and was diagnosed with postpartum depression. She had been thrilled about having a baby and couldn't connect her despondence to the same joyous life event. She came to recognise that the move to Ziguinchor had changed so much about her experience of new motherhood and helped trigger the depression. "The separation from my



Photo: John Wessels/AFP

family in Dakar, having a baby of just two months to care for all by myself..." she trails off. But Gning says her psychologist was "very patient and reassuring" and she has adjusted well to being there for her son, who will soon turn two.

The experience nonetheless impacted her profoundly and Gning, who already runs a non-profit called Space for Empowerment and Support for Women, plans to create an association for the mental health of young mothers.

According to Dr Juliette Ba, an obstetrician-gynaecologist, Gning's experience was somewhat better than what many Senegalese women with the same condition go through. "In Senegal, there are two social strata. You have people who can afford a psychologist, and will be referred to a psychologist. And then you have people who don't have anyone around them who can possibly

refer them to a psychologist,” says Ba. And they likely would not be able to afford a psychologist in any case.

At home, Gning was lucky to have the support and understanding of her husband, which women don't always have, as Ba explains: “It is dubbed an illness for westerners. I regularly see in my work women who show clear postpartum depression signs, while their relatives are taking digs at them, saying they are just being capricious or moody.”

Even in healthcare settings, postpartum depression can be misunderstood. *The Continent* spoke to a nurse who said she doesn't believe the illness really exists, but offered that she once heard about “a woman whose lochia had gone up her head”. Lochia is a discharge from the uterus and vagina following childbirth.

According to El Hadji Thierno Mbengue, head of the maternal, newborn and child health division at the Senegalese ministry of health, postpartum depression is actually known as puerperal psychosis. “It is known, and its management is very

well done in the healthcare system”.

Puerperal psychosis is a rare condition that can afflict mothers after childbirth. But it is usually treated differently from postpartum depression, which is considered a separate condition. While the symptoms of puerperal psychosis may include depression, not all postpartum depression patients suffer psychosis – which includes hallucinations, delusions, a manic mood and other severe symptoms that often trigger psychiatric hospitalisation.

In this context, support for mothers with postpartum depression is left to community and social workers like Bineta Thiam, who runs Wassor Womanity. The non-profit helps women who are divorced, widowed or have heavy family burdens, including with their mental health. “Postpartum depression or any mental disorders are not to be overcome, but rather managed through a combination of therapeutic interventions, medical and psychological therapies”, says Thiam. ■



Clinical:
A midwife helps a pregnant woman in Thies, Senegal. Support for postpartum depression is usually left to social workers.
Photo: AFP

THE QUIZ

0-3

"I think I need to start reading more newspapers."

4-7

"I can't wait to explore more of this continent."

8-10

"Most of history is really just idiots rewriting geography."



1_ The Spanish city of Melilla (pictured) faces the Mediterranean Ocean and borders which African country?

2_ Algeria celebrated 60 years of independence this week. Which country were they emancipated from?

3_ What is the name of Nigeria's women's national football team?

4_ True or false: Bafana Bafana is the name of South Africa's women's national football team.

5_ Soukous is a genre or style of music from which country?

6_ The Suez Canal is a waterway located in which country?

7_ Which two seas does it connect?

8_ Which country is Wimbledon semifinalist Ons Jabeur from?

9_ Kiswahili was adopted as an official language by which country this week?

10_ Faustin Archange Touadéra is the president of which country?

HOW DID I DO?

WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!

Would you like to send us some quiz questions or even curate your own quiz? Let us know at TheContinent@mg.co.za



Africans rely on forests – why are they not central in their protection?

Photo: Alexis Huguet/AFP

More than a quarter of Africa, outside the Sahara desert, is covered in forests – but they are fast being degraded by extractive business practices. To reverse the trend, we need to invest in forest-dependent people and require businesses to act ethically.

Elna Schütz

More than half of Africa's forest-reliant population live on less than \$1.25 a day. Forests are a key part of their survival, but they are constantly left out when it comes to conversations about how forests should be managed. Those conversations are instead driven by elites who brand themselves as environmentally conscious. People are then left to scramble to make a living, often to the detriment of the forests they rely on.

Forests cover around 27% of the

African landmass, excluding the Sahara, according to a 2018 estimate by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation.

According to Marie-Louise Avana, of the African Forest Forum in Kenya, forests provide livelihoods – through food, medicine and work – for 284-million people on this continent. But deforestation rates in Africa in the past few decades have been as much as double the rates elsewhere in the world, she says.

“The people who are dependent on forests are not the ones that are degrading it,” says Gertrude Kabusimbi Kenyangi,

the founder of Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment in Uganda. “They are trying their best to plant trees and to fight against bad practices.”

But the rate at which forests are being lost or degraded is higher than the pace at which indigenous efforts are trying to restore them.

Part of the challenge is that people living near forests often cannot afford to focus on restoration, explains Cécile Ndjebet, the founder and president of the African Women’s Network for Community Management of Forests of West and Central Africa. “Restoration has to go with livelihood development,” she says. “If you want people to plant trees to restore the environment, they need an alternative to earn a living.”

Women face the additional challenge that they often don’t own the land and so can’t make long term decisions for its use such as planting forests.

These local communities are then left out when decision makers create planning and forestry policies. They often don’t take into consideration the views and needs of these communities working in or around the forests, setting themselves up for failure.

Léonidas Nzigiympa, founder of Conservation and Community of Change, a Burundian non-profit, believes that in addition to enabling and upskilling communities to protect and use forests better directly, Africa needs broader initiatives and investments that improve the livelihoods and living conditions of forest-dependent people.

“I’m a forester,” Nzigiympa says. “And



People power: Kenyan wildlife staff join community members fighting forest fires. Photo: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP

the main mistake a forester makes is to be focused on biodiversity and on trees, forgetting people and communities.”

But given that forest-dependent communities are not responsible for the majority of the degradation happening, our broader economies must also shift away from predatory and extractive models towards a more sustainable approach to harvesting forests, according to George Akwah, the Congo Basin coordinator for the Forest Stewardship Council. The council awards certifications to businesses that deliver sustainably harvested goods, an approach that is catching on – the 2020 forest code introduced by the Republic of Congo requires such certification.

Shifts like this need to be scaled up and out, Akwah says, and as a rule of thumb, to save forests, “we need to fight poverty and the poor policies, not the poor”. ■

Every silver lining has a clown



Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

Notorious British strongman Boris Johnson has been watching his regime crumble before his very eyes. On Thursday, Johnson finally agreed to step down, heralding an end to a reign characterised by corruption, nepotism, lies, scandals, and very, very bad hair.

While there has been no official word from the African Union, experts are recommending that the organisation keep its peacekeepers on standby in case an intervention is required – or if Johnson and his children (final birth toll unknown, but apparently still rising) need to seek asylum in Rwanda.

Observers worried that Johnson's departure may create a sudden deficit of racist and problematic remarks on the global stage can at least take comfort in the fact that others are already stepping up to shoulder the burden of this responsibility. These include Emily Compagno of Fox News, who this week informed the world that pregnant women in Kenya are forbidden from leaving the house, and so do not have the right to vote. This is a shocking revelation, in particular to us at *Drift* who have seen



Whaaaat? Fox News's Emily Compagno has some weird ideas about Kenya.

many a pregnant woman out and about in Kenya – including at the polling booth. We honestly had no idea they were all criminals and pariahs, and will be sure to report them to the nearest foreign, right-wing broadcast authority the next time we see such grievous and apparently taboo behaviour taking place.

Voice recognition

Unfortunately, if the conspirators who plotted Johnson's downfall are angling for a part on *Keeping Up With The Coupdashions*, then they are going to be sorely disappointed. For such a role military chic is essential, and the traditional tweed-and-bowtie garb of the average Boricidal Tory simply won't cut it. So until they get serious about their wardrobe, we have no choice but to return to our current cast from Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso, who were the topic of an Ecowas heads of state summit this week.

The leaders of the West African



When, though: Sudan's Abdel Fattah al-Burhan says the army will back off at some point. Photo: Twitter/aftaburhan

bloc announced that they were lifting sanctions on Mali, which have been in place since January this year. This came after the junta brought forward its timetable for civilian rule, saying elections will now take place in June 2024. Ecowas leaders must have realised that is probably about as good as they're going to get, so borders with Mali will now reopen, with diplomats returning to Bamako. It's not a full pardon, mind you: Mali is still suspended from Ecowas and sanctions targeting individuals are also still in place.

Guinea, however, did not fare even that well. Led as they are by everyone's favourite sunglasses-bedecked coupdashion, Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, Guinea's three-year transition plan was roundly rejected by the Ecowas judging panel, who sent the coup-addled country back to the rehearsal studio to polish their act. Choosing not to take any further action against the country just yet, they have appointed Boni Yayi, the former president of Benin, as a new mediator-

slash-dance-coach. Yayi will most likely be tasked with reminding Guinea that the choreography is "step, step, pirouette and bow" not "step, step, pirouette and arrest the opposition in a violent crackdown on dissent". A subtle but important distinction.

Sudan jeopardy

While we're on the subject of steps – mainly down – leaders in Sudan may want to take some notes. Demonstrators demanding a return to civilian rule have once again been met with tear gas and live bullets, as well as a forced internet outage. The Central Committee of Sudan Doctors say a protest last week saw the highest number of injuries since demonstrations began in October 2021, with another nine deaths bringing the total number of people killed since then to 114.

The country's leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has since given a statement saying the army will withdraw from talks regarding the transition back to civilian rule. But that it will also not stand in the way of a democratic transition, and would make space for a civilian government to be formed. The only one thing he neglected to mention was a timeline. So we are left none the wiser on when this will happen, or how many more people will be killed by the state in the process.

As abolitionist minister Theodore Parker once said: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice". But in the case of Sudan and so many other places struggling to secure peace and justice, how much more must we bend before we break? ■

How to keep the political polarisation of Kenya in perspective

Dennis LC Weng and Catherine Musuva

Political polarisation is one of the main factors that drive political behaviour. While an inclusive society can encourage political pluralism and hence democratisation, a higher level of ethnic diversity and ideological division can intensify polarisation. This has significance during an election campaign such as the one taking place in Kenya.

Polarisation in the country tends to peak around elections and the winner-takes-all competition between different ethnic alliances. In Taiwan, polarisation is driven by political-ideological differences between two major political parties and has gradually worsened since the first democratic power transition in 2000.

Our research finds that polarisation is highly correlated with the short-term strategies of political elites, who utilise it to gain support and identify non-supporters. Polarisation is not a necessary consequence of democratisation, nor does mobilisation occur only along the lines

of pre-existing ethnic or other cleavages. Instead, polarisation arises because of the instrumental interest of competing political parties to adopt confrontational strategies that divide the electorate into opposing camps. While this aggressive strategy is often effective at mobilising supporters, it can damage confidence in elections and in democracy itself.

Encouragingly, even though the causes of polarisation are different in the two countries, our findings show that the solution to deal with polarisation might be the same: strengthening the electoral system and making it more inclusive. In the case of Kenya, the electoral process needs to provide fair opportunities to all ethnic groups. In Taiwan, the electoral system must ensure voters always have viable alternatives. If the electoral system creates too many advantages of incumbency, the ruling party can marginalise challengers and undermine confidence in democracy.

In other words, elections are critical for political stability in polarised societies, and we can do a much better job of designing them to promote national cohesion and democracy. ■

Dennis LC Weng is an associate professor of political science at Sam Houston State University. Catherine Musuva is a non-resident research associate at the Centre for Research on Democracy at Stellenbosch University.

This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa



The Big Picture

Photo: Sebastien Bozon/AFP

Final countdown: Tunisia's Ons Jabeur returns the ball to Czechia's Marie Bouzkova during their singles match at Wimbledon on Tuesday. The 27-year-old is the first African woman to reach the Wimbledon final, where she'll face Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina. Jabeur is the highest-ranked African and Arab player in history, by Women's Tennis Association and Association of Tennis Professionals rankings.



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