

**AVIATION, TOURISM AND CONSERVATION NEWS from Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.**  
*A weekly roundup of breaking news, reports, travel stories and opinions by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang H. Thome*



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### **EUROPEAN NIGHT FLIGHT BANS, RUNWAY BOTTLENECKS AID GULF AIRLINES**

The European Union, and several of the member states, appear to be on a collision course with their aviation industry, first over the 'down your throat' ETS regulations, which have met with global opposition and demands to let ICAO come up with a world wide solution, and also over regulatory measures and court orders, restricting flying hours at key airports and drowning expansion projects in litigation.

Contacts in several European airlines have left privately no doubt, that they would hope for nothing better than political and retaliatory measures by countries like China, Russia, India, the United States and perhaps even the Gulf states to succeed and force the European Commission to reverse their course, while officially remaining subdued if not resigned into their fate, that the almighty EU got it wrong but also got away with it so far.

At the same time are complaints about the uneven playing field vis a vis the leading Gulf airlines like Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad returning in dialogue sessions between EU based airlines, their association and their respective European governments, alleging anything from outright subsidies to undercutting of fares.

The core problem however lies elsewhere as more recent developments once again have made clear. In Germany, literally coinciding with the opening of another runway at Frankfurt, a court upheld the night flight ban from 11 pm until 5 am, i.e. 6 hours, which passenger but more important cargo airlines claim will hugely disadvantage them compared to hubs which can operate at 100 percent and not at 75 percent only. The new Berlin airport too has been subjected to such restrictions and earlier in the week did the state of North Rhine Westphalia equally impose a ban on passenger aircraft between 11 pm and 5 am for the Cologne / Bonn airport, yet in a mindboggling display of incompetent arguments let cargo airlines keep operating during those hours.

Across the channel a different but all too familiar problem hampers the growth of air traffic into Heathrow, where the current government has immediately upon taking office 2 years ago decided against the building of another runway, leaving airlines in a lurch. From a UK based source it is understood that over 85 percent of the airlines flying to Heathrow would add more frequencies if only they could get slots, but with runway capacity at the UK's most important airport now utilized by over 99 percent this will remain a wish no Santa Claus can ever deliver. The Board of Airline Representatives in the UK has in a recently published survey also said that about half of their member airlines, a total of 86 flying in and out of the UK, have stated to them that they were actively considering moving at least part of their operations out of Britain, should push come to shove and they find their financial future in jeopardy over lack of slots or their ability to expand and meet growing traffic demand.

While there are current indications, that a new policy paper on aviation may recommend that the present coalition government review their hard stand on the third runway at Heathrow, critics pointed out that whatever little progress there maybe, it would come too late and offer too limited an expansion space, saying a third runway at Heathrow should be under construction now and a fourth in the planning stages to retain the airport's global position as the busiest international transit hub. That accolade though is expected to be yielded to Dubai International, which by 2013 is due to overtake Heathrow and become the busiest international transit airport, courtesy at least in part by Heathrow being unable to expand in time.

Meanwhile though have the declared 'enemies' in the Gulf found unconditional backing by their own governments to catapult aviation infrastructure deep into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Dubai International Airport is looking towards the completion of a new dedicated A380 terminal exclusively used by Emirates while already embarking on the building of Terminal Four. At the same time, in aviation terms only a stone throw away, is the new mega airport Al Maktoum International at Jebel Ali nearing its opening phase for passenger operations. When complete it will be the world's largest airport with 6 runways and a metro line connecting the two Dubai airports 'airside'.

In neighbouring Abu Dhabi a new central terminal was approved for construction earlier this year, to turn Etihad's home base into a state of the art airport while further up the Gulf Doha is gearing up towards the opening of their new mega airport, home of Qatar Airways, another airline on the prowl and ready to exploit the follies of the European Union, European governments and subsequently hamstrung airlines, which appear to have become the favourite punching ball of pseudo eco policies.

Notably has Air Berlin's CEO Hartmut Mehdorn spoken out against the night flight ban into Cologne / Bonn, with the airline claiming nearly 30 flights a night will be affected as a result of the ban on night flights, seriously compromising the airport's connectivity into the wider Air Berlin network. Air Berlin notably is now tied to Etihad, which now holds nearly 30 percent of the Air Berlin shares and codeshares a large number of flights into Abu Dhabi and beyond. Mehdorn was quoted as having said: *'This is the wrong decision, taken at the wrong time'* before adding *'... making this kind of change damages business, costs jobs and prevents airports and airlines from planning with confidence for the future'*.

An uncertain future that is, should German airports continue to be compelled to operate only 75 percent of the available hours every day, airlines be taxed beyond acceptable levels and branded environmental polluters of the highest order, contrary to available evidence of aviation's carbon footprint on a global scale.

Should Europe, the EU and individual governments not find a way forward to sensibly address such issues, and on the fast track, they will be the ones history will blame when the present seismic shift of traffic volumes to the Gulf, from the former aviation world powers America and Europe, continues beyond the point of return. Signs though are they won't change tack, not of their own free will or by recognizing their failed approach to aviation, leaving the future of aviation looking at the Gulf and the Far East including China, relegating themselves almost by default into columns of have beens. Watch this space.

## **East Africa News**

### **EAST AFRICA'S FORESTS – GOING, GOING, GOING AND GONE BY WHEN**

The recently published East Africa Report 2012 makes grim reading, when it comes to the forests in the region, as over the past 20 years, between 1990 and 2010 more than 22 million hectares of forests were razed, for logging, through population encroachment and to make way for farming, the latter often shortlived, as the soil quality rapidly exhausts, then forcing yet more clearing of forest to squeeze out another 2 or 3 harvests before the deadly cycle continues.

While between 1990 and 2000, according to the report, a forest shrinkage from 107 million hectares to 98 million hectares was recorded, a loss of 9 percent, the following decade between 2000 and 2010 saw this trend accelerate significantly to 13 percent, leading to a further reduction of forests to now only 85 million hectares.

The biggest 'culprit' in this report appears to be Tanzania, where the shrinkage was way beyond average recorded in the East African region, with a 67 percent reduction compared to Kenya's 33 percent while significantly Rwanda has actually added forest cover during the period, accelerating in fact in recent years as part of a determined policy implementation to restore amongst others Gishwati forest to its former size and link it back to the Nyungwe Forest National Park.

While Tanzania retains the largest percentage in spite of the major losses in recent years, with 45 million hectares of forest, it is ominous that upon a presidential directive the application for UNESCO World Heritage Status for the Eastern Arc Mountains was withdrawn, paving the way for extensive logging and mineral extraction without having to answer UNESCO. This move was ostensibly aimed to prevent finding local activities in the spotlight of the international media, as is presently the case over the hugely controversial plans to build a highway across the Serengeti – most recently local politicians demanded that the highway be paved even inside the park belying earlier assurances given even by President Kikwete himself – or the planned Uranium mining inside the Selous Game Reserve. Both locations are UNESCO World Heritage Sites, bringing the Tanzanian government and UNESCO officials to loggerheads.

In Uganda, plans by President Museveni have never been shelved to carve out nearly 8,000 hectares of prime rainforest from Mabira to give to a sugar baron for cane farming, in spite of the availability of land or the option to use more outgrowers, something the company has refused as they would have to pay instead of getting it for free. It

is worth pointing out that the performance ratio of this sugar company in Lugazi is the worst in comparison with all other major sugar companies, and that the same government has withdrawn from its erstwhile shareholding due to the persistent losses the company has made in recent years.

Also in Uganda is a section of the Murchisons Falls forest above the Nile falls under threat, where again President Museveni seems to think that cutting prime forest to create a golf course is a splendid idea, when a few miles outside the park an almost idle golf course at Pakwach could be upgraded to achieve the same purpose, except in the process leaving the park forest alone. Mindboggling!

And in Kenya is the saga of the Mau Forest ongoing, as is the Karura Forest in Nairobi under renewed threat, made famous for the civil disobedience campaign by the late Prof. Wangari Mathai, who later became Kenya's first ever Nobel Peace Prize winner.

The assault on East Africa's environment are many, like the '*Corridor of Destruction*' in Tanzania, the constant politically motivated encroachment of Mt. Elgon National Park or the forests in Kibale District, where political opportunism and anticipated gains in voter favour seem to shove environmental concerns rudely aside.

Yet, the changes to the micro climates across the region have started to have a real impact and the quickening cycles of drought and floods has reaffirmed what ecologists and environmentalists have long been saying, that part of the climate change now visible for all in Eastern Africa is home made. Draining of wetlands on an unprecedented scale in Uganda and elsewhere in the region, again with the exception of Rwanda, and the brutal onslaught by chainsaws against the forests in the region, has made an impact already, and unless reversed by copying Rwanda's foresighted policy of re-forestation and better organized land use for agriculture, future generations will have to pay dearly for the sins of the present generation of politicians and beneficiaries of unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. One look at the icecaps of Kilimanjaro, Mt. Kenya and the Rwenzori Mountains is enough to confirm the worst fears, that give another 20 or 30 years, they will be all but gone. Quo Vadis East Africa, where to from here. Watch this space as answers will emerge over time.

#### EMIRATES SEEKS TO RECRUIT 4,500 NEW STAFF IN AFRICA



Information was confirmed overnight that Emirates, Dubai's award winning airline, was once again on the prowl in Eastern Africa and in fact across the continent, to recruit 4,500 pilots, cabin crew, engineering, ground handling, operations, IT and other staff, urgently needed to back up the planned expansion of fleet and destinations in coming years. The airline's Regional Manager for Eastern Africa, Mr. Sulaiman Essa Ahmad revealed in a media communiqué to this correspondent that Emirates currently employs over 1,000 Kenyans in a variety of positions, which include, according to the latest figures provided, 10 pilots, 430 cabin crew and over 600 personnel deployed in a range of other areas including engineering. Said Mr. Sulaiman: *'We need around 4,000 cabin crew in this fiscal year plus hundreds of pilots and other operational staff as well. We do not have specific targets for certain countries but instead looking to hire qualified candidates who can meet Emirates high level of competence. Kenyans are well represented in our talent pool and they've demonstrated a good measure of competence and drive. This is yet another opportunity for those wishing to work for Emirates to apply'* before adding: *'Emirates cabin crews are trained to deliver exceptional customer services experience on every flight. Thus, in addition to the requirement above, the candidate should demonstrate a positive attitude and empathy for others, a strong cultural awareness and the ability to adapt to new environments and people, flexibility and the motivation to manage a demanding work schedule, and qualities necessary to live up to the mission and values that Emirates holds in high regard i.e. professional, empathetic, progressive, visionary, cosmopolitan'*.

The airline presently receives one additional wide bodied aircraft every month and currently flies to 123 destinations with their 171 aircraft now in service.

Meanwhile has one airline executive responded to questions posed to him by email, saying: *'Last year we faced a situation where Kenya Airways openly advertised for pilots to join them and that was targeting our captains and first officers. Engineering staff, cabin crew, operations staff are all siphoned away by the big league with better terms and conditions. When the bond arrangements for pilots and other staff trained at our expense expire, we always face a difficult situation if they stay or succumb to offers from other airlines.'*

*Africa is a resource pool, not just for minerals and other riches but now also for well trained staff. Reasons for that are often the political circumstances which are not in favour of top professionals wishing to stay and the opportunities to work as an expatriate especially in the Gulf. Highly qualified staff get paid well, can send money*

*home and us local airlines find it difficult to match terms and conditions. In fact it makes our life much more difficult. We not only compete against the big fish in our own pond which is hard enough as it is, now the Gulf airlines are adding to this. And it is not Emirates alone, every airline now flying from the Gulf to Kenya is looking at recruitments from here. Kenyans are well educated, keen workers with good work ethics and ambitious but this strength is also now a threat to smaller airlines because there simply are not enough training academies to bring up new pilots and the expansion of Gulf airlines is faster than anyone can produce new flying school graduates. So they recruit in the open market’.*

Truly two sides to this coin and as repeatedly referred to here in previous articles, this contentious issue will not go away, considering that Kenya Airways is intent to triple their fleet by 2021 and has already been given green light to recruit expatriate captains themselves to alleviate the looming shortage of cockpit crews. For aviation professionals from Eastern Africa though, this is the time of milk and honey it seems with added opportunities and options how to advance their careers. Watch this space.

## **Uganda News**

### **UGANDA TO STAND BY SOUTHERN SUDAN IN CASE OF FULL SCALE WAR**

Information is circulating in Kampala that the rogue regime of ICC wanted alleged war criminal Bashir in Khartoum has stepped up contacts with the LRA – which leadership is also wanted by the ICC for crimes against humanity – and may be funneling material support to the terror group in an effort to open up new proxy fronts.

Uganda’s Chief of Defense Forces Gen. Aronda Nyakairima has in an address to colleagues from the wider region earlier in the week also left little doubt, that Uganda would come to the aid of Southern Sudan to avoid another genocide, should the regime in Khartoum continue with its aggression against an independent African country. Gen. Aronda was quoted in local media as having said: *‘We will not sit by and do nothing. We will be involved having suffered a proxy war by Khartoum. Our people in northern Uganda suffered and intelligence information also indicates that the LRA, who have an estimated 200 guns, are again in contact with Khartoum’.* The comments echo President Museveni’s own declaration some years earlier, that Uganda would never let another genocide happen again, following the events in Rwanda 18 years ago and also lent credibility to ongoing speculation, following large scale joint war games by the East African militaries with their Southern Sudanese counterparts inside that country last year. Since then it is rumoured that one form of mutual pact or another has been struck between Juba and Kampala, if not other capitals too, to help the newly independent country in case Khartoum would want to make a play for the oilfields, now largely located in the Southern Sudan. Gen. Aronda’s comments are the first ‘official’ reactions following Bashir’s announcement in Khartoum on Wednesday, that he was set to ‘liberate’ the Southern Sudan, in other words grab back the oil and other mineral riches while inflicting ethnic cleansing of major proportions on the Africans living in the South after breaking free from his hardline slavist oppression.

It was also learned that Juba, contrary to misleading press reports in sections of the global media, was ready for a ceasefire on condition that the illegal occupation of Abyei by Khartoum forces would have to end and that a UN peacekeeping force be installed to pave the way for a referendum on Abyei’s future, something likely to be extended then too to South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

Kenya too is thought to consider a response, and although statements have been made to the effect that the UN has to inject a contingent to create a buffer zones between the two countries, it is generally understood that Kenya, come push to shove, will also side with Juba in what could be the precursor to a wider regional conflict including Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, with Khartoum considered a strong backer of the hardline regime in Asmara, which in turn stands accused of propping up the Al Shabab terrorists in Somalia.

Meanwhile have reports come to light of recent large scale elephant poaching in Congo’s Garamba National Park, a suspected hideout of LRA terrorists, which would support the speculation that the outlawed rebel group was using blood ivory to make down-payments on new supplies although weapons and ammunition appear to be freely given by Khartoum in an attempt to stir more trouble in the region. A revival of the LRA would also pose a challenge to the United States which has about 100 logistics and support troops in the region aimed to support Ugandan troops on the ground to hunt down Joseph Kony and bring him to justice, or else inflict a Jonas Savimbi solution on him should he not surrender when cornered. Watch this space to find out if pressure can be brought to bear on Khartoum to pull back from the brink of war, unlikely as that may be considering that this may be Bashir’s last gamble before he himself faces a coup d’etat by regime hardliners who blame him for losing the oil rich South.

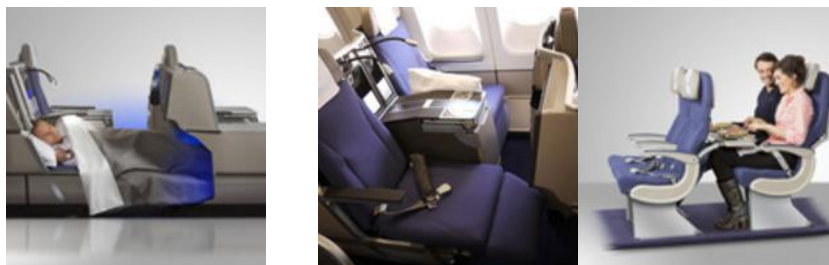
## **BRUSSELS AIRLINES LAUNCHES NEW CABIN PRODUCT**



The latest addition to the growing Brussels Airlines fleet, another A330-300 making it 7 A330 overall, has been unveiled with a new cabin product during a flight last week to Cameroon. A state of the art business class cabin with full flat beds has been introduced while in economy class a new type of ergonomic seats has been installed. A new inflight entertainment system too is in place in the new aircraft, which from June onwards will fly daily to New York. Until then however, 4 more of the A330-300 aircraft will be retrofitted while undergoing maintenance at their stipulated intervals while the 2 A330-200 aircraft, presently deployed on the routes to East Africa due to the larger cargo uplift capacity, will be retrofitted by November this year.

SN has in recent weeks made waves in the market, not just to ‘launch’ their own nonstop flights to the Big Apple from June onwards but also been aggressively marketing their 4 flights per week, only days ago making a unique offer of ‘transferring’ frequent flyer statuses from other airlines to their own ‘*Miles and More*’ loyalty scheme.

Have a preview of the new seat product in both business and economy class, which awaits passengers besides the traditional ‘*Savoir Vivre*’ in the air. Watch this space for breaking and regular news from East Africa’s exciting aviation scene.



## BRUSSELS AIRLINES TURNS UP THE COMPETITIVE HEAT



In what is clearly aimed at capturing market share from their closest competitors, has Brussels Airlines just launched a major campaign in Kampala ‘*It Only Takes One Try To Win Gold*’.

Frequent travelers holding loyalty cards from competing carriers, especially those with lots of miles accrued, often fear to lose those miles and resulting benefits when switching to another airline.

Not so, or no longer with Brussels Airlines. All it takes now is to take one flight with Brussels Airlines, in a class of the travelers choice, between today and the end of June, and prior to that contact the sales team at SN’s Rwenzori House offices along Lumumba Avenue, and hey presto, the miles accrued elsewhere will be translated into the same status with Brussels Airlines ‘*Miles and More*’ – matching Gold with Gold, Silver with Silver and well, Blue in this case with whatever colour others have for entry levels.

That will mean that access to lounges, upgrades subject to space, added baggage allowances and other benefits will be extended to the new SN flyers from the second flight onwards, an attractive proposition by any standards. Anyone for the classic ‘*Savoir Vivre*’ in the air – go see your Brussels Airlines sales representative or visit them via [www.brusselsairlines.com](http://www.brusselsairlines.com) for more information. And as a by the by, come June SN will be flying daily to the Big Apple, aka New York JFK from their hub in Europe’s capital city Brussels. Watch this space.

## CHANGES AT SERENA UGANDA SEE PROMOTIONS, TRANSFERS





With Joyce Wangui, until now Country Sales Manager for Serena Hotels in Uganda, returning to Nairobi to take up a new position as Group Corporate Sales Manager on head office level, Miss Allen Ampaire has been promoted to the position of Country Sales Manager Uganda. Allen will oversee sales for the Kampala Serena Hotel and the Lake Victoria Serena near Lweza on the shores of the lake.

Ms. Jacqueline Kwesiga has subsequently been promoted to the position of Reservations Manager at the Kampala Serena Hotel.

Serena Hotels is publicly listed at the main three East African stock and security exchanges of Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam as TPS East Africa. Started in Kenya in the early 1970's by AKFED, the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development with likeminded partners which at the time included amongst others Lufthansa and AVIS, the hospitality company now covers all of Eastern Africa like no other, with some of the finest safari, beach and city properties in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Mozambique. Congratulations all way round and while many will miss Joyce and her ever cheerful disposition, it will be a fresh challenge for Allen, an equally familiar face at Serena from the very beginning when Serena took over the former Nile Hotel International in 2004 and transformed the 'shoebox' into one the presently most stunning hotel complexes in Kampala.

Visit [www.serenahotels.com](http://www.serenahotels.com) for more information on locations, tariffs and for reservations and payments.

## UGANDA WILDLIFE AUTHORITY COUNTS DOWN TO NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH



The presence, finally, of a competent and respected board of directors at the Uganda Wildlife Authority has made its presence felt almost immediately, as the organization is now sailing in calmer waters once again all round. Sections of the past board, (mis)led by the former chairman who was eventually sacked by the High Court for failing to meet the competence requirements under the relevant law, as well as the ill fated and ill intended commission of enquiry by disgraced retired Justice George Kanyeihamba, had taken issue with the 'Friend a Gorilla Campaign' and related matters, literally paralyzing at the time UWA's public relation and marketing efforts.

On Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> of May will UWA, in conjunction with their partner, USAID's *STAR – Sustainable Tourism In The Albertine Rift* launch their new website and webportal, featuring all the 10 national parks, game reserves and activities UWA is undertaking to preserve Uganda's precious wildlife and protected areas.

Interest for travel to Uganda this year has risen sharply after the *Lonely Planet* named *The Pearl of Africa* as their number one destination for 2012, a year when the country will also celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence from Britain. Venue and time of the event will be announced in coming days. Meanwhile is the current website of UWA still functional via [www.ugandawildlife.org](http://www.ugandawildlife.org), as is by the way the website of the Uganda Tourist Board, accessible via [www.visituganda.com](http://www.visituganda.com)

#VisitUganda2012 is the hashtag location for the campaign on Twitter for those who cannot manage to come to *The Pearl of Africa* this year and are only able to pay *virtual visits* to our beautiful country. Watch this space.

## Kenya News

### KENYA GOVERNMENT MAKES ADDED FINANCIAL PROVISIONS TO PAY FOR KQ SHARES



It was learned overnight that the Treasury in Nairobi has made added provisions to set aside a further 2.5 billion Kenya Shillings to fully pay up their portion of 26 percent, the government holds as a 'golden stake' in Kenya Airways, the country's national airline.

Last year did parliament initially slash the required amount by half but additional funds had to be found to ensure that the crucial 51 percent shareholding by Kenyan institutions and individuals could be maintained to ensure the required status of a national airline vis a vis bilateral agreements and traffic rights in place.

At a share right price of 14 Kenya Shillings per share the transaction is thought to cost the Kenyan government, and ultimately the taxpayers some 4.8 billion KShs but with the prospects of regular dividends declared and paid into the state's coffers.

The take up of share rights is according to financial analysts from Nairobi also on course, though final statements are only expected to be made after the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, when the offer formally expires.

Meanwhile is the airline set to receive another Embraer E 190 in a month's time while also preparing for the launch of nonstop flights to Delhi from 15<sup>th</sup> of May, providing a crucial link for trade and tourism between the two countries. Watch this space.

## C & P CLAIM GLOBAL RUNNER UP POSITION IN *TOURISM FOR TOMORROW AWARDS*



CHELI & PEACOCK

One of Kenya's finest safari camp companies, Cheli & Peacock, has just been anointed global runner up at the '*Tourism For Tomorrow Awards*' in the field of conservation, adding yet another trophy to their display cabinet. Organized annually by the World Travel and Tourism Council, in conjunction with their partners TravelPort and the Travel Corporation Conservation Foundation, these awards are amongst them highest rated in the global hospitality and travel industry. A stringent process, taking the award nominees through a multi phased selection and evaluation, including site visits, led to one of travel's most coveted awards, albeit '*only*' the runner up position, come Cheli & Peacock's way, and for those in the know much deserved.

The C&P collection in Kenya is one of the most outstanding, in terms of locations, design and service, operations in Eastern Africa and many in fact have wondered when, not if, C&P will spread their wings into neighbouring countries to '*spread the gospel of top quality*' to places where there is room for the Cheli & Peacock philosophy.

Started in 1985 as a family owned mobile safari business, it has since then grown in leaps and bounds and established safari camps and lodges in some of the most scenic places across Kenya, winning award after award along the way. Congratulations once again to the entire staff at Cheli & Peacock and of course also to Liz and Stefano for this achievement.

## KENYA WILDLIFE SERVICE PASSES OUT 300 MORE RANGERS



The Tsavo based KWS Manyani training college was the venue for passing out over 300 community game rangers last weekend, who were given intensive training for several months to supplement and assist KWS personnel in combating poaching and keeping rogue animals at bay. The new batch of rangers were specifically trained in paramilitary procedures to be able to serve alongside regular KWS units and security forces during anti poaching operations but notably also received training in the management of ecosystems and lessons in ecology.

Sections of Tsavo East and Tsavo West had in the recent past seen some increased human wildlife conflict when drought conditions saw herds of elephant leave the national park in search of water and pastures as they did for centuries prior, only to find ever more human settlements in their way, causing destruction of property, loss of crops and loss of life even, a sign of failed planning for such eventualities before permitting settlements in areas which are in any case only border line productive for agriculture. KWS in fact over the past months had been involved in several large scale operations to drive elephant back into the parks after they had broken out and are now in the process of installing electric fences and creating ditches along the most common sections of the park where wildlife have in the past broken out.

A statement released by KWS also stated that: '*this programme is to develop the capacity of communities and private land-owners to establish and manage economically viable and sustainable nature-based enterprises within targeted landscapes of Kenya*'.

Watch this space for regular updates on Eastern Africa's wildlife and conservation topics.

## Tanzania News

### NEW RULES FOR TANZANIAN TOUR GUIDES AIMED TO IMPROVE QUALITY

Under a recently launched new set of regulation will it become mandatory for tour guides in Tanzania to register and get licensed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. The measure is expected to come into effect in the

next financial year, to allow for time to work out the logistics and modalities for the measure, which according to an Arusha based source is ***'to improve the quality of our guides and make them more professional'***.

The Director of Tourism in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism met members of the Tanzania Association of Tour Operators in Arusha last week during a meeting to discuss a range of issues concerning the private sector and explained to them the rationale behind this latest regulatory measure.

Requirements presently include having a certificate from a recognized training institution in tour guiding, experience as a guide, training in first aid and a valid driving permit. A regular source from Arusha added his opinion to the new measures by saying: ***'We should not just look at these minimal requirements if we really want to improve the quality of our guides. Those guides should form their own professional body to assess and grade members, setting exam standards for attaining certain levels of competence like knowledge of flora and fauna, ability to identify birds, history, culture, geography and then grant them categories along those lines. The better qualified one is, the more money they can make with their fees. There should be an entrance level for guides, like starters, and I am not talking of what paper they carry from an institution or school but how they perform in the field. It has to be a panel of their peers to judge competence. Then one can attain higher levels after that, or if found worthy and able and skilled they can go straight to higher levels once they have passed exams.'***

***I know in Kenya they have a professional safari guide association and they give their members the chance to sit for regular exams and then get bronze, silver and gold status. That determines the level of their fees, the best get paid a lot more of course. We need to look at that, or how for instance guides are graded in South Africa, where they have a similar system. The guide association administers exams, assesses knowledge and presentation and then gives them their rating and grading. So finally we have made a good start but it will take a lot more to achieve the objective to make Tanzanian guides reach the top of their profession and give the quality services tourists expect. Right now, you can find certain safari tours where the tourists know more about birds than their driver guide does or even their bird guide does. So if we improve that part, our tourists will know that Tanzania was worth visiting not only for the parks and all but for the experience and competence of all the staff they were in contact with during a visit.'***

Others in periodic contact with this correspondent also commented, saying that the new regulations will help to create specialized guides for birding, culture, history and other fields while the regular safari drivers, who often act as guides too at the same time, can acquire more knowledge and skills when undergoing training courses. One source in particular appealed to employers, i.e. the owners of safari companies, to come on board and give their staff the chance to train during the off peak season as it would benefit the customer satisfaction and bring more repeat business to the country.

No comments, in view of this being a weekend, could be obtained from the EAC head quarters in Arusha if there are any plans in the making to have a region wide accreditation and quality standard for guides, similar to the East African Community wide catalogue of criteria for grading and classification of hotels and hospitality businesses. Watch this space.

## **AIR TANZANIA'S PAST SINS COME HOME TO HAUNT THEM**

Parliamentarians opposed to the constant need to bail out ATCL and having to pay for the irresponsible decisions made by top management, have unearthed yet more liabilities, incurred through guarantees given by the Tanzanian government, in connection with past aircraft deals.

The stricken airline, in deep financial doldrums but also without a single plane to fly and earn revenue, some time ago, apparently against the advice of experts and opposition even from within the airline itself, entered into a lease deal for an A320, luring government at the time, possibly by misrepresenting the full facts, into giving a guarantee for the transaction.

This leaves according to the committee on parastatal organizations the government liable to pay over 100 billion Tanzania Shillings and perhaps even greater liabilities, as ATCL seems to have sent the plane for maintenance in France in 2008, but failed to clear the bills now standing at over 3 million US Dollars. This is consistent to ATCL's handling of major maintenance of a Bombardier Q300, which government had to bail out from an imminent auction in South Africa, after ATCL had failed to heed any notices to pay or else, but only months after getting the aircraft back, it crashed two weeks ago during a botched take off attempt from the Kigoma aerodrome.

Said a regular source from Dar es Salaam when contacted to give his input: ***'I have said it even the other day, this is a bottomless pit and the longer we wait the more comes out. It is time our parliament calls an end to any funds given from our limited tax revenues and waste on ATCL. Let them be liquidated and the final audits will surely reveal more rot and more concealed liabilities. At least that is then the end of them and their failed managers cannot waste ever more money. What issue does our government have to invest in Precision Air. That is a***



*thriving airline, will make money and can do Tanzania proud. ATCL is only one big and never ending embarrassment.'*

Other aviation observers in the region claimed they needed to see the lease contract to understand better if ATCL was under the deal liable and responsible for maintenance of the aircraft, as can be the case, while in other lease arrangements it is the lessor which has to maintain the plane to ensure continued airworthiness. Said one periodic contributor from Nairobi: *'I cannot put it beyond those managers at the time, desperate to get a jet aircraft on their register, that they may have been a bit negligent when doing the contract. In many cases it is up to the lessor to pay for maintenance and even provide an alternative aircraft. This does not seem to be the case from what you explained. No alternate aircraft was ever provided when the Airbus went into heavy maintenance. Lease deals are complicated at times. You pay higher commitment fees and monthly charges when maintenance is included but a lot less when the operator is responsible for those duties. Optically such a deal can look attractive but when the bills for maintenance arrive, the whole cost suddenly becomes visible for everyone. If that happened, then it is purely a bad management decisions taken and those who caused this loss should be made to answer'.*

Oooops comes to mind, once again. Watch this space as the saga of ATCL continues unabated as ever more bad news emerge the deeper people dig.

#### **DATES SET FOR SAUTI ZA BUSARA 2013, FIRST CALL FOR ARTISTS TO PARTICIPATE**



Zanzibar's globally renowned music and performing arts festival, **Sauti Za Busara**, has announced the dates for 2013 as 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> February, making the love affair with this most widely known and best reputed African music and arts festival all the more befitting, starting on *Valentine's Day*.

The 2012 festival was the best attended ever and 2013 is promising to be bigger and better as the continent's musicians, poets and film makers descend on the **Spice Island**. Next year will also be the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the festival, and the organizers are reportedly already pulling out all the stops to make this a very special occasion. Artists wishing to participate in this special anniversary edition are to apply on line by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012 to be considered and details are available via the festival website on [www.busaramusic.org](http://www.busaramusic.org) while further communications can be directed to [busara@busara.or.tz](mailto:busara@busara.or.tz). The selection committee will sit in August and successful applicants will be notified, according to the information at hand, by latest September this year.

Fans can also visit and 'like' the festival via [www.facebook.com/sautizabusara](http://www.facebook.com/sautizabusara) where the latest information is available and updated on a regular basis.

For wannabe visitors a word of advice though already at this early stage. Last year's festival saw record numbers of visitors stream to the island, by ferry from Dar es Salaam and by air, and seats were reportedly tight if not outright unavailable as were most of the hotels and resorts booked up. Early bookings, as early as right now, would therefore be advisable to secure airline bookings and hotel reservations, so don't get back to me as some did last year claiming 'you should have said that earlier'. Sauti Za Busara beckons on the distant horizon, so make a date with the **Spice Island of Zanzibar** for a holiday alongside Africa's biggest and best arts festival.

#### **PRECISION AIR ANNOUNCES NEW DESTINATIONS**



Starting on 18<sup>th</sup> of May will Precision Air, Tanzania's most successful private airline, commence flights between Dar es Salaam and Lubumbashi / Congo DR, which will be served via the Zambian capital of Lusaka. Return launch fares have been put on the market at US Dollars 599 return, all taxes inclusive.

The airline has, in order to facilitate expansion of the route network, a leased B737-300 coming on line which is presently being readied for delivery at the Kenya Airways' maintenance facility in Nairobi, before joining the PW fleet within the coming days. In addition are another 6 ATR 72-600 on order, one of the most economic turboprop aircraft presently in service, the first of which is due for delivery in October this year before at least two more will

be delivered in 2013, mainly to expand domestic and short regional services where the use of larger jets does not make financial sense.

The airline also announced plans to commence flight to Angola later in the year as the projected growth takes root with more frequencies and more destinations.

The announcement will be welcome news to strong critics of the Tanzanian government's warped sense of economics, insisting that they will revive erstwhile national carrier ATCL, which only last week crashed their sole operating aircraft during a botched take off attempt, once more leaving the skies over Tanzania to Precision Air, which now operates more flights to more domestic destinations than ATCL ever has even in its former heydays. Said a regular aviation source from Dar es Salaam in a mail just received: *'I think it is high time that the efforts and achievement of our country's most successful airline ever is being recognized by our government. Instead of throwing money at a dying horse with its last kicks, which has become a huge embarrassment for Tanzania and an undefendable drain on our treasury, they should call it a day and buy shares in Precision and be a major shareholder in the airline. Then they can have seats on the board, and make it a quasi national airline which pays dividends and not comes begging every so often for more bailouts'*.

Another source however discounted this option saying that the Tanzanian government is deeply rooted in the 70's command economy mindset, very suspicious of private enterprise and its successes and ever ready to jump on investors, or have proxies like unions jump on investors once their ventures are up and running with the aim to bring some level of socialism and 'redistribution' into the equation, allegations often heard and only repeated recently during an economics' forum when government was challenged by leading academics to review their approach to private enterprise and move beyond lipservice into concrete action to support the private sector.

Watch this space for breaking and regular news from Eastern Africa's aviation industry.

## **Rwanda News**

### **NYUNGWE FOREST LODGE – THE GATEWAY TO THE ENCHANTED FOREST**

When I write about Rwanda, anything to do with Rwanda, my readers often get back to me and say they feel the passion I have for the *Land of a Thousand Hills* and it is true. Be it the capital Kigali, well lit, clean streets, disciplined traffic and such a shining example of how an African capital city can look like, impressing a visitor from the first moment one drives into the city from the airport, or be it the country side. I visited many parts of the country in past years and have written much about the Parc de Volcanoes, the Akagera National Park, the Congo Nile Trail and the often breathtaking scenery along the shores of Lake Kivu. But one park, one place in particular has captured my imagination like few others, this being the *Enchanted Forest*, aka Nyungwe National Park and the *Nyungwe Forest Lodge*, so close to the forest that sitting on the balcony of some of the villas instantly makes one feel like being in the forest itself, not just looking at it. My all too brief visits in the past left the taste for more in me, and later this year, good health and available time permitting, I intend to return to Eastern Africa's largest montane forest and hike along some the nearly 50 KM of trails for a few days, exploring the hidden secrets of Nyungwe, see the waterfalls, sit on the banks of little streams lost in contemplation and seek out butterflies, and some of the more than 100 types of orchids, exotic plants and ancient trees, many of which date back hundreds of years. Yes, there is game too, over 70 species including predators like the sly and elusive leopard, the golden cat, serval, genet and civet cats but also colobus, grey-cheeked mangabey, blue as well as red-tailed monkey, mountain monkeys, golden monkeys, owl-faced monkeys, chimpanzees even, important for most visitors but for me almost on the mundane side of things. The forest is home to over 275 species of birds, many of them endemic, but the true attraction for yours truly is the solitude, the magnificent feeling of being surrounded by a flora of days long gone elsewhere, the fresh air and the priceless experience found in few other places in our world of today, except for the distant jungles of Borneo, the Amazon rainforest perhaps, although the common trails there appear rather too crowded already for my taste. The elevation of the forest into a full national park some years ago, spurred by the vision of then ORTPN and its tourism planners, and turned into reality by the Rwanda Development Board's Tourism and Conservation Department, has left Rwanda richer in biodiversity, richer for a crucially important water tower and richer a destination for tourist visitors. More and more tourists are now coming to the country, as a result of more flights by more airlines than ever before and also as a result of some creative and determined marketing abroad by RDB and the private sector. When the time is right, you will read more about Nyungwe Forest, the very one I call then *Enchanted Forest* as I can close my eyes and hear the rustling of the leaves above me, bushes brush against tree trunks in the coming and ebbing breeze and I imagine myself transported into another world altogether, distant, ancient and full of creatures from tales I read as a child, and even more recently, here thinking of J.R.R. Tolkien's works.



(A view of Nyungwe Forest National Park from near the Nyungwe Forest Lodge)

Besides accommodation as far as Cyangugu – some 35 kilometres from the **Nyungwe Forest Lodge** – the Rwanda Development Board has basic accommodation available at their Gisakura park offices, including some self catering campsites inside the forest, at least one of which I intend to use to do a full overnight trip should I be permitted to stay on my own for the night.

But set in the middle of an extensive tea estate is a little jewel, THE place in my own mind to come to after spending time on the trails and then in need of some luxurious relaxing, with the forest close to touching distance from some of the villas' balconies and also a base for more walks, guided or alone.

Dubai World, the owners of **Nyungwe Forest Lodge**, spared no expense to make the lodge not just comfortable but provide the luxuries one comes to expect from a 5 star rated property owned by them, the rating by the way bestowed upon the lodge by RDB in an end 2011 award ceremony when the first ever star rating of hotels and lodges was first publicly revealed in Rwanda.

The main building of the lodge already tells the story, from the moment the car drives on to the porch. Built of stone and timber, it sets the tone for the stay and from the tiled roof emerge the chimneys required by the open fireplaces generously dotted around the public areas. The bags are offloaded unobtrusively and a hostess greets the new arrivals, with fresh chilled juice – steaming, freshly brewed hot tea is served on request of course as is coffee – and scented towels to wipe off the dust and sweat of the journey. Check in is swift, done in the lounge if preferred, and beyond the lounges and the huge fireplace, where a fire roars at night, and if requested during the day too should it be chilly outside during the rainy season, is a boutique and that all important dining room.

On sunny mornings or afternoons, extending to the outdoors and in the evening of course rather indoors, the menu is offering a choice of starters, main courses and desserts, while breakfast is a combination of a small healthy buffet of fruits and cereals although there are cold cuts and orders are taken for hot dishes by the attentive waiters. A wide selection of home baked breads and pastries, needless to say, is also available.



(Breakfast is served at Nyungwe Forest Lodge)

And lunch, just to mention, can be served '*al fresco*' at the pool side for those too lazy, or too caught up in their novells, to dress up and walk up to the restaurant. It is available and there for the asking of guests.

Some of the activities like tracking of chimps require an early start at 4 am, but even then hot drinks and a basic breakfast is available, or in addition a breakfast box can be taken along if ordered the night before.

Food preparation and presentation are now showing the pedigree of the owners' and the service, since the early days of opening, has matured and gelled well, even when the lodge is busy and all the 22 villas and 2 suites are occupied. And the chefs are ever ready to prepare a special dish and are of course happy to discuss culinary delights with their guests, to the point of taking them for a quick tour of their kitchen, spotless of course as one would expect in a property of this outstanding quality.

A heated swimming pool right at the edge of the forest is supplemented by a fully equipped gym – looking out into the forest of course – and a Spa offers body and beauty treatments for those who need a massage after a long day's hike in the forest.

Accommodation is available in villas, or two superb suites, and while the bathroom is separate, shutters can be opened right above the bed to permit a view from the large bathtub across the room and through the open curtains, or open terrace doors, on to the forest, giving that very special feeling of being part of the nature outside.



(Embedded into a tea plantation, the villas are set right at the edge of the forest)

While some guests might find a state of the art flat screen TV with satellite programmes essential, I make it a habit on my travels not to switch them on at all, relying on my Twitter feed for breaking news and then of course does **Nyungwe Forest Lodge** have wireless internet connections, and reception for cellphones.

The rooms are a mix of both the modern and of African features like art, and again, while I personally would prefer an altogether more rustic look, many, perhaps even most guests will just love what they find.

The beds are ultra comfortable, with soft feather pillows and hard enough mattresses, but most important a warm duvet keeping the cold away during the at times rather coolish nights, considering the elevation of the lodge.

In my opinion, a stay at **Nyungwe Forest Lodge** is always too short, no matter how long one stays and I would recommend at least three nights, to explore the lodge grounds and tea estate, do some hikes, see the chimps or some of the dozen other primates and not to be forgotten, do the canopy walk high above the treetops from the Uwinka Visitors' Centre, from where a phantastic vista opens up across the forest, showing just how extensive it is. I hope I have enchanted you too now and made your mouth water for more of this soul food, for now to read but hopefully one day to see in person as the **Land of a Thousand Hills** is warmly welcoming visitors from near and far.

For more information on the lodge visit [www.nyungweforestlodge.com](http://www.nyungweforestlodge.com) or else learn more about Rwanda's tourism attractions by looking in a [www.rwandatourism.com](http://www.rwandatourism.com)

## **RESCUED LOW LAND GORILLA TO RETURN HOME**

When the Rwandan security forces took a baby gorilla from traffickers last year near the common border with Congo DR, the young animal was kept under close care and supervision for several months, while the authorities tried to establish the origin of the baby. DNA analysis undertaken by the Max Planck Institute in German recently affirmed that the little gorilla belongs to the lowland species, not at home in Rwanda or the Virunga mountains across the border but from a more distant part of Congo, and arrangements are now being made to return the animal home to a special facility near Goma operated by ICCN. The Congolese wildlife managers will then determine if and when the animal can be put back into its original habitat, thought to be at the Tshiabirumu National Parks in Walikale, DR Congo.

Last year at least 6 cases became public knowledge, of lowland gorilla babies being caught by the Rwandan dragnet established to capture poachers and wildlife traffickers, before handing the animals back by the Rwanda Development Board's Tourism and Conservation Department to their Congolese counterparts at ICCN, and only last month did reports emerge that at least three young gorillas were 'liberate' from trader's residence in Goma while he sought interested buyers.

Such reports reaffirm the need for constant vigilance and I thankfully acknowledge the support wildlife NGO's like the Diane Fossey Gorilla Fund International whose Vice President Juan Bonilla was reported to have said: ***'This clearly shows the urgency of the anti-poaching investment we have been advocating for especially in the Eastern DR Congo'***. However, with that part of the Congo almost lawless due to the presence of various militias and a severely limited administration, directed from distant Kinshasa on the other side of the continent and left without any meaningful funding, that has for long been a major issue with wildlife conservationists. Said one regular source close to the tripartite cooperation office between Rwanda, Uganda and Congo DR in Kigali: ***'Wildlife conservation in Rwanda works very well and their surveillance and interventions are really good. In Uganda too gorilla conservation is a huge priority for UWA, and now with a new board they can find back to their glory days. But Congo is a problem. ICCN is underfunded, visits to habituated gorilla groups on the Congo side of the Virunga massif are a fraction of what Rwanda and Uganda are recording so there is not as much income. And much of that part of the country continues to have problems with upholding existing laws. It is lucrative to engage in illegal mining, wildlife trade and even game meat trade, including meat from monkeys and primates. For that reason our development partners are trying to get Kinshasa to take these issues more seriously and intervene with direct projects. But really, compared to us here in Rwanda it is a drop of water on a very hot stone. Wildlife conservation in Africa needs to get a political ranking of the top 5, because many countries depend so much on wildlife based tourism. Here in Rwanda it works, so why not in the countries around us you need to ask'***.

True enough, but for now bouquets to the Rwandan authorities and their partners in wildlife conservation like the DFGIF and barbs galore to wildlife traders and traffickers with no regard to the survival of a seriously endangered species. Watch this space.

#### EXPEDIA PARTNERS WITH RDB TO PROMOTE RWANDA



Expedia Incorporated, arguably the world's largest online travel company, has teamed up with the Rwanda Development Board's Tourism and Conservation Department, to give greater exposure to ***The Land of a Thousand Hills*** and widen the marketing reach for the country. RDB hosted a seminar in Kigali earlier in the week ***'Online Travel in Rwanda'*** to make the tourism trade aware of the added options now available to them to find business from overseas through e-Commerce, especially now that secure payment methods can be assured for web based credit card transactions. Ms. Rica Rwigamba, Head of Tourism and Conservation at the Rwanda Development Board, was quoted in a media release sent to this correspondent as saying: ***'Rwanda will gain visibility thus promoting awareness of this country as a top tourism destination as well as a launching pad for global travel. We want to increase receipts which means we have to increase sales. This will be a big boost to Rwanda's tourism revenue'***.

Virtual visits to Rwanda's attractions have increased in recent years by several hundred percent, showcasing the attractions of the country around the world but this has also translated into double digit increases of *real* visitors and the resulting sharp rise in foreign exchange earnings for the country, now standing at well over 250 million US Dollars in 2011.

Participants in the workshop were urged to make use of the new facility, as presently only about a dozen hotels and service providers had signed up with Expedia when the CEO of RDB John Gara addressed the gathering, echoed also by the Chairman of the Rwanda Private Sector Foundation's Tourism Chamber who reportedly said: ***'We want to see how we can sell more online, market ourselves and have more tourists coming in to increase competitiveness, tourism revenues and create more jobs for Rwandans'***.

No quarterly data for the period January to March are officially available as yet but insider information points to once again a double digit rise compared to last year, attributed to the increase in flights, with more coming to Kigali when Turkish Airlines will commence operations to Rwanda by mid May. Watch this space.

#### SERENA RWANDA TOO ANNOUNCES STAFF CHANGES





Information was received from regular sources in Kigali, that staff changes through transfers and promotions have taken place at Serena Rwanda too. Former head of Sales and Marketing for the Great Lakes Region Miss Evelyn Karamagi was promoted to the position of Rooms Divisions Manager at the Kigali Serena Hotel, while her former position is now filled by Ms. Denise Benzinge-Omany.

James Nzavwala is the new Food & Beverages Manager at the Kigali Serena Hotel.

At the helm remains Mr. Charles Muia who, besides being General Manager of the hotel in Kigali is also country manager, overseeing the Lake Kivu Serena too which is located in the border town of Gisenyi.

Both Serena Hotels are ideal starting or ending points for visits to the *Land of a Thousand Hills* when extended to include a hiking, biking or boating trip along the Congo Nile Trail, from where two of the three national parks, Volcanoes and Nyungwe, can be reached with ease. Also see [www.rwandatourism.com](http://www.rwandatourism.com) for more information about the country's range of attractions, available accommodation and DMC's.



(A view from the Lake Kivu Serena on to the lake and the islands beyond)

### South Sudan News

#### **SOUTH SUDAN PUSHED INTO NEW WAR AS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY STANDS BY IDLE ?**

A remarkable article was brought to my attention overnight, reflecting what I myself have often said, advocated and argued, that the aggressors in Khartoum seem to be getting away with murder on a massive scale once again. The Southern Sudan's leadership in Juba, pushed into a corner by the constant aerial bombings, ground attacks and the brutal ethnic cleansing inflicted on hundreds of thousands of the Southern people, now in full flight as far as Kenya and Uganda, has tried hard to stay away from re-engaging on a full scale but with Khartoum's guns pointed to the combined heads of the leadership in Juba, they are now left with unenviable choices. Heglig, an area clearly marked as belonging to the South in the maps of 1956, when the Sudan became independent, was used as a forward launch pad of the North's burned earth policies and the slaughter of Southern people in Blue Nile, South Kordofan and Abyei, which without doubt in my mind belong equally to the South, has compelled Juba to react and act, perhaps too late as Khartoum got encouraged by the Christian principle employed by the South of offering the other cheek.

No more. The prospect of '*Khartoum ante portas*' has now roused the Southern leadership and it can only be hoped that their allies, in Eastern Africa and overseas, are taking a stand and support them, with the harshest of sanctions against Khartoum and its rogue regime, with supplies to boost the SPLA's abilities, and should need arise with troops to stem Khartoum's ambitions to expand their evil empire further South.

Read Eric Reeves' article in full herebelow:

#### **Sudan/South Sudan on the Brink of Catastrophic War:**

#### **The Price of International Expediency and Disingenuous Moral Equivalence**

Eric Reeves

April 12, 2012

### Overview

The price of a year's worth of international diplomatic failure and facile moral and diplomatic equivocation will soon be paid in blood and suffering by many hundreds of thousands of civilians in Sudan and South Sudan. Hundreds of thousands have already been brought to the brink of starvation because there is no will to confront the Khartoum regime over its intransigent refusal to allow humanitarian access to Blue Nile and South Kordofan. Additionally, more than 100,000 Dinka Ngok civilians---forced militarily from Abyei by Khartoum's Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in May 2011---remain displaced and in poor conditions as refugees in South

Sudan. Refugees from Blue Nile have found only tenuous relief in the camps of Upper Nile (South Sudan), and the impending rainy season threatens to increase a population of almost 100,000, even as the transport of relief supplies and equipment, especially that needed for provision of clean water, will rapidly become impossible.

Hundreds of thousands in the Nuba Mountains face starvation because of Khartoum's humanitarian blockade. And in a highly revealing military action, those Nuba who escaped to Yida refugee camp in Unity State (South Sudan) were deliberately targeted by Khartoum's military aircraft on November 10, 2011---with international journalists present as witnesses. Further, hundreds of thousands of other civilians have, as of April 8, been stripped of their northern Sudanese nationality for no reason other than their "Southern" ethnicity.

And yet Khartoum's responsibility---for the seizure of Abyei, for the current military aggression on three fronts in northern Sudan, for the obstruction of humanitarian relief (including to Darfur), and for ethnic culling of the northern population---the regime's direct responsibility for all this stands without consequential rebuke. Instead, international actors have with consistent and shameless expediency apportioned blame in equal allotments to both Khartoum and Juba, no matter what the actual political, diplomatic, or moral equities. This has over time done much to generate the present crises throughout greater Sudan; but given present military developments, such expediency also seems guaranteed to accelerate the move toward a war of unfathomable destructiveness.

### **Military realities: what renewed war will look like**

Traveling to a range of locations in South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains in January 2003 (after the October 2002 cease-fire agreement but before Khartoum began to observe the cease-fire with any regularity), I found a grim but constant perception, a relentless certainty---expressed to me by every military and civil society official I spoke with, including John Garang: "If war comes again, it will be the most destructive of all our wars." This is an extraordinary observation, coming from people who had just begun to emerge from a civil war that claimed well over 2 million lives and displaced between 4 and 5 million civilians; the prediction was made not in a bellicose spirit, but as a factual matter, one that should be clear to anyone who looked with any understanding at the nature of the military forces in the North and the South. As of today, those terrible premonitions from 2003 seem on the verge of becoming a vast and uncontrollable reality.

For what has also been clear to me in my conversations with Southerners and other Sudanese, now over many years, is that the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) leadership understood full well that there would be no international guarantors of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), completed in 2004 and signed on January 9, 2005. This was the reason the SPLM/A was adamant about maintaining its own army: in the event of military violations of the peace by Khartoum, the leadership knew that no other country would offer anything meaningful by way of help or protection to the South. The reasoning of the Southern leadership was all too astute, as we're seeing with a grim clarity today.

Thus to understand the painfully high military expenditures by Juba, it's necessary not only to keep in mind the deeply felt need to prevent excessively rapid and destabilizing demobilization of SPLA forces, which have certainly not been needed in present numbers for military purposes. It must also be understood that from the viewpoint of military deterrence, expensive weapons acquisitions such as more advanced tanks, helicopters, and significant anti-aircraft defenses were judged necessary to provide a sufficiently credible deterrent to military aggression by an opponent known not only for aggressiveness, but for duplicity, ruthlessness, and indifference to human destruction, especially when those killed are ethnically African. These relatively advanced weapons, as well as the extraordinarily lethal and advanced weapons acquired by Khartoum over the past decade, ensure that future military violence will be extremely destructive.

In short, this will not be a war between a guerilla force and a national army substantially assisted by proxy militias. It will be a conflict between two very powerful military forces, with a number of advantages accruing to the South: they will have much better logistics and transport than during the 1983 - 2005 civil war, and the SAF will again be fighting far away from Khartoum. The SAF will also not have nearly as easy a time forcibly conscripting recruits into military service from regions it formerly counted on, including Blue Nile, South Kordofan, Darfur, and South Sudan itself. Perhaps most importantly, the people of the South generally feel that if war comes, they will be fighting for their survival, given Khartoum's unconstrained military ambitions; SPLA morale is correspondingly high. Khartoum's SAF, by contrast, is poorly motivated in the main and spread very thin, presently waging war in Blue Nile, South Kordofan, Darfur, as well as in the border regions. Moreover, [all evidence suggests that the SAF is being badly mauled by the SPLA-North](#) in brutal fighting within the Nuba Mountains, now over many months; Khartoum's response has been an increasing reliance on bombing, long-range artillery, advanced rocket launchers---"stand-off weaponry"--and the ruthless determination to starve the people of the Nuba Mountains as a way of ending

the insurgency. But crushing defeats of the SAF in military encounters with the SPLA-North are increasingly in evidence, and this is [taking a significant toll on the larger military force](#).

### **Military realities: where is military conflict occurring?**

What the SPLM/A did not anticipate in its negotiations for peace was that it would be abandoned diplomatically in ways that have emboldened Khartoum to pick and choose which elements of the CPA Protocols it would observe and which it would ignore. Nor did Juba anticipate that the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party regime would fully renege on key provisions of the CPA without meaningful consequence, Abyei most notably. Indeed, to understand the current extraordinarily precarious military situation, one must see just how poorly the international community performed in securing from Khartoum good faith participation in negotiations over delineation and demarcation of the North/South border per the terms of the CPA.

It not surprising that there is a good deal of confused news reporting on the situation in the Tishwin (Unity State)/Heglig area, where the most serious fighting is concentrated; for this is part of the North/South border that has not been delineated, even as many Southerners believe---with good reason---that Heglig is actually in the South as defined by the 1956 border (at independence). This makes Khartoum's use of Heglig as the launching point for two major offensives against the Tishwin area all the more galling to Juba. President Salva Kiir had the strong support of most Southerners when he declared in a Presidential Statement today that, "the Republic of South Sudan is prepared to withdraw its forces from Heglig if a clear mechanism and guarantee can be provided that Heglig will not be used to launch another attack against South Sudan."

Kiir has rightly placed the diplomatic ball in the international court; unfortunately, he has already and preemptively been denied the very assistance he needs to help produce a military de-escalation in the Tishwin/Heglig area. Indeed, Kiir and the Southern Sudanese leadership stand accused by the UN, the AU, the EU, the UK, and the U.S. of military aggression against northern Sudanese territory (see below). This is so even as all evidence---including that of UN observers from UNMISS, journalists on the ground, and oil workers---points to the fact that in both assaults on Tishwin, Khartoum was the clear aggressor, and that the SPLA's military response was defensive, and retaliatory only to the extent consistent with further self-defense. Following the most recent assault, Juba understandably decided that it would not allow Heglig to be used yet again by the SAF as a staging ground for military assaults on the South, hence President Kiir's statement.

Some of the confusion in international responses seems to come from a failure to follow the course of the dispute over Abyei, which is key here. Six months following the CPA signing (and thus also formal ratification of the Abyei Protocol) the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) presented its findings to Khartoum (July 2005), as mandated by the Protocol. The regime immediately and categorically rejected the boundary findings, even as the ABC membership was selected equally by Khartoum and Juba. In May 2008 Khartoum's regular and militia forces brutally assaulted Abyei town and the surrounding area, killing many civilians and forcing many tens of thousands to flee to the South. UN forces in what was then UNMIS (UN Mission in Sudan) stood by passively. For its part, the Southern leadership---convinced that the matter should not be resolved militarily---concluded that "final and binding" arbitration of the border issues was essential, and was successful in having the case concerning delineation of Abyei's boundaries heard before the Permanent Court of Arbitration (The Hague). The July 22, 2009 ruling by the PCA was dismaying to the South, which saw much of what was traditional Dinka Ngok Abyei disappear, but Juba nonetheless accepted the finding.

What must be understood is just how narrowly the Court's "final and binding" ruling actually was:

[from GOS-SPLM/A Final Award July 22, 2009 Page 267-68 Eastern Boundary (of Abyei)]

"1. In respect of the ABC Experts' decision that "the eastern boundary shall extend the line of the Kordofan - Upper Nile boundary at approximately longitude 29°32'15" E northwards until it meets latitude 10°22'30" N, the ABC Experts exceeded their mandate.

"2. The eastern boundary of the area of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms transferred to Kordofan in 1905 runs in a straight line along longitude 29°00'00" E, from latitude 10°10'00" N south to the Kordofan - Upper Nile boundary as it was defined on 1 January 1956."

The central implication for purposes of understanding the present military conflict in the Heglig region, lying east of Abyei as defined by the PCA, is that this ruling did nothing to settle where the "1 January 1956 border" actually lies. It had no mandate to make such a determination, and did not attempt to do so. This was to have been

determined by post-CPA negotiations between Juba and Khartoum. But feeling no real international pressure, Khartoum has never engaged in good faith negotiations on either delineation or demarcation of the North/South border; indeed, Khartoum militarily prevented demarcation of areas that had actually been delineated in the Abyei region.

The importance of negotiations to settle the location of the "1 January 1956 border" has been made repeatedly clear, most authoritatively by historian of Sudan Douglas Johnson, a member of the Abyei Boundaries Commission. His analysis from January 2011 ("[The Road Back from Abyei](#)") and other work gives us a detailed sense of how for decades the Khartoum regime has been moving the North/South boundary southward, often by proxy:

"Violence spilling over from Bahr el-Ghazal during the civil war in the 1960s brought the first armed conflict between the Ngok and Misseriya since the 19th century, and it was at this time that the Misseriya began claiming and occupying the northern-most Ngok settlements. The violent displacement of Ngok from their villages by armed Misseriya, sometimes with the backing of members of the local police, was accelerated after the end of the first civil war in the 1970s when the Ngok were offered a referendum on whether they wanted to be incorporated into the newly-established Southern Region, or remain as part of Kordofan. Following the discovery of oil flowing beneath Abyei Khartoum blocked the referendum, in a move that preceded and led to the abrogation of the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1983. The Abyei referendum, therefore, is unfinished business."

Long-time and highly informed Sudan observer John Ashworth notes just today that:

"[I]t is widely acknowledged that the current border is NOT the 1956 border. Successive Khartoum governments have pushed the border southwards, particularly since the discovery of oil in the 1970s. South Sudanese have waited patiently while Khartoum procrastinated on border negotiation while continuing to attack locations which are known to be well within South Sudan according to the 1956 border." (email received April 12, 2012)

These historically informed assessments make clear that statements such as we are hearing today from various international actors are in fact judging a matter---the location of the North/South border---presumptively; they are determining an issue that should still be very much on the negotiating table. But Khartoum has refused to negotiate boundary issues, and this is the fundamental problem that has yet to be frankly acknowledged. Peremptory judgments like those that have come today from the UN, the U.S., the AU, the EU and the UK are all unwittingly but effectively encouraging Khartoum to remain intransigent in any future negotiations on the location of the border. In a ghastly way, this represents a reprise of the international failure in responding to Khartoum's intransigence on Abyei, including the denial of a self-determination referendum. And just as a weak and compromising response ensured the military take-over of the region, so present international responses work to ensure that this part of the disputed border becomes a cartographic *fait accompli*. Such an outcome will in turn ensure that conflict continues, and it is here that we should bear in mind the [time-line of serial failures leading up to the seizure of Abyei](#). It's important to remember that judgments in both Juba and Khartoum have been shaped by the consequent abject failure to bring meaningful pressure to bear on the regime to withdraw its forces and thereby create a security environment necessary for the return of the Dinka Ngok. Instead, these displaced people continue to struggle to survive, often in extremely challenging circumstances---and this because the international community cannot escape its expedient habit of equivocation:

"The AU notes with alarm, the *occupation of the Heglig by the forces of (South Sudan)* and calls for their immediate and unconditional withdrawal,' a statement from the AU Commission said on Wednesday, amid continued fighting in the region."

"State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters when asked about the surge in border fighting between Sudan and the newly independent state of South Sudan [that] the State Department would issue a 'statement which strongly condemns the military offensive, *incursion to Southern Kordofan state, Sudan*, by the SPLA today.'" (Agence France-Presse [Washington, DC], April 11, 2012)

"The move by the South Sudanese armed forces *to occupy Heglig in Sudan is completely unacceptable*, as are the continuing bombings of South Sudanese territory by Sudan, [UK Minister for Africa Henry Bellingham] said in a statement."

"The move by the South Sudanese armed forces to occupy Heglig is completely unacceptable. So is continued aerial bombardment of South Sudanese territory by the Sudan Armed Forces,' EU foreign policy chief Catherine



Ashton said through a spokesman. 'Both parties must also stop supporting armed groups in the territory of the other state' and *should 'cease hostilities, withdraw forces immediately back within their own borders and respect each other's territorial integrity,'* Ashton insisted."

"[Salva Kiir, speaking in Juba today] 'He gave me an order, the *U.N. secretary-general, that I'm ordering you to immediately withdraw from Heglig.* I said, "I'm not under your command." If I'm head of a state, an independent state, nobody will tell me that---*do this*, under duress."

"The UN Security Council is demanding demands 'a complete, immediate, and unconditional: end to all fighting; *withdrawal of (South Sudan's Army) from Heglig;* end to (Sudanese Armed Forces) aerial bombardments; end to repeated *incidents of cross-border violence between Sudan and South Sudan;* and an end to support by both sides to proxies in the other country."

Moral equivalence is fully preserved here, along with a border defined so that Heglig is in North Sudan. Only Norway managed anything reasonably appropriate to the situation, and even this statement represents the conflict as the equal responsibility of the two parties:

"We urge both parties to pull back their troops to where they were positioned before the recent escalation. We also urge them to immediately remove the last obstacles that are preventing the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mission from coming into operation, as they have previously agreed," said Mr Støre."

But of course the obstacles to this Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mission are virtually all a function of Khartoum's obduracy. Juba could wish for nothing so much as an active and robust JBVM Mission. Only Khartoum benefits from ambiguous borders, and an ability to project military power without a clearly defined trip-wire. It is also the ambiguity of the border delineation that permits what has now been photographed and witnessed first-hand: a secret "tie-in" oil pipeline, originating in Heglig and making its way toward Southern oil fields where it apparently would have had the capacity to siphon off as much as 25,000 barrels of Southern crude per day ([Reuters \[Juba\], April 5, 2012](#)). Such subterfuge is possible only because of the ambiguous borders that Khartoum is working so hard to maintain, knowing that it has already seized a great deal of what is Southern territory and would only lose territory, and military cover, if reasonable border delineation and actual demarcation actually occurred.

The large Kafia Kingi enclave in far western Western Bahr el-Ghazal, for example, has been seized by the regime on the basis of Khartoum's 1960 redrawing of the "1 January 1956 boundary"; per the terms of the CPA, Kafia Kingi should revert to South Sudan, since the entire enclave was created by the southward swoop of the factitious 1960 border. So far Khartoum has been unyielding, no doubt in part because there is copper to be mined and evidence of other minerals and ores as well. By cleaving to an untenable claim on Kafia Kingi, Khartoum has also made the enclave---[as an authoritative Rift Valley Institute study suggests](#)---a potentially useful bargaining chip in other border negotiations, if these ever occur. Of course there have been no international voices calling for a halt to Khartoum's violation of this remote part of sovereign Southern territory.

## Restraint and forbearance

What becomes clear in the pronouncements by the U.S., the UK, the UN, the EU, the AU and others over the past day is that Juba is in effect being punished for its forbearance in the face of relentless military provocations by Khartoum. These include aerial military attacks on civilian and military targets in South Sudan going back to November 2010---two months before the Southern self-determination referendum. Altogether, even before the recent onslaught of bombing attacks, there have been more than 40 confirmed incidents of aerial assault on Southern territory ([www.sudanbombing.org](#)). Painfully little has been heard from the international community about this indiscriminate barbarism, and what we do hear has taken on the form of boilerplate condemnation that barely registers in Khartoum. This is one reason the regime's military leaders felt free to escalate dramatically its [aerial offensive by attacking Bentiu today](#), the capital of Unity State. Bentiu is a major city, not a town or a village, and an attack on such a large civilian population certainly demands more than the familiar perfunctory demands that the bombing stop. There has been none.

Juba also made the excruciatingly difficult decision not to resist militarily Khartoum's May 20-21 (2011) seizure of Abyei: coming less than two months before Southern independence, the regime's seizure took advantage of the desperate desire by the South not to allow any event, however unjustified or provocative, to derail the achievement of independence. But there was a great deal of bitterness throughout the South, and particularly those from the Abyei area, that the international response was so flaccid---the more so [since Khartoum's military ambitions had](#)



[long been clear](#) and yet provoked no decisive objections from the UN, the U.S., the EU, the AU, or others. And even now the AU is calling for "[both sides to remove their illegal military presence in Abyei](#)"; given the truculent refusal of Khartoum to remove any of its SAF forces that were instrumental in the seizure, or its Misseriya militia allies, the suggestion that the SPLA has a comparable military presence is preposterously disingenuous. It should also be noted that Khartoum agreed to withdraw its forces as part of the June 20, 2011 settlement that created the terms of deployment for an Ethiopian brigade under UN peacekeeping auspices. It never did so. [The regime has yet again reneged on a signed agreement](#), and has yet again been emboldened by the failure of the international community to do more than huff and puff.

Just as difficult for Juba has been the decision to limit severely the assistance it provides to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North, former comrades-in-arms. A recent report from the authoritative Small Arms Survey (Number 19, April 2012

[Reaching for the Gun: Arms Flows and Holdings in South Sudan](#)) presents evidence that Juba is in fact assisting the SPLA-N. It finds precious little, however, and even less in the nature of physical evidence, such as the sort by which [SAS has clearly established that Khartoum is the source of weapons for the vicious South Sudan Liberation Army](#) (SSLA), a proxy force that mainly kills civilians. And many of the weapons in possession of George Athor's former militia group in Jonglei also originated in Khartoum; in many cases they have ended up fueling terrible ethnic conflict in Jonglei. The entirety of the SAS account of Juba's support for the SPLA-N fits in a small box insert (about one-third of page 4); and as to sources for the only generalizations of significance, only one is named: Military Intelligence Officer General Sa'ad Omer of the Sudan Armed Forces.

What is certainly clear is that there is a gross asymmetry between Khartoum's supplying of militias bent on creating havoc, and Juba's assistance, probably mainly food and fuel, to the SPLA-N. SAS specifies nothing in the way of quantity or the particular nature of any putative military assistance because there is no evidence extant that would allow for the possibility of quantification and specification. Certainly if Khartoum had any such evidence it would broadcast the fact and the evidence widely. Even so, this hasn't prevented the U.S. and other consequential international actors from speaking of "assistance to proxy forces by both Khartoum and Juba" as if they were in any way truly comparable. Such disingenuousness sends a clear signal to Khartoum: there will be no real consequences for its immensely destructive and disruptive military assistance to renegade militia groups that have no meaningful political agenda, and which trade only speciously on local agendas.

## Looking forward

The outlook is extremely bleak. There are in no evidence of countervailing forces that can bring Khartoum back from its present commitment to characterize the fighting as "South Sudan's [blatant invasion of Heglig](#)," with a corresponding need for the SAF to engage in massive military retaliation. The obscene international indulgence in "moral equivalence" is the only reason Khartoum has pushed as far as it has; and to see today the judgments of Juba by various international actors is to see precisely what has emboldened these brutal thugs. That the diplomatic world cleaves to its shameless expediency about conflict in Sudan justifies the grimmest pessimism about near-term military developments. The likelihood of all-out war is extremely great, and yet those diplomatically in charge refuse to recognize [where the center of power lies in an increasingly brutal and unconstrained](#) National Islamic Front/National Congress Party. Princeton Lyman's assessment evidently stands as that of virtually all diplomatic actors; [speaking to Asharq Al-Awsat](#), Lyman was blunt:

"Frankly, we do not want to see the ouster of the [Sudanese] regime, nor regime change. We want to see the regime carrying out reform via constitutional democratic measures."

We might chalk this up to foolish credulity had not Lyman given us ample reason to believe that in fact it represents the grossest expediency, an unwillingness to confront Khartoum---even when the issue is emergency humanitarian relief access. We might well wonder how Lyman squares his optimistic assessment of the regime with the fact that more than two months after the UN, the AU, and the Arab League prepared an agreement guaranteeing humanitarian relief to Sudanese civilians in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile, Khartoum still refuses to sign on (the SPLM-N signed on February 9). Indeed, two months later, with people already seen starving in the Nuba, the regime claims to be "still studying the proposal," and has conducted factitious food assessments that reveal "no problems in South Kordofan." This is of course transparent mendacity: the regime is attempting (among other things) to wait until the rains begin, in a matter of weeks, ensuring that delivery of international relief assistance will be immeasurably more difficult, and that in the [interim the destruction of civilian lives](#) and agricultural livelihoods can proceed apace with only a few intrepid journalists as witnesses (see [al-Jazeera's recent video dispatch from the Nuba](#) by Peter Greste).

Moreover, in allowing Khartoum to commandeer the diplomatic agenda by means of military aggression, the international community becomes complicit in a range of collateral damage that follows directly from what is now total absorption with a crisis that the regime has orchestrated. The agony of the people of Darfur will continue, even more silently, without any meaningful news profile, excepting only a [bizarrely distorting upbeat dispatch from the New York Times](#). Refugees from Blue Nile and South Kordofan are being doubly victimized by current violence; for virtually all of them fled initially because of Khartoum's violence against civilians or the consequences of comprehensive destruction of crops and plantings. Now, because of violence around Heglig, they receive precious little attention, even as those refugees in Upper Nile especially are poised to endure an extremely dangerous rainy season. [The same wretched conditions confronting the refugees from Abyei](#) will also likely become less visible, and thus more acceptable.

And in another source of potentially explosive conflict, tensions between the Dinka Ngok displaced from Abyei and the Misseriya herders who are moving north again from Southern grazing areas are such that violence could easily flare. Very little attention is being paid to this potential crisis.

### **What should happen**

- The international community must put Khartoum on notice that it will be held responsible for its actions, and that there will no longer be some factitious parceling out of blame to Juba as well with every serious condemnation of the regime's military violence or support of proxy forces. To be sure, the odds for changing this decades-long pattern seem exceedingly small, and the likelihood of war commensurately greater.
- Every single bombing attack on sovereign Southern territory should be investigated, detailed, and highlighted publicly for meaningful condemnation. (Juba, of course, has no offensive military aircraft.) [Having escaped meaningful censure following more than a decade of indiscriminate aerial assaults](#), Khartoum must face condemnations marked by both discipline and conviction, and a specified set of punitive sanctions. For in virtually all instances, given the inherently indiscriminate nature of Antonov "bombers" and inexpertly piloted jet aircraft, these attacks are war crimes, and [collectively---given their massive destruction of civilian lives and livelihoods---crimes against humanity](#).
- The UNMISS force should be capable of re-deploying much more rapidly, have much better transport, and most importantly should confirm reported military events more expeditiously and fully. Currently, UN political officials are continuing to conceal most of these findings. This is so despite the fact that many of the incidents and observations make perfectly clear, to all who would simply look, that despite Khartoum's vehement denials, the military actions reported by Southerners and the SPLA have in fact occurred. UN political suppression of observations and investigations that have direct bearing in assigning responsibility for the current military situation is deeply irresponsible, finally immoral. In many cases the world learns more from intrepid journalists than from the UN; witness the recent [Agence France-Presse dispatch with a Tishwin dateline](#), and a BBC interview of an oil industry worker in the Heglig area who declared to the BBC: "The Sudanese attacked first but they didn't have as many soldiers, so they were forced to fell back" (in [The Guardian, April 11, 2012](#)).
- The Border Verification and Monitoring Mission should deploy wherever security permits, with a robust response force continually at the ready to provide additional security. The Mission should report frequently and publicly on its findings. Khartoum will resist, and may make deployment impossible in many areas; this fact should then be made widely known.
- Border delineation should begin in earnest, with substantial diplomatic commitment to securing meaningful participation from Khartoum. In the absence of sharply delineated borders, clearly demarcated, Khartoum will continue to test, to probe, to move in militarily threatening fashion, and in general keep the border regions unstable. The primary motive is to de-stabilize Juba, as it is with the regime's support for militia proxies.
- The UN should be prepared to authorize non-consensual cross-border relief efforts in the event that Khartoum persists in denying all access to South Kordofan and Blue Nile. We cannot allow hundreds of thousands of civilians to starve because some feel obliged to respect the territorial integrity of a genocidal regime.

- The UN should immediately reconfigure and augment UNMISS, both in light of the Jonglei crisis and as a means of creating a credible, effective "trip-wire" along the North/South border to prevent, if possible, future aggressive military actions against the South by Khartoum.

The painful truth is that none of these measures is likely to be taken. Khartoum's obduracy will be used to justify any diplomatic fecklessness---the regime's claim of "national sovereignty" long ago having trumped the "responsibility to protect."

This new war will be born out of international expediency, disingenuousness, and cowardice. Few seem to care that this is so.

**[Eric Reeves, a professor at Smith College, has published extensively on Sudan, nationally and internationally, for more than a decade. He is author of *A Long Day's Dying: Critical Moments in the Darfur Genocide*.**

## **Mauritius News**

### **ECO PARK DUE TO OPEN BY END YEAR AT VALLEY D'OSTERLOG**



A regular source from Mauritius provided information that in line with the country's tourism outlook, aimed to tap more and more into the eco tourism segment of visitors, a new eco-park will be launched before the end of the year at the Valley D'Osterlog, near Wooton, Eau Coulee. Selected for the rich biodiversity and as habitat to a number of endemic plants, this forested area will be a pilot project to gauge how keen the interest of tourists will be to visit such an attraction and learn more about the flora and fauna of the island while hiking across the area opened up by trails. A total network of hiking trails, ranging from easy to very difficult, extending over 18 kilometres has been established, including a rock climbing loop. According to the same source a visitor centre will be readied too so that sufficient information can be provided on the location, its origin and what rare plants, orchids and ferns can be found, besides providing other amenities such as a herbarium, a photo exhibition area, a lecture theatre and a coffee shop.

The 275 hectares large site was initially chosen five years ago, then protected by an special law in September 2007 following which a development masterplan was developed which is now in its final stage of implementation.

Visit <http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/osterlog/faugoo.html> for more information on this unique nature reserve or visit [www.tourism-mauritius.mu](http://www.tourism-mauritius.mu) for more details on the island's attractions.

### **MAURITIUS CRACKS DOWN ON OCEAN POLLUTERS**

The Ministry of Environment in Port Louis has spoken out against polluting the ocean around the island through careless practices and mismanagement of amongst others sewerage facilities, when it became known that a local treatment plant let a spill run into the sea near Baie du Tombeau. Environment Minister Deva Virahsawmy reacted to the reports with an announcement that more spot patrols would be deployed and tighter controls be affected to improve monitoring and shorten reactiontime. The Minister also demanded a change of mindset and declared that ocean pollution and dumping could no longer be tolerated while reminding of the fines and prison terms which in the case of repeat offenders could reach, depending on the severity of the case, up to 8 years.

Said a regular contributor from Port Louis when asked about the circumstances surrounding the development: *'Mauritius is a holiday destination which depends on its ocean environment. Crystal clear waters beyond our beaches are vital to attract tourists and bring them back for repeat visits. Fishing is big business, not just deep sea fishing by tourists but the fishing industry overall. It all depends on clean waters, free of pollution and the tourist industry of course supports any measures to give more protection to our environment. Two weeks ago I told you about the plans to tap into eco tourism with new trails and hikes across the forests and the island. Those also need a clean environment. Offenders must be cited, must be made to pay for clean ups and fined.'*

Well done to the environmentalists on Mauritius but do keep up the pressure and vigilance.

## **Seychelles News**

### **SEYCHELLES NATIONAL ECONOMICS COUNCIL TARGETS TOURISM FOR GROWTH**

When President James Michel chaired the country's National Economics Council, in short NEC, earlier in the week the meeting had to look at a revised growth forecast for the Seychelles of 2.8 percent, down from the initially expected 4 percent. Global rises in the cost of fuel, combined with inflationary pressures, caused this lower than

hoped for new estimate but the discussion reportedly swiftly focused on tourism, which continues to show a remarkable growth for the first almost four months of 2012.

The classic core markets from Europe showed in part a significant reduction in arrivals but the hard work of the Seychelles Tourism Board and the Seychelles Hospitality and Tourism Association is now paying off. A fresh approach to new and emerging markets saw unprecedented doubling of arrival numbers, for instance from China where already last year numbers literally doubled and are again up in 2012 for the first few months by 95 percent. Other markets, like from the Middle East, also show an increase of over 40 percent year by year, prompting the NEC to task STB and SHTA to prepare a strategy paper of the way forward for the rest of the year, to have tourism once more locomotive the economy forward. Diversification and new products were mentioned as the key for future success and Air Seychelles, now in a phase of re-orientation and looking at a new range of destinations under the auspices of partner airlines Etihad, was also called upon to play their part.

Other significant issues reportedly discussed were the government's plans to introduce VAT from mid 2012, with calls for review of both modalities and time frame to allow for a smoother implementation of the new tax system and to avoid any increase in cost for in particular the tourism industry.

A regular source also mentioned that reclamation of land through artificial peninsulas or islands connected with Mahe by bridges would also be necessary to cater for the increased requirements for office space and commercial premises while pointing out that this might take place under public private partnership in order to shift much of the financial requirements to private investors while government would provide zoned areas and the required permits to go ahead with such new projects, while also supporting loan finance through commercial banks and development banking institutions.

In an interesting turn of events was a principal decision also taken to facilitate the upstart of new airlines based on the Seychelles, subject to meeting regulatory and safety requirements, to improve connectivity between the islands at affordable tariffs, an apparent reference to the huge increase on domestic fares for Air Seychelles flights between Mahe and Praslin, where locals now have to pay the same fares as tourist visitors. Watch this space for regular news updates from the Creole Island paradise of the Seychelles.

#### **MONUMENTS AND SITES COUNCIL PROMOTES HERITAGE**

Information was received from Victoria that the local office of the International Monuments and Sites Council has launched a new award scheme to promote the conservation of Seychellois architectural heritage. The organization issued a media release saying: *'The Icomos Seychelles Heritage Award will recognise special accomplishments, projects and efforts which promote conservation of our built and architectural heritage. Apart from new constructions it will recognise restorations, rehabilitations, re-use of a building, property or structure of heritage value, which would have been completed during the preceding year of the award'*.

The Seychelles Tourism Board has thrown its weight and support behind the scheme as maintaining the archipelago's heritage of buildings and unique Creole homesteads is considered important for the picture the island gives to visitors. Said a regular source from Mahe: *'This is just another component of making the Seychelles more attractive for visitors. We have a number of well maintained buildings but more can be done to showcase our past. From next year there will be an annual award ceremony to recognize and honour outstanding conservation and preservation of architectural landmark buildings to be held on World Heritage Day [18<sup>th</sup> April]*.

The local chapter of ICOMOS, formed in 2010, involves Seychellois architects, historians, archeologists and engineers amongst others, working together to keep the archipelago's history alive and conserve it for future generations.

#### **SEYCHELLES CONNECT LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE**



Finding out what's on and where things happen across the Seychelles archipelago is now made easier, since **Seychelles Connect** has launched a brand new website via [www.seychellesconnect.co](http://www.seychellesconnect.co)

Operated by the publishers of the Seychelles premier annual *'Leisure and Business Guide'* the new site will bring local hospitality, tourism and other businesses together with the overseas market place for special offers, new attractions and last minute deals, all available now at the click of a button.

Facebook users can also find their business page via [www.facebook.com/pages/Seychelles-Connect/269272603143](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Seychelles-Connect/269272603143) which allows further access to the Creole Island paradise.

The new site has optimized search features included to make surfing and finding the right offers easier for visitors, supplementing the efforts of the Seychelles Tourism Board to promote the islands around the globe from where the archipelago, when flying with one of the Gulf carriers, is only one stop away. Seychelles, truly *Another World*.

**AND in closing today, as most weeks, some very interesting reads from ‘*The Livingstone Weekly*’, courtesy of Gill Staden – thank you my friend as always!**

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## ZAMBIA

### Domestic Tourism

#### A Reply from Flatdogs, Luangwa

In this one you mention that there are not enough cheap places for Citizens to visit the National Parks. I would like to say that that is absolutely not the case. Most tourism operators in the Luangwa offer amazing deals for residents of all types. You can get return flights from Lusaka and 3 nights with any operator here for about K3.5 million. That includes all meals, 8 hours of game viewing a day, accommodation in one of the most amazing places in the world, airport transfers and flights. That is for 3 nights, About \$220 per person per night. FOR EVERYTHING including flights. Same price as a hotel room in the middle of Lusaka on a B & B basis only.

If they don’t want to pay for everything up front they can come to Flatdogs and get a room only deal for as little as K192,000 and then eat in the restaurant or self cater. They can do their own game drives in their own vehicle and it will cost Citizens K25,000 per person and K15,000 for the vehicle for the whole days game viewing. So for less than K250,000 per person they can stay at Flatdogs in en suite accommodation and do a full days game viewing n the best national park in Africa. Pretty good in my view.

Oh, and if they want to drive and do 2 nights with us on all inclusive and one night full board, so 2 full days of game viewing and one night relaxing in camp with all food paid for they can get this for \$415, which is just over K2million. FOR THREE NIGHTS with all your food and board and 16 hours game viewing over 2 days with a professional guide!

There are many Zambians who spend more than this on dinner with wine in the restaurants of Lusaka.

We advertise these rates and they have been on *Zambian Weekly*, and all the local tour operators are selling many of them. So this is no secret.

Please can we put the side of the story from a tour operators point of view. We are always told by GRZ we should charge less for Zambians and WE DO!!!!!!!

My own comment would be to work out how many Zambians can actually afford such rates – people we call here in East Africa the ‘*Wananchi*’ – ordinary folks with quite ordinary incomes who look for real budget deals ...

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### Lusaka Park

Mr Given Lubinda, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism has taken on the job of trying to sort out the Lusaka National Park. As I have written before, it was stated in the press some time ago that the park



was ready for visitors and then a few weeks later someone actually went to visit the park and said it was most definitely not ready and that many animals were still in bomas after several years and that there was no infrastructure.

Mr Lubinda has recently stated that there is encroachment to the park and that this matter has to be resolved first. After that, he needs designers with a vision to make sure that that park is beautiful and caters, not only for animals, but visitors too. He envisions accommodation, with playgrounds for children and a swimming pool. He also expects that the park will be a Public-Private Partnership.

For me there are two issues. Firstly, when many of our parks are in a terrible state one wonders why we need another one. But, of course, with the park being easily accessible by people from Lusaka, there is a good chance, if things are done properly, that it could be profitable.

Secondly, I feel that the park should be an educational park. There is one thing which we lack in Zambia and that is facilities for teaching the children to appreciate their natural heritage. Mukuvisi Woodlands in Harare was set up with this in mind – the emphasis was on education. There are facilities for school groups and it is free for school children. If the designers of the park take a visit to Mukuvisi they can pick up many ideas for a park which is within a city. Mukuvisi is run down now, of course, but the ideas are there to see.

As I have commented before, our own park in Livingstone needs this type of facility for school children and if they can get it right in Lusaka, maybe we can see better access to the Mosi-oa-Tunya Park for our children.

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## FIGURES: Tourists

Zambia recorded an estimated number of visitors in 2011 of 906,417 (the figures are still being “cleaned up”), compared to 815,000 in 2010. Zambia Tourism Board said it was on course to attract 1 million visitors in 2012 (Times 10).

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## Another Photo

### We call it a Lunar Rainbow

Arching over the world famous Victoria Falls this mesmeric rainbow shines in the moonlight creating a nocturnal light show.

Known as a 'Moonbow', the hypnotic phenomenon was captured under the gaze of a full moon over 'The Devils Cataract' section of the falls.

Photographer and television presenter Charlie Hamilton James travelled to Cataract Island on the Zambezi River between Zimbabwe and Zambia, where he managed to observe this rarely witnessed event.



Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2127637/Stunning-Moonbow-captured-Victoria-Falls.html#ixzz1rvtZcJPm>

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### **Familiarisation Tour for Namibian Journalists**

Last week I wrote that Zambian journalists should visit our parks in Zambia so that they can write articles from the heart; articles which would inspire people to visit our parks. In Namibia, the Namibia Tourism Board has done just that. Last week, a group of Namibian journalists were put on the plane to Rundu and then on a bus to the Caprivi Strip. They visited many lodges and guest houses; went on a river cruise, learned about the wildlife and environment.

*Several hospitality establishments such as the Sarasungu River Lodge, Ngandu Lodge, Mashare Lodge, Kavango River Lodge, Hakusembe River Lodge and Mahangu River Lodge, as well as numerous bed-and-breakfast establishments, are scoring from the upsurge in tourism and the media was roped in to market the regions to attract more travellers.*

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