



ML Strategies Update

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David Leiter

djleiter@mlstrategies.com

Georgette Spanjich

gmspanjich@mlstrategies.com

ML Strategies, LLC

701 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20004 USA

202 296 3622

202 434 7400 fax

www.mlstrategies.com

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AFRICA UPDATE

Leading the News

South Sudan

On February 13th, the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council welcomed the start of new Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) peace talks between the Government of South Sudan and anti-government opposition forces in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Security Council called for the talks to be fully inclusive and reiterated demands for the release of political detainees held by the Government of South Sudan. Input from the Security Council was noted [here](#).

On February 14th, the U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR) advised Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda against the forced return of roughly 130,000 South Sudanese civilians who have fled their home country as violence continues. UNHCR said people fleeing South Sudan are likely to meet the criteria for refugee status under international and regional conventions. An additional 75,250 people who have been displaced internally are currently seeking refuge at U.N. bases in South Sudan. An article on South Sudanese refugees can be read [here](#).

On February 18th, the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) reported an outbreak of heavy fighting in Malakal. UNMISS officials said South Sudanese Government forces and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) forces engaged in violence near the U.N. compound in the Upper Nile State. In addition, inter-communal fighting broke out inside the U.N. base, which is currently providing refuge to 21,568 internally displaced persons. More information was reported [here](#).

On February 19th, State Department Deputy Spokesperson Marie Harf reported that U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan Ambassador Donald Booth is Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, seeking a response to extensive fighting in and around Malakal in violation of the cessation of hostilities agreement. Deputy Spokesperson Harf's report on Ambassador Booth's involvement can be found [here](#).

Central African Republic

On February 14th, French President Francois Hollande's office announced that France plans to send an additional 400 troops to the Central African Republic (CAR), bringing the total number of French troops in the country to 2,000. In making the announcement, French officials also urged the U.N. to accelerate the deployment of peacekeeping forces to the CAR and pressed other countries to support operations to counter the violence in the country. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 14th, during a meeting on cooperation between the U.N. and regional organizations in Africa, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for coordination to assist Muslim and Christian victims of violence in the CAR. Secretary-General Ban urged that cooperation between the U.N., the African Union (AU), and the European Union (EU) will continue to be necessary to assist Central Africans in their time of need. Comments from Secretary General Ban were transcribed [here](#).

On February 14th, the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that at least 133 children have been killed or maimed in interreligious fighting in the CAR over the past two months. UNICEF expressed concerns for reports of children being intentionally beheaded and mutilated, wounded in cross-fire, and forced to undergo amputations as a result of their injuries. A full report from UNICEF can be accessed [here](#).

On February 19th, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay issued a public warning that authorities in the CAR will be held personally accountable for human rights violations as the cycle of violence in the country continues. High Commissioner Pillay reminded both anti-Balaka and ex-Seleka members that there are clear obligations under international law to refrain from committing human rights violations. Comments from High Commissioner Pillay can be seen [here](#).

On February 19th, in response to requests from NGOs for the Obama Administration to include U.S. support for a U.N. peacekeeping mission in the CAR in its FY15 budget request, State Department Deputy Spokesperson Marie Harf noted U.S. officials' ongoing concern for interreligious violence in the CAR and U.S. calls for the urgent deployment of additional African-led International Support Mission to the CAR (MISCA) troops. Deputy Spokesperson Harf also indicated the State Department is developing targeted sanctions against individuals perpetrating instability in the CAR. More information was posted [here](#).

Egypt

On February 16th, the espionage trial for deposed Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi adjourned until February 23rd when lawyers walked out in protest of the defendants being held in a soundproof glass cage. President Morsi faces four different trials. These particular proceedings were centered on charges that President Morsi collaborated with foreign extremist groups, including Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Revolutionary Guards. More information was shared [here](#).

On February 16th, the U.S. Embassy in Cairo issued a condemnation of the terrorist attack against a tourist bus in Taba, stating there is no justification for such cowardly attacks. The embassy also extended condolences to the friends and families of the tourists who were killed and wished those who were injured a swift recovery. The embassy's statement can be read [here](#).

On February 16th, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the U.N. Security Council condemned the terrorist attack on a bus in Taba, Egypt, that killed four people and wounded dozens of others. The U.N. reaffirmed that terrorism poses one of the most serious threats to international peace and security and called for the perpetrators of the attack in Egypt to be brought to justice. More information is available [here](#).

On February 17th, the U.S. Department of State issued a statement condemning the February 16th terrorist attack in Egypt and offering condolences to the families of innocent Korean tourists who were killed in the attack. The full statement can be seen [here](#).

On February 18th, after claiming responsibility for suicide bombings in Egypt over the weekend, Sinai-based Islamist militant group Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis issued a threat via Twitter to attack any tourists

who stay in Egypt beyond February 20th. Egyptian Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi said the threat aimed at tourists is likely an attempt by Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis to derail Egypt's roadmap to elections. More information can be viewed [here](#).

Nigeria

On February 16th, Boko Haram militants dressed in military uniforms stormed villages in Nigeria's Borno State and began sporadically firing at male residents. The attackers also looted local businesses and food stores. Shortly thereafter, Boko Haram launched a similar attack in Adamawa state. The incidents were reported [here](#).

On February 18th, U.N. OHCHR condemned the recent terrorist attacks in eight villages in Nigeria. The attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram gunmen killed at least 65 people in Adamawa state and 90 others in Borno state. OHCHR called on Nigerian authorities to thoroughly investigate the attacks and to enhance security for civilians in the villages where a state of emergency remains in effect. The attacks were further detailed [here](#).

United States – Africa Relations

White House

On February 16th, President Barack Obama issued a statement expressing opposition to legislation criminalizing homosexuality that Uganda is soon expected to enact. President Obama said the law poses a danger to the gay community in Uganda and warned that enacting the legislation will complicate the U.S.-Uganda bilateral relationship. President Obama's full statement can be accessed [here](#).

State Department

On February 16th, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield departed on foreign travel to Kano, Nigeria, to meet with Governor Rabiu Kwankwaso on strengthening the U.S.-Nigeria bilateral relationship and partnerships. Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield's travel was announced [here](#).

On February 17th, Secretary of State John Kerry issued a press statement recognizing Gambia's celebration of 49 years of independence. Secretary Kerry wished Gambia a festive celebration and a prosperous year and noted the U.S. looks forward to working with Gambia to build a better future for all Gambians. Secretary Kerry's full statement can be read [here](#).

On February 17th, U.S. Ambassador to Libya Deborah Jones issued a statement congratulating Libya on the third anniversary of the February 17th Revolution. Ambassador Jones applauded Libya on the recent steps taken to further its transition from dictatorship to democracy. Ambassador Jones' full statement can be seen [here](#).

On February 17th-18th, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield led the U.S. delegation to the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission (BNC) meeting in Abuja, Nigeria. The BNC meeting allowed U.S. and Nigerian officials the opportunity to discuss enhancing the bilateral relationship in the areas of good governance, transparency, and integrity, regional security, energy and investment, agriculture and food security, and the Niger Delta. More information was shared [here](#).

On February 18th, the State Department announced Secretary of State John Kerry's travel to Tunis, Tunisia, to meet with senior officials to discuss the progress made in Tunisia's democratic transition and continued U.S. support for the Tunisian government and people. While in Tunis, Secretary Kerry met with Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki and Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa, and visited with staff at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis. A background briefing provided by senior State Department officials en route to Tunis was summarized [here](#). Comments to the press by Secretary Kerry following his meetings with President Marzouki and Prime Minister Jomaa can be found [here](#). Remarks delivered by Secretary Kerry at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis were transcribed [here](#).

On February 18th-20th, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield traveled to Stuttgart, Germany, to participate in the Africa Strategic Dialogue with interagency partners held at U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) headquarters. Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield's participation was noted [here](#).

On February 19th, Secretary of State John Kerry issued a press statement noting that he was deeply troubled by the anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rhetoric Gambian President Yahya Jammeh used in his National Day speech delivered on Tuesday. Secretary Kerry called on the Government of Gambia to protect the human rights of all Gambians and encouraged the international community to signal that anti-LGBT statements are unacceptable. The press statement was issued [here](#).

U.S. Agency for International Development

On February 13th, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) published a post on its Impact Blog on defending civil society organizations in Egypt. Authored by Mahmoud Farouk of the Egyptian Center for Public Policy studies, the post details the efforts of the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) to raise awareness about the need to defend freedom of association and to lift restrictions on civil society. The blog post can be read [here](#).

On February 20th, USAID Assistant Administrator for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment Eric Postel authored a blog post on the new U.S. National Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking and U.S. participation in last week's London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade. As part of the new strategy, Assistant Administrator Postel detailed USAID's plans to roll out a system for prioritizing ranger patrols in dozens of African parks to help put an end to poaching. The blog post can be accessed [here](#).

Department of Defense

On February 13th, AFRICOM participated in the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) celebration of World Radio Day. AFRICOM Public Affairs noted that the Command has recently hosted delegations of journalists and broadcasters from Kenya, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Zambia, South Africa, Algeria, and Mauritania, with the goal of disseminating information about the command's activities via radio. Additional information can be viewed [here](#).

On February 16th, the *Los Angeles Times* published an op-ed on U.S. military intervention in Africa, authored by the Brookings Institution's Michael O'Hanlon. Despite U.S. war fatigue and tight budget conditions, O'Hanlon suggests that strategic U.S. military engagement in Africa, in places such as Somalia, Kenya, Mali, Libya, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Nigeria, could play a significant role in boosting stability on the continent. The full column can be read [here](#).

On February 18th, Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) provided additional information on a recent ribbon cutting ceremony held at the Karta Health Clinic in Djibouti, a project completed by CJTF-HOA and USAID. The ceremony was presided over by Djibouti's Minister of Health Kassim Issak Osman, CJTF-HOA Commanding General Wayne Grigsby, and U.S. Ambassador to Djibouti Cheryl Anderson. Details were highlighted [here](#).

On February 19th, U.S. Special Operations Command Africa launched a multi-nation counter-terrorism training exercise in Niger, aimed at improving security capabilities to combat Al Qaeda-linked groups, local militias, and other criminal organizations in Africa's Sahara-Sahel zone. More than 1,000 soldiers from 18 African and Western nations participated in the annual training exercise. The exercise was detailed [here](#).

Department of Homeland Security

On February 19th, the bodies of American security officers Jeffrey Reynolds and Mark Kennedy were discovered in a cabin aboard the Maersk Alabama, the ship famously hijacked by pirates in 2009, where it was berthed in Port Victoria, Seychelles. Because the ship is a U.S.-flagged vessel, the U.S. Coast Guard is leading an investigation into the men's deaths. The full story was reported [here](#).

Department of Justice

On February 18th, an unnamed plaintiff who is a U.S. citizen of Ethiopian descent filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia against the Government of Ethiopia. The plaintiff, who has ties to the political opposition in Ethiopia, alleged the Ethiopian Government used a spyware program called FinSpy to access his Skype calls, e-mails, and web-browsing history in violation of U.S. wiretapping laws. Details on the case can be found [here](#).

Congress

On February 14th, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern and Central and South Asian Affairs Tim Kaine (D-VA) departed on recess travel to the Middle East. Following stops in Israel and Palestine, Senator Kaine traveled on to Egypt, where he hoped to meet with interim President Adly Mansour and Field Marshal Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi. Details on Senator Kaine's travel were reported [here](#).

North Africa

On February 14th, the U.N. Security Council issued a press statement calling on the Sudanese Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) to reach an agreement to effectively end three years of fighting in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The Security Council also welcomed the start of new peace talks, held under the auspices of the African Union (AU) High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Details were shared [here](#).

On February 18th, the al-Qaaqaa and al-Sawaaq Libyan militias called for the Libyan General National Congress (GNC) to step down. The term of the Libyan parliament had ended on February 7th, but legislators voted to extend the body's term through elections this spring. Chairman of the GNC Mohamed Yousef el-Magariaf of the National Front Party labeled the militia's threats an impending coup. The full story can be viewed [here](#).

On February 18th, in recognition of the third anniversary of the 2011 uprising in Libya that resulted in the overthrow of Muammar Gadhafi, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reiterated its call for the Libyan GNC to reconsider new legislation restricting freedom of expression and opinion. The new Law No. 5 imposes prison sentences on individuals who undermine the revolution by publicly insulting government figures. More information is available [here](#).

On February 19th, the U.N. Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) urged calm ahead of the February 20th elections for Libya's Constitution-Drafting Assembly. Libyans were expected to head to the polls to select a 60-member constituent assembly that will meet for 120 days to draft a new constitution to be considered by popular referendum. Details can be found [here](#).

East Africa

On February 13th, Chairman of Kenya's National Security Advisory Committee (NSAC) and Secretary of the President's Cabinet Francis Kinemia sent a letter to the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs encouraging Kenyan diplomats to investigate USAID's role in supporting recent anti-government protests in Nairobi. Meanwhile, U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Robert Godec responded that accusations that the U.S. is trying to destabilize Kenya's government are false. More information can be viewed [here](#).

On February 14th, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim issued a statement expressing alarm at reports that families had been evicted from the Embobut Forest and Cherangany Hills areas of Kenya. While acknowledging the Kenyan Government's goals of protecting watersheds in Kenya's forest and Hill areas, President Kim voiced concern that the evictions are not following the legal process. President Kim's full statement can be seen [here](#).

On February 17th, an Ethiopian Airlines flight flying from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to Rome, Italy was hijacked and forced to land in Geneva, Switzerland. The hijacker was the co-pilot of the plane, an

Ethiopian citizen, who was allegedly seeking asylum in Geneva. No one was injured in the ordeal, but Ethiopian Information Minister Redwan Hussein indicated Ethiopian officials are investigating the episode. The full story can be found [here](#).

On February 17th, in response to U.S. President Barack Obama's expression of opposition to Uganda's anti-homosexuality law, the leader of Uganda's Freedom and Unity Front, Amii Omara-Otunu, said the U.S. should consider imposing sanctions on Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's Administration and uninviting President Museveni from attending the U.S.-African Leaders' Summit planned for August. Comments from Omara-Otunu were transcribed [here](#).

On February 17th, officials with the U.N. Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice urged Kenyan officials to repeal sections of the Marriage and Property Act that went into effect on January 16th. U.N. officials said the provisions that would strip women of their marital property upon divorce or death of their spouse unless they can prove they contributed to the acquisition of the property violate the equality provisions in the Kenyan constitution. Additional feedback from the U.N. was posted [here](#).

On February 18th, a Kenyan court in Mombasa began proceedings in the trial of British national Jermaine Grant, who is accused of planning terrorist attacks in Kenya targeting British, French, and U.S. interests. Grant was arrested in an apartment he allegedly shared with Samantha Lewthwaite, who is still wanted by Kenyan authorities on terrorism charges. Officials believe Grant may have ties to Al Shabaab. An article on the trial can be read [here](#).

On February 18th, Ugandan Ethics and Integrity Minister Simon Lokodo dismissed U.S. President Barack Obama's call for Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni not to sign a law that would criminalize homosexuality in the country. Minister Lokodo said the U.S. was trying to blackmail Uganda. Additionally, Minister Lokodo said that U.S. aid should not be tied to the Ugandan Government's position on homosexuality. Comments from Minister Lokodo were transcribed [here](#).

On February 18th, Executive Director of the Joint U.N. Programme on HIV/AIDS Michel Sidibe urged Ugandan authorities to reject the anti-homosexuality bill passed by the Ugandan parliament in December. Executive Director Sidibe warned that implementing the legislation would have serious human rights implications for LGBT people and would relinquish Uganda's leadership role in combatting HIV/AIDS. Comments from Executive Director Sidibe were shared [here](#).

On February 18th, following a three-day visit to Somalia, Director of the Coordination and Response Division in the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) John Ging said the humanitarian situation in Somalia remains fragile and a solution is dependent upon funding assistance from the international community. He noted that 857,000 Somalis remain in crisis and emergency conditions as the \$933 million funding request for humanitarian operations in the country remains just 4% funded. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 20th, the Africa Growth Initiative of the Brookings Institution and Oxfam America hosted a live webcast to discuss issues relevant to the discovery of oil and gas reserves in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Mozambique. Speakers included representatives of the U.S. Government, the private sector, civil society, think tanks, and academia who addressed potential benefits from the discovery of new resources and the need to craft policies to ensure activities in the oil and gas industry benefit local people and environments in East Africa. Event details were posted [here](#).

West Africa

On February 13, the *Associated Press* profiled cross-country skier Mathilde-Amivi Petijean, Togo's first Winter Olympics competitor. Togo's first Winter Olympics team participating in the Sochi games also includes Alpine skier Alessia Afi Sipol, who was born in Italy and became a naturalized citizen of Togo. An article on Togo's Olympic team can be read [here](#).

On February 13th, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission concluded a visit to Guinea-Bissau. The IMF delegation met with officials for Guinea-Bissau's interim government, including Minister of Finance Gino Mendes and Minister of Economy Soares Sambu, in addition to Director of Guinea-

Bissau's national bank Joao Fadia. The IMF mission found that Guinea-Bissau's economic activity had been strained by the political consequences of the 2012 coup and external support for the economy will be needed in advance of the election of a new government. The IMF mission to Guinea-Bissau was summarized [here](#).

On February 13th, UNESCO reported that 90% of the cultural heritage in Gao, Mali, was destroyed during the period in 2012 when the town was held by Islamic extremists. UNESCO encouraged swift repairs to the Tomb of Askia World Heritage site to protect the structure as the rainy season approached in June. Observations by UNESCO were summarized [here](#).

On February 14th, the Executive Board of the IMF completed the third review of Guinea's economic performance under the program supported by an Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement. The IMF found that despite the challenges facing the Guinean economy in 2013, that macroeconomic prospects for 2014 are positive, so long as Guinea proceeds with the implementation of structural reforms and promotes political stability. Additional information can be viewed [here](#).

On February 17th, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that U.N. efforts to encourage Malian cotton farmers to use alternative methods of pest control have been effective in eliminating the use of toxic pesticides. While only 34% of farmers participated in the U.N. program, pesticide use has dropped by 92%, while agricultural outputs have remained constant. More information was shared [here](#).

On February 18th, *The Guardian* provided insights on the competition between local fishermen and foreign fish processing factories in Senegal. Over the past three years, Senegal has experienced an influx of primarily Chinese, Korean, and Russian fishing companies. With increased fishing activities, the fish population has declined significant, leading President Macky Sall to convene a meeting with local fishing industry representatives last month. More information is available [here](#).

On February 20th, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan suspended Nigeria Central Bank Governor Lamido Sanusi, citing financial recklessness and misconduct. Sanusi continues to be at the middle of a controversy involving \$20 billion in missing oil revenues, although it remains unclear whether or not Sanusi committed fraud or simply acted as a whistleblower. Sanusi's suspension was announced [here](#).

Sub-Saharan Africa

On February 14th, South African Olympic track star Oscar Pistorius broke his silence to recognize the one year anniversary of his shooting and killing his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, an incident which he called a devastating accident. Meanwhile, the women's league of the African National Congress (ANC) organized a march in Pretoria to commemorate Steenkamp's death and to protest violence against women. Pistorius will go on trial on March 3rd. Details were reported [here](#).

On February 14th, the IMF hosted a seminar on "Mobile Financial Services: Business and Regulation" in Mauritius. The workshop brought together participants from 38 central banks, including banks in Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, to discuss regulatory challenges in the face of growing mobile financial services. Highlights from the seminar were noted [here](#).

On February 14th, U.N. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Mary Robinson traveled to Kinshasa, DRC to meet with DRC President Joseph Kabila and other government officials on the implementation of the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region. Special Envoy Robinson also met with civil society leaders to discuss their role in the implementation of the agreement. Special Envoy Robinson's visit to the DRC was detailed [here](#).

On February 14th, the U.N. Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) reported that more than 70 men and women had been executed in the DRC's North Kivu province in late January and early February. MONUSCO reported the killings were committed by armed militias and the violence was likely triggered by ethnic or commercial disputes. Observations from MONUSCO were

shared [here](#).

On February 16th, rescue operations seeking to help as many as 200 miners trapped in a collapsed mine outside of Johannesburg, South Africa, were halted when trapped miners refused to leave after learning they would be arrested at the surface for their involvement in what is believed to be an illegal mining operation. Police are investigating the mine's collapse. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 17th, 11 miners who were rescued from the abandoned mine near Johannesburg, South Africa, were arrested and charged with illegal mining. The Benoni Magistrate's Court is expected to handle proceedings related to the charges. Meanwhile, emergency workers continued to hold up rescue operations and the remaining trapped miners indicated they did not want assistance if they would also be arrested. Developments were noted [here](#).

On February 18th, police and immigration authorities in Zimbabwe arrested former U.S. Congressman Melvin Jay Reynolds (D-IL) at a hotel in Harare. Reynolds was held in custody on the suspicion of possessing pornography and an immigration offense. In Zimbabwe, possessing pornographic material is illegal and Reynolds could face up to two years in prison if he is found guilty. If Reynolds is found to be in breach of Zimbabwean immigration laws, he could also face deportation. More information was shared [here](#).

On February 18th, the *Christian Science Monitor* described an initiative launched by South African NGO, The Lunchbox Fund, to provide a daily meal to underserved school children in South Africa. In partnership with 100 food bloggers around the world, The Lunchbox Fund launched a campaign to raise \$5,000 to feed 100 schoolchildren a daily meal for one year. Due to a lack of resources, the South African Government can only provide school meals to eight million of the country's 12 million students. The initiative was announced [here](#).

On February 19th, South Africa's newest higher education institution, the University of Mpumalanga, began offering classes at the start of its academic year. Under the patronage of the University of Johannesburg and the University of Pretoria, Mpumalanga University is offering programs in agriculture, teacher education, and hospitality. More information was posted [here](#).

On February 19th, the *Financial Times* reported on an 8.5 megawatt solar power plant project in Kigali, Rwanda. The \$24 million plant is expected to increase electricity generation in the country by 8%. The plant will feed electricity into the national grid under a 25-year power purchase agreement with the Rwanda Energy, Water, and Sanitation Authority. The project was described [here](#).

On February 19th, former U.S. Congressman Melvin Jay Reynolds appeared at the magistrate courts in Harare, Zimbabwe, where he pleaded not guilty to charges of possessing pornography. Later this week, Reynolds is expected to enter into a plea on the separate charge of violating Zimbabwe's immigration laws by overstaying his visa. Developments in Reynolds' case were noted [here](#).

On February 20th, *Mail & Guardian* reported on planning for Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's 90th birthday celebration. Thousands of President Mugabe's supporters are expected to gather for a \$1 million celebration to be held at the Rudhaka stadium in Marondera on Sunday. The lavish festivities are drawing criticism, especially as Zimbabwe continues to experience slowing economic growth and increasing unemployment. More information was posted [here](#).

General Africa News

On February 17th, U.N. FAO Director-General Jose Graziano da Silva noted the importance of family farming in rural communities, highlighting how the expansion of youth gardening in Africa has helped to promote nutrition and sustainability. Director-General Graziano da Silva noted this is likely true in Africa where two-thirds of the population resides in rural communities and 75% of the population is under the age of 25. Comments from Director-General Graziano da Silva can be found [here](#).

On February 19th, Microsoft announced the appointment of four youth members to its 4Afrika initiative Advisory Council in order to ensure that Africa's growing youth demographic has input in guiding the initiative in making strategic investments that are aligned with the continent's development goals. The

appointments included Akaliza Keza Gara of Rwanda, Chude Jideonwo of Nigeria, Tayeb Sbihi of Morocco, and Olivia Mukam of Cameroon. More information was shared [here](#).

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