



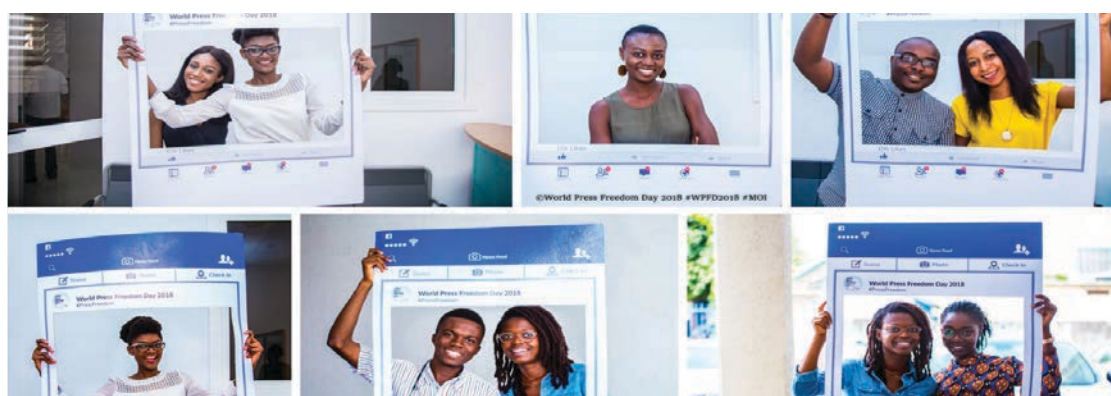
WEST AFRICA BRIEF

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GHANA HOSTS **WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2018**



"Keeping power in check: Media, justice and the rule of law" was the global theme of the 25th edition of World Press Freedom Day, which is celebrated every year on May 3. The international conference, co-organised by UNESCO, was hosted this year by the government of Ghana in Accra from 2-3 May in recognition of that country's independent and pluralistic media landscape. The global event brought together some 700 representatives from civil society, academia, the media and the judiciary. Participants focused on the transparency of the political process, the independence and media literacy of the judicial system and the accountability of state institutions towards the public. According to UNESCO's statement, the World Press Freedom Day was organised to achieve, adopt and

apply laws that would create an enabling environment for the freedom of expression, the right to information and the safety of journalists. Participants also examined new challenges such as press freedom online. Nearly half of the world's population now has access to the Internet, but reliable and affordable Internet access in African countries remains a key challenge. Some governments notably tend to restrict Internet access during electoral periods. Parallel sessions focused on covering electoral campaigns, national mechanisms for the safety of journalists in Africa and gender-related issues. A youth newsroom and a photo exhibition gave voice to the concerns of young Ghanaians. Ghana is the best-performing African country on the 2018 World Press Freedom Index.

The West Africa Brief is published by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD). It presents political, economic and social developments in the region. Special focus is given to news regarding regional organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS) as well other SWAC Members' activities. The articles should not be reported as representing the official views of the OECD or of its member countries. Contact: julia.wanjiru@oecd.org

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MINISTERS AIM TO BOOST **AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA**



African Continental Free Trade Area: creating fiscal space for jobs and economic diversification

Fifty-first session of the Commission

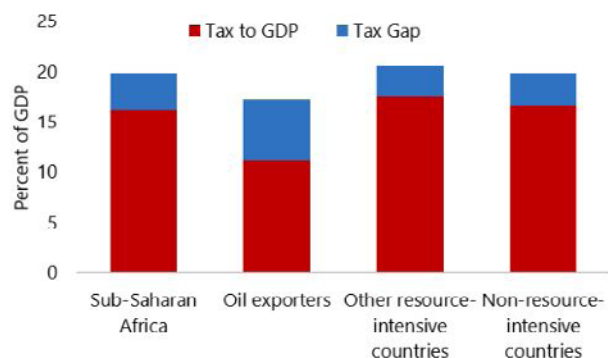
African ministers of finance, planning and economic development gathered from 11-15 May in Addis Ababa to discuss the next steps in implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). “AfCFTA: Creating fiscal space for jobs and economic diversification” was the official theme of the ministerial conference’s 51st session. An agreement to establish the AfCFTA was signed by 44 African countries in Rwanda on 21 March 2018. While Ghana and Kenya are the first two countries that have ratified the documents, Nigeria and South Africa have yet to sign the agreement. They account for nearly one third of the continent’s GDP and more than 20% of its population. The AfCFTA will become effective once at least 22 countries have ratified it. But without the continent’s two economic giants, the agreement will be much less powerful. There are many other obstacles standing in the way of making the

continental free trade area a reality including infrastructure gaps, the investment climate and administrative burdens. In many cases, it is currently more expensive to export goods within the continent than to outside countries. “The AfCFTA is a major milestone that will no doubt lead to a prosperous integrated Africa that is less dependent on outside sources for its well being,” acknowledged Moroccan economy and finance minister Mohamed Boussaid. Former AfDB president Donald Kaberuka called for African citizens to mobilise to boost the free trade area’s operationalisation. The ambitious continental initiative aims to create a regional common market to boost intra-African trade from its current level of 16% to 52% by 2022. It will also trigger job creation and economic diversification. The conference theme recalled the importance of accompanying the AfCFTA with taxation measures to support and fully take advantage of the free trade area while also strengthening fiscal sustainability in Africa. Other topics included agriculture’s role in economic growth, financing infrastructure, tackling illicit financial flows and an integrated strategy for the Sahel. The 5th African Governance Report, the Global Education Monitoring Report and the 2018 Assessing Regional Integration Report were launched on the sidelines of the event.

IMF PREDICTS **3.4% GROWTH IN 2018 FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

Revenue opportunity

The region could potentially collect more in tax revenues than the total amount received from foreign aid.



Sources: IMF, *World Economic Outlook* database; and IMF staff estimates.

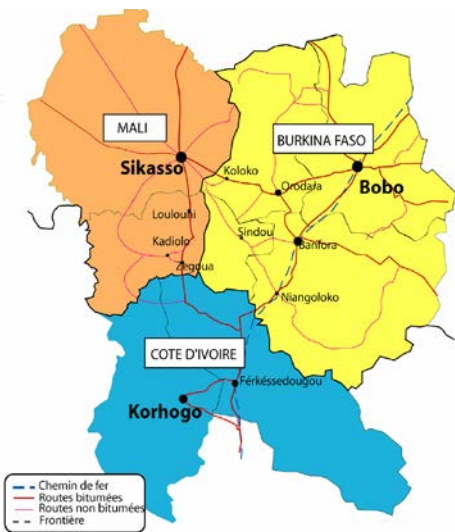
According to the most recent IMF forecast published in May 2018, the average growth rate in sub-Saharan Africa is projected to rise from 2.8% in 2017 to 3.4% in 2018. While Nigeria’s giant economy is still stagnating and slowly recovering from the period of low oil prices, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal were among the West African economies with a solid growth rate of 6% or more in 2017. These economies are likely to continue to enjoy strong growth rates in 2018. However, growth is mostly driven by public infrastructure development, which contributes to an increase in public debt; the risk of debt distress has become a concern in many African countries. There is a need to increase private investment to achieve sustainable strong growth over the medium term. Private investment in sub-Saharan Africa remains low compared with other regions. The region could also gain from strengthening its tax collection mechanisms to increase domestic revenue mobilisation. The report estimates that sub-Saharan Africa could, on average, collect between 3-5% of GDP in additional tax revenues, significantly more than the amount the region receives each year through international aid.

CILSS AND PARTNERS DISCUSS **SEASONAL CLIMATIC FORECAST**

CILSS and its partners held the 5th session looking at the seasonal agro-hydro-climatic situation forecast in Sudano-Sahelian Africa. The experts’ meeting took place from 30 April to 4 May in Bingerville, Côte d’Ivoire. The overall situation is similar to previous years. Average to above average rainfalls are expected for the June-August period in southern Mauritania, eastern Senegal, Burkina Faso, western and eastern Niger, northern Nigeria, central Chad and the northern parts of Benin and Togo. But most of the coastal areas

(Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, southeastern Nigeria, etc.) are likely to record normal to below-average levels of rainfall. The rainy season might start slightly late and last longer than usual. With respect to the risk of drought, experts recommend that the region improves its management of water basins, dams and barrages, uses drought resistant crops and climate-smart agricultural techniques, and establishes fodder stocks to prevent conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in transhumant areas.

BURKINA FASO, CÔTE D'IVOIRE AND MALI LAUNCH SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE



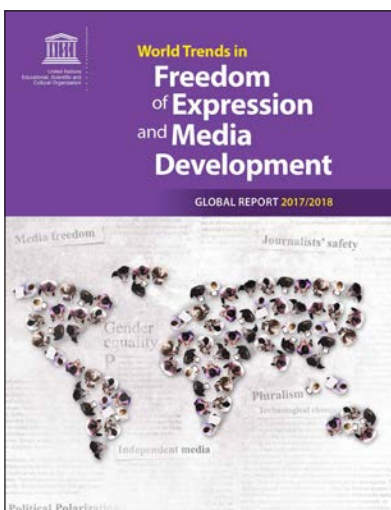
On 14 May, the three Prime Ministers of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali launched a special economic zone in the SKBo triangle, composed of the regions of Sikasso (Mali), Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina Faso) and Korhogo (Côte d'Ivoire). It is the first special economic zone in West Africa that operates across borders. The legal framework foresees there will be fiscal advantages for companies that decide to operate in this cross-border area and this could contribute to the integration of local economies. In particular, the three governments aim to attract private sector investment in agribusiness, agro-industry and the mining sector. The precise details of the cross-border arrangements were discussed during a meeting between the three Prime Ministers at the launch ceremony in Sikasso. The UEMOA Commission and partners support the development of an integrated territorial development approach for this area. Cross-border co-operation activities have been developed in the SKBo triangle for several decades. The region is part of the ECOWAS Cross-border Initiatives Programme (PIT) launched in 2005 that aimed to increase co-operation frameworks along intra-community borders.

2018 AFRICA **THINK TANK SUMMIT**

The second edition of the 2018 Africa Think Tank Summit was held in Rabat, Morocco from 9-10 May and explored the theme “Deepening expertise and enhancing sustainability: Insight into contemporary challenges facing African think tanks.” The summit offered an opportunity to reflect on the role of think tanks in African society. How do they contribute to improving the understanding of African development challenges? And how do they help to develop an inclusive dialogue around African public policies. Olusegun Obasanjo, the former president of Nigeria, was among the key speakers addressing the issues with his speech, “Think tanks and regional integration, bold strategies for long-term impact.” Other breakout sessions

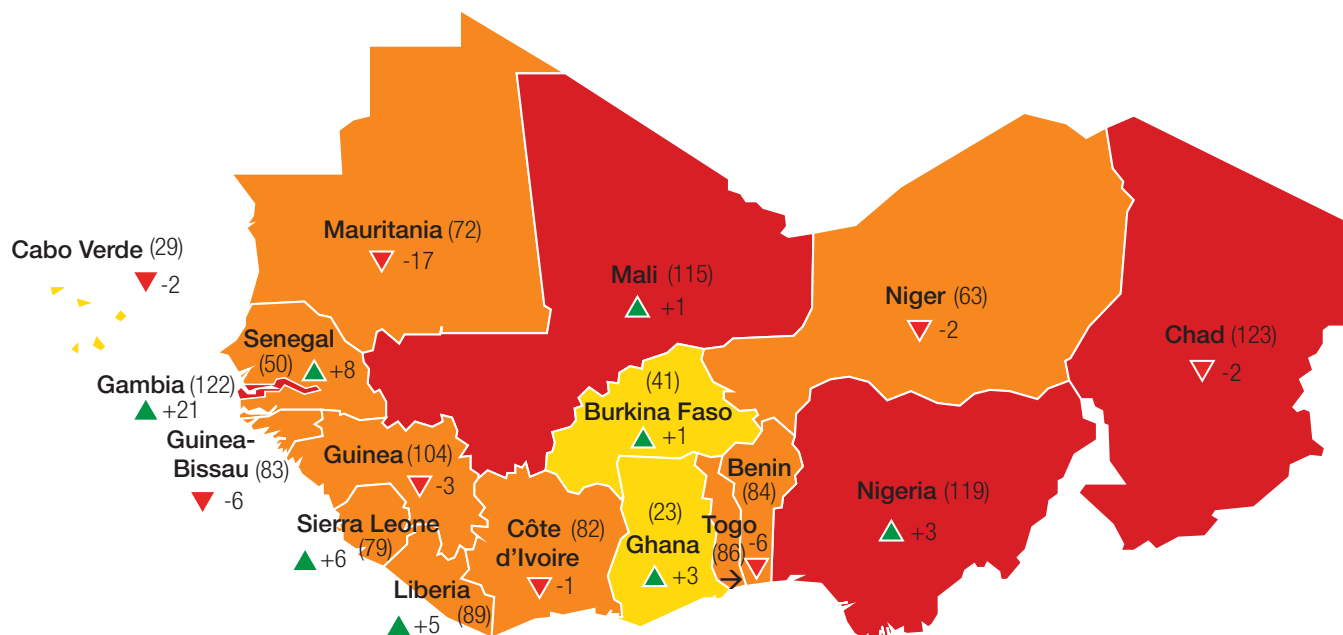
focused on relationships between think tanks and the private sector, the media and the diaspora. The closing session aimed to explore new avenues to make Africa’s think tanks fit for the future. The event was organised by the OCP Policy Center and the Think Tank and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania, with support from the Moroccan Agency of International Development. The Council for the Development of Social Science Research (CODESRIA, Senegal), the Ivorian Centre for Economic and Social Research (CIREs) and the Applied Research and Analysis Group for Development (GRAAD, Burkina Faso) were among the West African participants.

MUST READ: WORLD TRENDS IN FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA DEVELOPMENT



On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on 3 May, UNESCO launched a new global report offering a critical analysis of four key dimensions of press freedom: media freedom, media pluralism, media independence and safety of journalists. Although the public’s right to access information is increasingly recognised and the freedom of information in Africa has improved overall, legal restrictions, Internet filtering and Internet shutdowns have curtailed freedom of expression. Moreover, women remain largely underrepresented in the global media landscape. They make up only one in four media decision-makers, one in three reporters and one in five experts interviewed. Media organisations are also increasingly dependent on government and corporate subsidies, which threatens their independence. Political and commercial interests rather than the public interest often drive editorial choices in many African countries. Some 73 journalists were killed in sub-Saharan Africa between 2012-16, compared to 191 journalists in North Africa and the Middle East during the same period.

MAPS & FACTS: PRESS FREEDOM IN WEST AFRICA: GHANA BEST



Level of press freedom

good
 fairly good
 problematic
 bad
 very bad

(x) Rank 2018 ▲ Positive trend (Δ 2017) ▼ Negative trend (Δ 2017) → Same score (2017)

Sources : Source: 2018 World Press Freedom Index, Reporters without Borders. rce: 2018 World Press Freedom Index, Reporters without Borders.

West Africa is making mixed progress on press freedom, access to information and the development of a pluralistic media landscape. According to the World Press Freedom Index 2018, which ranks 180 countries worldwide, the level of media freedom was categorised as “fairly good” in three West African countries, namely Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde and Ghana. These countries achieved better or similar scores than many OECD member countries. Senegal might soon join this group. It improved

its score by eight positions and enjoys a diverse media landscape. A new era for freedom of expression is finally emerging in Gambia, one year after President Yahya Jammeh was forced to step down after 22 years. Journalists there are no longer executed, new private broadcast and online media outlets have been launched and the government is working on reforming the legal frameworks guaranteeing freedom of expression and access to information. At the index's bottom

end, Chad, Mali and Nigeria still face serious challenges related to the safety of journalists and censorship. Abductions, arbitrary detentions, the closure of radio stations and Internet restrictions continue to hinder the freedom of expression and the public's right to information in these countries. Moreover, media freedom has declined dramatically in Mauritania, which dropped from position 55 to 72, after several years of progress.

WHO'S WHO: MAKHTAR DIOP, WORLD BANK VICE-PRESIDENT



Makhtar Diop has been appointed as vice-president of the World Bank in charge of infrastructure. Diop will take office of this newly created position on 1 July 2018. His portfolio includes transportation, the digital economy, energy, the extractive sector, as well as infrastructure financing and public-private partnerships (PPPs). Diop was Senegal's former minister of economy and finance and has become one of the most influential Africans in the world. An economist by training, Diop started his career in the banking sector before joining the IMF and later the World Bank. Between 2002-05, Diop was the World Bank's country director for

Kenya, Eritrea, and Somalia, based in Nairobi. From 2009 to 2012, he was the World Bank country director for Brazil, where the World Bank helped finance major infrastructure projects. Prior to his current appointment, Diop had been serving as the World Bank's vice president for Africa since May 2012, overseeing some 600 development projects on the continent that total USD 65 billion. Diop holds degrees in economics from the Universities of Warwick and Nottingham in England. He received the Regents' Lectureship Award from the University of California, Berkeley in 2015.