



## ML Strategies Legislative Update



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## AFRICA UPDATE

### Leading the News

#### **Egypt**

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Egypt as part of his first overseas trip as Secretary of State. Shortly after arriving, Secretary Kerry hosted roundtable discussions with Egyptian political parties and business leaders. Secretary Kerry also met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Amr. During the meeting, Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Amr discussed issues of significance to the strategic relationship between the U.S. and Egypt, including relations with Palestine and Syria and nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Secretary Kerry's joint statement with Foreign Minister Amr following their meeting can be read [here](#). Secretary's schedule upon his arrival in Egypt can be viewed [here](#).

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Secretary of State John Kerry continued his meetings in Egypt. Secretary Kerry met with Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, Egyptian Defense Minister Abdul Fatah Khalil al-Sisi, and Egyptian General Intelligence Service Director Mohamed Refaat Shehata. Remarks delivered by Secretary Kerry following this series of meetings can be read [here](#). Secretary Kerry's schedule for his second day of meetings in Egypt can be found [here](#).

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, after meeting with Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, and upon President Morsi's agreement to implement economic reforms with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Secretary of State John Kerry announced \$250 million in assistance to Egypt. Approximately \$190 million in U.S. aid will go towards the Egyptian government's budget, while \$60 million will be spent on programs to support the creation of small businesses in Egypt. A *New York Times* article on Secretary Kerry's announcement of U.S. aid to Egypt can be read [here](#).

#### **Kenya**

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, the State Department released a fact sheet on U.S. government assistance in support of free, fair, and transparent elections in Kenya. According to the fact sheet, not only has Kenya been a reliable U.S. partner in a volatile region, but the country also serves as an economic powerhouse

and transportation hub in East Africa that helps to provide security to neighboring African nations. The fact sheet also details U.S. support to Kenya in the areas of strengthening Kenya's Independent Elections and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), civic and voter education, elections security, conflict prevention and mitigation, and youth engagement. The State Department fact sheet on U.S. relations with Kenya can be viewed [here](#).

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, *BBC News* reported that a separatist movement in Kenya known as the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) is gathering support and calling on voters to boycott the elections in Kenya. MRC Secretary General Andu Ruwa has stated the objective of the movement is to lift the coastal people of Kenya from the neo-colonialism of the government of Kenya. The Kenyan government has expressed concerns regarding the MRC and has attempted to ban the movement through the court system. Many MRC leaders have also been arrested. Additional details on the MRC movement in Kenya are available [here](#).

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, State Department Acting Deputy Spokesperson Patrick Ventrell opened up the State Department daily press briefing with a report on the elections in Kenya. He said Kenya's national elections serve as a historic opportunity for Kenya to take another bold step in implementing its new constitution and strengthening its democracy. He expressed optimism that the elections will be free, fair, and transparent. He also reiterated U.S. support for Kenya and noted the U.S. has contributed more than \$35 million to support electoral reform, civic education, and elections preparation since 2010, and more than \$90 million to support constitutional reform, conflict mitigation, civil society, and youth empowerment since 2008. Acting Deputy Spokesperson Ventrell's full remarks on the elections in Kenya can be read [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, outgoing Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki addressed the nation on the elections. President Kibaki's address was aired live on radio and television stations across the country. In his remarks, which followed President Kibaki's invitation to the eight presidential candidates to the State House for tea, the President expressed confidence in the IEBC and Kenya's police forces to oversee the elections process. Additional information on President Kibaki's nationwide address on the elections in Kenya is available [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, voters in Kenya went to the polls to elect a new president. Turnout in the election has reportedly been more than 70%. With about half the ballots counted, Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta had received roughly 53% of the vote, while Prime Minister Raila Odinga had about 42%. If a candidate fails to achieve a clear majority, a runoff election will occur in about a month. Details on the presidential election in Kenya are available [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, State Department Acting Deputy Spokesperson Patrick Ventrell was asked to provide an updated assessment of the elections in Kenya. Acting Deputy Spokesperson Ventrell reported that there has been high voter turnout and that media and election observers in Kenya have described the situation as generally peaceful, although there have been some isolated incidents of violence. The full transcript of Acting Deputy Spokesperson Ventrell's remarks on the elections in Kenya can be found [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the IEBC issued a statement indicating plans to announced official results from the elections in Kenya on March 6<sup>th</sup>. According to the IEBC, election results had yet to be announced due to delays experienced by electronic transmitters. The IEBC called on voters in Kenya to remain calm in anticipation of the election results. At the time of the IEBC announcement, Uhuru Kenyatta maintained the lead in provisional results with 2,753,414 votes. More current IEBC updates on the election in Kenya have been posted [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the State Department issued a statement applauding the peaceful elections in Kenya on March 4<sup>th</sup>. While acknowledging isolated incidences of violence, the State Department commended the calm, orderly, and patient manner in which voting occurred and encouraged Kenyans to avoid any post election violence. The full State Department statement on the elections in Kenya can be read [here](#).

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, State Department Spokesperson Victoria Nuland addressed concerns that the IEBC was still in the process of counting votes and claims made by Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga

that counting should be stopped because voting was fraudulent. Spokesperson Nuland said that the State Department is continuing to urge the IEBC to continue its work counting votes in a thorough, transparent, and professional manner and to announce the election results as expeditiously as possible. She also encouraged patience in Kenya as the votes continue to be counted. Spokesperson Nuland's full remarks on the status of the election results in Kenya can be read [here](#).

## ***Mali***

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, State Department Acting Deputy Spokesperson Patrick Ventrell responded to a question regarding reports that one of the senior leaders of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM), Abdelhamid Abu Zeid had been killed in fighting with French troops in Mali. Acting Deputy Spokesperson Ventrell responded that these reports had not been confirmed, but noted that the death of Abu Zeid would represent a significant blow to AQIM's efforts to exploit West Africa. Acting Deputy Spokesperson Ventrell's full comments related to reports of Abu Zeid's death are available [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, State Department Acting Deputy Spokesperson Patrick Ventrell was asked again about the reported death of AQIM leader Abdelhamid Abu Zeid, as well as new reports that another Islamist leader, Mokhtar bel Mokhtar, had been killed in Mali. Acting Deputy Spokesperson Ventrell said that while reports indicate that Mokhtar was killed on March 2<sup>nd</sup> by French and Chadian forces, the State Department has yet to receive official confirmation of either death. He noted that the French forces in Mali have made significant gains and there is ongoing discussion at the United Nations (UN) to bring the African-led international support mission in Mali under UN authority. The full transcript from the State Department's daily press briefing can be read [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said French and Chadian troops in Mali killed 15 Islamist militants in the country's northern Ametetai valley during an overnight attack. Chad's President Idriss Deby confirmed the attack killed two prominent Al Qaeda leaders. Details on the attack and comments from Foreign Minister Le Drian can be found [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, French officials acknowledged that, while steady advances are being made on militant forces in Mali, the full threat of terror might never be eliminated from the region. The combined French and African forces have decimated the militant forces in Mali and freed northern cities that had been held by Islamist extremists since the spring of 2012. Fighting continues in the country's mountainous northern region. Details on the latest French military actions in Mali are available [here](#).

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, French President Francois Hollande said his country would begin phasing out its involvement in Mali beginning in April. Although French officials had said that troops would begin withdrawing in March, President Hollande said April would bring a decrease in France's commitment of 4,000 troops. Comments from President Hollande and an article on the withdrawal can be read [here](#).

## ***Tunisia***

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, sources within Tunisia's new political coalition of moderate Islamists, secularists, and non-partisans said independents will now lead the country's foreign and defense ministries. Political unrest pressured the ruling Ennahda party to make cabinet changes following the assassination of Chokri Belaid. Ennahda has denied any involvement in the killing. Details on the new cabinet appointments are available [here](#).

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, State Department Spokesperson Victoria Nuland presented the State Department's position on the new coalition government in Tunisia. Spokesperson Nuland indicated that transition is still in progress, but U.S. officials are gratified to see the parties talking to one another and dialoguing in a peaceful manner. Spokesperson Nuland's full remarks on the government transition in Tunisia can be found [here](#).

## **United States – Africa Relations**

### ***White House***

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, White House National Security Advisor Tom Donilon announced Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon is joining President Obama's national security staff as the White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region. Assistant Secretary Gordon's first day in his new position will be March 11<sup>th</sup>. The White House announcement can be found [here](#).

### **State Department**

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, State Department Acting Deputy Spokesperson Patrick Ventrell addressed a media question related to the announcement that the main opposition group in Egypt will boycott the upcoming elections, which will begin on April 27<sup>th</sup> and conclude in late June. Deputy Spokesperson Ventrell indicated that President Obama had a call with Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi regarding the upcoming elections during which he articulated the U.S. position that all political parties and individuals with an interest in representing the Egyptian people should be encouraged to participate in the elections. The full transcript of the State Department daily press briefing can be read [here](#).

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, the State Department issued a statement calling for nonviolence and support for a peaceful democratic process in the West African nation of Guinea. Violence has recently disrupted the political protests in the capitol city of Conakry. The U.S. continues to encourage Guinea to work with all political parties, government officials, security forces, and civil society to ensure peaceful legislative elections, planned for May 2013. The State Department release on the recent violence in Guinea is available [here](#).

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Robert Hormats met with Ambassador Princeton Lyman, U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan. The meeting was held at the State Department and was noticed on the State Department's daily appointment schedule, which is posted [here](#).

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, the State Department issued opportunity announcements for NGOs to receive funding to benefit refugees in South Sudan. The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration said it anticipates sending \$4 million to support NGO programs in South Sudan. The State Department announcement is available [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, the State Department announced that U.S. Special Advisor for Children's Issues, Ambassador Susan Jacobs, would be traveling to Egypt March 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>. During her trip, Ambassador Jacobs was scheduled to meet with Egyptian government officials and non-governmental organizations to promote Egypt's accession to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The State Department announcement on Ambassador Jacobs' travel to Egypt can be found [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman attended a dinner hosted by Ambassador of Morocco to the U.S. Rachad Bouhlal and his wife. The event took place at Ambassador Bouhlal's residence in Washington, DC, and was included on the State Department's daily appointment schedule, which can be viewed [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, the State Department announced that on March 8<sup>th</sup>, Secretary of State John Kerry and First Lady Michelle Obama would present 10 women, including three women from Africa, with the Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award. This annual award is used to recognize women who have demonstrated courage and leadership in advocating for women's rights and empowerment. This year's awardees from Africa include Samira Ibrahim of Egypt, Coordinator of Know Your Rights, Dr. Josephine Obiajulu Odumakin of Nigeria, President of Campaign for Democracy, and Fartuun Adan of Somalia, Executive Director of Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre. Additional information about the awardees is available [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, the State Department issued a statement welcoming the decision of the Mogadishu appeals court to overturn the conviction of a 27-year-old-alleged rape survivor in Somalia. While the State Department applauded this decision, it expressed disappointment that the same court decided to uphold the conviction of journalist Abdiiazab Abdinur Ibrahim, who interviewed the alleged rape victim in question. Although Ibrahim's sentence has been reduced from one year to six months, the U.S. urged Somalia to ensure that freedom of expression provisions in Somalia's provisional constitution

are protected. The full State Department release can be read [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, Secretary of State John Kerry held an interview with James Rosen of *Fox News*. Rosen asked Secretary Kerry why no survivors of the Benghazi tragedy have discussed the attack with the media. Secretary Kerry said the survivors of the attack are doing well and that lessons learned from the attack are currently being implemented by the State Department. The interview transcript can be viewed [here](#).

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, the State Department issued a statement in recognition of Ghana's National Day. In the statement, Secretary of State John Kerry recognized Ghana's celebration of 56 years of independence and congratulated Ghana on completing its sixth presidential and parliamentary elections. The full State Department statement can be viewed [here](#).

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Sherman met with an Egyptian Presidential Delegation led by Dr. Pakinam El Sharkawy, Assistant to Egyptian President for Political Affairs, in Washington, DC. Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Robert Hormats also met with the Egyptian delegation. The meetings were included on the State Department's daily appointment schedule, which can be viewed [here](#).

### ***Department of Defense***

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, the Obangame Express 2013 Exercise, an effort to help African maritime nations better monitor and enforce territorial waters, concluded in the Gulf of Guinea. The exercise included practice in at-sea ship boarding, air operations, and communication drills. More information on the exercise is available [here](#).

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, former Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE) was sworn in as the 24<sup>th</sup> Secretary of Defense. Following the ceremony, Secretary Hagel spoke to service members and civilian employees at the Pentagon. Additional details are available [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, Pentagon Press Secretary George Little reported that Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel spent much of his first week in the position on calls with foreign counterparts and defense leaders, including Egyptian Minister of Defense Abdul Fatah al-Sisi. During this call, Secretary Hagel expressed a personal commitment to maintaining strong military relations between the U.S. and Egypt, regardless of fiscal uncertainty in Washington, DC. Secretary Hagel and Minister of Defense al-Sisi also discussed combatting violent extremism, nonproliferation of weapons, and regional stability. A Department of Defense press release has been posted [here](#).

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) held a security seminar on maritime safety and threats in Cote d'Ivoire. U.S. Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire Phillip Carter III said Africa's oceans remain a crucial platform for trade in the area. During the seminar, attendees assessed the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy. Details on the meeting are available [here](#).

### ***U.S. Congress***

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) said she expected the White House would send Congress additional classified documents that would clear a path for approval of the nomination of John Brennan to serve as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), with a vote likely the week of March 4<sup>th</sup>. Ranking Member Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) indicated that the additional documents could contain information on both the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, as well as drone strikes. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) also indicated he was still waiting for the White House to respond to some of his questions related to the Benghazi attack. A *Washington Post* article on the status of Brennan's nomination can be read [here](#).

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Chair Marcia L. Fudge (D-OH) announced the CBC taskforces for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. CBC taskforces examine issues impacting African American and vulnerable communities to develop and support necessary policy solutions. The Co-Chairs of the Africa Taskforce will be Representatives Gregory Meeks (D-NY) and Karen Bass (D-CA). Additional

Members serving on the Africa taskforce include Representatives Bobby Rush (D-IL), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Keith Ellison (D-MN), and Hank Johnson (D-GA). More information on the CBC taskforces can be found [here](#).

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Representative Ed Royce (R-CA) released a statement on the killing of Mokhtar bel Mokhtar, who is believed to have collected more than \$50 million from kidnapping ransoms. Mokhtar also claimed responsibility for the January attack on an Algerian gas plant. Representative Royce said that the killing would represent a hard blow to jihadists operating in North Africa. Representative Royce's statement can be read [here](#).

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) appeared on *Face the Nation* and insisted that John Brennan's nomination to serve as Director of the CIA should not move forward until there is greater understanding of the attack that occurred on the U.S. mission in Benghazi on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Senator Graham also indicated that he is asking the Obama Administration for official interviews with survivors and real-time transmissions between Washington and Libya on the night of the attack. Additional details regarding Senator Graham's appearance on *Face the Nation* are available [here](#).

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, a spokeswoman for Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) announced the Committee would vote on John Brennan's nomination to serve as CIA Director the afternoon of March 4<sup>th</sup> in a closed session. While a vote on Brennan's nomination had been tentatively scheduled for last week, both Democratic and Republican senators had held up the nomination as a means to secure additional information regarding the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya. The vote was noticed on the Committee calendar, which is posted [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, the House Appropriations Committee unveiled a continuing resolution (CR) including nearly \$2 billion in additional diplomatic security funding following a request linked to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi. A portion of the funds identified for increased diplomatic security are derived from unspent funds allocated for the War in Iraq. Upon its unveiling, Republican leaders in the House indicated a floor vote on the proposed CR would be held later in the week. The bill ultimately passed the House on March 6<sup>th</sup>. Additional information about this provision in the CR can be found [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Intelligence Committee approved John Brennan's nomination to serve as CIA Director by a vote of 12-3. Following the Committee vote, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) indicated that he wanted the full Senate to consider Brennan's nomination by the end of the week. An article on the Senate Intelligence Committee vote can be read [here](#).

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) began to filibuster a floor vote to confirm John Brennan as Director of the CIA, vowing to keep speaking to derail Senate action. Despite earlier holds on Brennan's nomination related to outstanding questions on the terrorist attack in Benghazi, Senator Paul indicated his intentions to filibuster were based on a letter authored by Attorney General Eric Holder that Senator Paul interpreted as a justification for drone attacks on American citizens on American soil. Additional details on the filibuster are available [here](#).

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Buck McKeon (R-CA) expressed concern that budget ambiguity may jeopardize U.S. military commitments around the globe. More specifically Representative McKeon argued that the U.S. faces a strategic threat because of ill-defined commitments to the region covered by the military's Central Command, which includes North Africa. An article on Representative McKeon's concerns can be found [here](#).

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Armed Services Committee held an oversight hearing on AFRICOM and U.S. Transportation Command. The purpose of the hearing was to receive testimony on AFRICOM and U.S. Transportation Command in review of the defense authorization request for FY14 and the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP). General Carter Ham, the current Commander for AFRICOM, testified at the hearing. An archived webcast of the hearing can be watched [here](#).

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs Chris Coons (D-DE) released a report entitled *Embracing Africa's Economic Potential: Recommendations*

for *Strengthening Trade Relationships between the United States and Sub-Saharan Africa*. The report includes recommendations for economic engagement between the U.S. and Africa, including supporting Africa-led efforts to improve the business environment, reauthorizing and strengthening the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), developing an interagency strategy for increased investment in Sub-Saharan Africa, and increasing the presence of U.S. Foreign Commercial Service officers to help U.S. companies to navigate the business environment in the region. A press release from Senator Coons' office on the report can be read [here](#). The full report can be viewed [here](#).

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, the Senate confirmed John Brennan to serve as the next Director of the CIA by a vote of 63-34. A *Washington Post* article on the confirmation vote can be found [here](#).

### **North Africa**

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan said Mohsen Derregia, the head of the Libyan Investment Authority (LIA), refused to step down from his post despite being dismissed by the board of the LIA. In 2010, the LIA was the world's largest investment fund, with holdings of \$64 billion. Derregia provided numerous reasons for not stepping down in an interview with the *Libya Herald*, available [here](#).

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, *Reuters* reported that Britain is increasingly looking to decrease its gas imports from Qatar while increasing gas imports from Nigeria. The potential for Algerian gas exports to the U.K. is anticipated to be a topic of discussion when Algerian Energy Minister Youcef Yousfi travels to London March 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. Energy Minister Yousfi's travel follows British Prime Minister David Cameron's travel to Algiers, Algeria in the wake of the hostage situation at a desert gas plant in Algeria earlier this year. Additional details on the relationship between Algeria and the U.K. related to gas supplies are available [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, H.A. Hellyer and the Brookings Institution released an outlook for the Egyptian political landscape ahead of the country's parliamentary elections in April. The outlook notes that it is difficult to predict the future in Egypt and that the country is still in transition. The full report is available [here](#).

### **East Africa**

On February 27<sup>th</sup>, the *New York Times* reported on Ethiopia's efforts to attract foreign athletes to competitive races in Ethiopia. According to the article, the annual Great Ethiopian run, held in the capital city of Addis Ababa every November, has failed to attract top foreign athletes. As a result, Ethiopia is planning the first Haile Gebrselassie Marathon, named after one of Ethiopia's most successful runners and businessmen, for October. In order to attract foreign athletes, the marathon will be held in Hawassa in southern Ethiopia with a prize of \$19,000. Additional details on planning for the marathon are available [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the Bank of Uganda kept its Central Bank Rate at 12% to address the increased cost of living in the country. The rate has been brought down from 23% last November. The Bank of Uganda projects that GDP growth will recover in 2013 and 2014. An article on the maintained rate is available [here](#).

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, the UN Security Council voted to suspend, for one year, the weapons embargo on Somalia. The UN said the move would help strengthen the new Somali government. Weapons like surface-to-air missiles, antitank guided weapons, mines, and night-vision goggles are still restricted from being sold. More details on the embargo, which has been in place since 1992, can be found [here](#).

### **West Africa**

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, *Buzzfeed* reported on a new collection of queer African fiction published last month as an edition of *Q-zine*, a quarterly magazine put out by the Burkina Faso-based Queer African Youth Networking Center. At a time when politicians in several African countries use homosexuality as an explosive wedge issue, the magazine's objective is to push back on media portrayals of gays, lesbians, and transgendered Africans. Additional details on the most recent edition of *Q-Zine* are

available [here](#).

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, the *New York Times* reported on grassroots efforts in West Africa to stop local governments, such as the government of Senegal, from granting so many foreign fishing licenses. With the support of organizations, such as Greenpeace, small-scale fisherman in West Africa have successfully implemented campaigns that have resulted in the revocation of foreign fishing licenses, allowing fleets originating from the European Union (EU), Russia, China, Korea, Taiwan, and Belize to operate in the Senegalese exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The *New York Times* report on advocacy in opposition to foreign fishing licenses in West Africa can be found [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, President of the ECOWAS Commission, Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo announced that the economy of the West African regional bloc grew by 6.9% in 2012. The announcement came as part of a report delivered at the 42<sup>nd</sup> ECOWAS Summit in Ivory Coast. ECOWAS Commission President Ouédraogo noted West African economic growth outpaced economic growth in South Africa, which occurred at a rate of 5.3%. In addition, he noted Sierra Leone recorded the highest economic growth rate of all 15 ECOWAS countries at 18.3%. Additional details on economic growth in the region can be read [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Ghana's President John Mahama launched a \$10 billion project to build an IT hub in the capitol city of Accra over the next three years. The project, called Hope City, is intended to be the tallest building in Africa at a height of 885 feet. The IT hub is anticipated to employ 50,000 people. An article on the launch of the Hope City project can be found [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Royal Dutch Shell announced that it might shut down operations of the Nembe Creek oil pipeline in Nigeria due to thefts of thousands of barrels from the pipeline. The pipeline moves more than 150,000 barrels of oil per day. Some experts suggest that Nigerian officials are part of the thefts. An article on the potential pipeline closure is available [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, *Bloomberg* reported that Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana remains the two-to-one favorite to replace Pope Benedict XVI as head of the Catholic Church, according to Paddy Power in Dublin, Ireland. London-based William Hill had Cardinal Turkson ranked as the third frontrunner. The possibility that Cardinal Turkson may become the next pope is especially important in Africa, especially as Catholics comprise 13.1% of Ghana's population of 24.6 million people. Additional information on Cardinal Turkson's prospects of becoming the next pope is available [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, Chief Executive Officer of Citi Bank for Africa Naveed Riaz met with Ghana's Vice President Kwesi Amissah-Arthur to discuss Citi Bank's intentions to seek a full banking license so that it can launch operations in Ghana. According to Vice President Amissah-Arthur, Citi Bank would become the first U.S. Bank operating in Ghana. Citi Bank currently has operations in 16 other African nations. An article on Citi Bank's efforts to enter the banking market in Ghana can be read [here](#).

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, Ghana celebrated its 56<sup>th</sup> independence day. President John Dramani Mahama marked the occasion with remarks delivered at the Independence Square in the capital city of Accra. In recognition of the holiday, parades were held throughout the country and 20 students from across Ghana were presented the President's Independence Awards. Additional details on the celebrations in Ghana can be found [here](#).

### **Sub-Saharan Africa**

On February 27<sup>th</sup>, South African Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan presented the 2013 national budget in Parliament. Of notable interest, the budget includes a proposed 15% corporate income tax rate incentive for medium-sized businesses in some of the country's special economic zones intended to boost competitiveness in the manufacturing sector. In addition, the budget proposes a personal tax relief amounting to \$770 million nationally, introduces an employment tax incentive targeted to support young workers and those working in special economic zones, and marginally increases the tax on plastic bags used by supermarkets and other consumer outlets. During his speech Finance Minister Gordhan also announced that South Africa would proceed with the implementation of a carbon tax in January 2015. A transcript of Finance Minister Gordhan's remarks to Parliament can be read [here](#).

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, fighting erupted between the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS). The fighting has killed at least 70 people and has caused thousands more to flee the eastern part of the DRC. Details on the violence in the country can be found [here](#).

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, the M23 rebel group split after the group's military leader, General Sultani Makenga, said M23 President Jean-Marie Runiga provided financial support to a wanted war criminal. The M23 group has fought against the DRC government. The rebel group demands implementation of the peace accord agreements signed by the DRC government in 2009. More information on the group's split is available [here](#).

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, Zambian economist Dambisa Moyo appeared on *CNN* to discuss how international aid stifles Africa's development. During the *CNN* interview, Moyo argued that Africa is in need of jobs creation, investment, trade, and foreign direct investment, and that China may be best positioned to provide the right combination of economic stimulus to developing economies in Africa. A transcript from the *CNN* interview can be read [here](#).

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, it was determined that Nigeria became the country with the second highest growth in YouTube viewership in 2012, with the number of views increasing by 125%. YouTube viewership growth in Sub-Saharan Africa was only outpaced by Ghana, where viewership increased by 140%. Other Sub-Saharan countries observed growth in YouTube utilization in 2012, including Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, and Senegal. Additional details on YouTube trends in Sub-Saharan Africa can be viewed [here](#).

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, the South African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat announced that the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development has entered into force following ratification by two thirds of member states, including Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The protocol's objectives are to provide for the empowerment of women, to eliminate discrimination, and to achieve gender equality and equity through gender-responsive legislation and policies. Additional information on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development can be found [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, worldwide financial and tax advisory firm KPMG ranked Nigeria as one of the four major investment destinations and growth areas in the world following poor performance by other popular destinations for investment, including Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa. KPMG attributed Nigeria's appeal to a growing middle class, a predictable regulatory environment, and transparent and stable government. Additional information from KPMG on investing in Nigeria is available [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, a plane crash in the DRC killed 36 people. Poor weather in the eastern city of Goma led to the crash. The DRC has one of the world's worst air traffic safety records. An article on the crash can be read [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Google recognized the birthday of South African-born civil rights campaigner Miriam Makeba with a Google doodle. Makeba was also a singer who performed at U.S. President John Kennedy's birthday party at the Kennedy Center in 1962. An article on Google's recognition of Makeba's birthday can be read [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Managing Director and Chief Executive of Fidelity Bank Reginald Ihejiahi disclosed that Fidelity Bank is the financier of Africa's biggest aluminum can factory which is to be completed in a few months with a production capacity of 1.2 billion cans, in Aba, Nigeria. The first aluminum can manufacturing facility in West Africa, Agbara Can Manufacturing Factory, was launched in 2010 and was also financed by Fidelity Bank. Additional information on Fidelity Bank's investments in aluminum can factories in Africa can be found [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe celebrated his birthday in the mining town of Bindura. During the celebration, President Mugabe was presented with a cake said to weigh close to 200 pounds and gold coins were minted in honor of the occasion. Despite the lavish celebrations, in

his remarks, President Mugabe confronted claims that he was seeking to intimidate political opponents in elections later this year. Additional information on President Mugabe's birthday celebration can be found [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Angola announced that freight trains would resume the transport of cargo from Luanda port in Angola for the first time in two decades. Angola has spent \$600 million over two years, with loans and workers from China, to rebuild the two main rail lines leaving the capital city. In the interim, importers have relied on cargo trucking operations. An article on freight rail developments in Angola can be viewed [here](#).

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, tensions continued between miners and the South African company, Lonmin. Six thousand workers protested outside Lonmin's Marikana mine. Rival unions are competing for members, largely because the union with the greatest number of members holds negotiating power. More information on the labor tensions is available [here](#).

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, De Beers announced that diamond exports from Botswana neared \$5 billion in 2012, representing a nearly 20% increase from the previous year. Diamond exports comprise approximately 63% of the country's total principle goods shipped out. The increase in exports over the past year is largely attributed to a new sorting center in Gaborone, Botswana, that ships materials to locations throughout the world. An article on diamond exports from Botswana can read [here](#).

On April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, partners of the 49M initiative, a project launched in March 2011 to encourage South Africans to cut their energy consumption by 10%, will host the Sustain and Build Africa conference. The event will focus on intelligent building and lighting design, solar and wind projects, and independent power producers (IPPs) in the electricity sector. Additional details on the 49M initiative and the upcoming Sustain and Build Africa conference are available [here](#).

### **General Africa News**

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, the journal *Science* published a study finding that airborne dust and other particles from as far away as the Sahara are linked to winter precipitation in U.S. states, such as California and Colorado, in the Sierra Nevada region. While National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) researchers were surprised that dust particles in clouds over California could come from as far away as Africa, the report highlights how these particles ultimately end up in reservoirs in the U.S. that hold water resources used for drinking water, hydropower, and agriculture. Additional information on this study can be found [here](#).

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, *The Economist* published a report arguing that while Africa has made significant progress in bringing its economy to flourish, Africans need to take the additional steps necessary to complete economic transformation, such as building infrastructure, rooting out corruption, and streamlining government regulation. The report on next steps for Africa's economy can be read [here](#).

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Deloitte issued a brief providing insights on the opportunities and risks in Africa's construction sector. According to the brief, opportunities in Africa's construction sector include rapid urbanization, strong current and projected economic growth, a rising middle class, regional integration and strengthened democracy, and increasing transparency in government. The brief also identifies risks to investment, including challenges of accessing funding for property development in Sub-Saharan Africa, lack of alignment on national and regional priorities for construction projects that cross borders, and non-availability of specialist building materials. The full brief can be obtained [here](#).

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank issued a report entitled "*Growing Africa: Unlocking the Potential of Agribusiness*," arguing that Africa's agricultural sector could become a \$1 trillion industry by 2030 if governments and the private sector shift policy to better support African farmers to take advantage of the increase in global demand for food and higher prices. Additional findings from the World Bank report on developing Africa's agricultural sector are available [here](#).

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, a study in the journal *Ecology Letters* noted that half of Africa's lion population could go extinct in the next 40 years if efforts are not taken to protect the animals. Conservationists say lions face an increasing human population, poachers, and declining prey populations. More information on

the study can be found [here](#).

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