

Togo - 2017: domestic politics, foreign affairs, and socio-economic development

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Togo – 2017

Dirk Kohnert

The demand for political alternance, initiated by institutional and electoral reforms, constituted the major contentious issue between the government and the challengers of the Gnassingbé regime throughout the year. Civil society organizations and representatives of the Christian church supported the demands of the opposition. The protest of the notorious divided opposition took a new momentum since August with the lead by a hitherto hardly known opposition party and its charismatic leader, Tikpi Atchadam. He organized huge demonstrations of all the 14 opposition parties in the second half of the year which put the government progressively under pressure. Foreign affairs were dominated by the impact of increased aid by the international donor community. Socio-economic development was marked by diminishing human development and economic freedom.

Domestic Politics

The controversy about institutional and electoral reforms in order to initiate political change after nearly 50 years of rule of the Gnassingbé Regime continued to dominate domestic politics. Right at the start of the year President Faure Gnassingbé nominated two advisory bodies. On 3rd January, he installed a national commission of reflection on the institutional and electoral reforms that had been proposed already five years before by the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVJR, 2012). The reforms had been demanded by the opposition and the international donor community time and again since several years. The president of the commission of reflection, Mme. Awa Nana Daboya, had already been designated two years before (9. January 2015), whereas the appointment of the remaining members had been retarded. The eight members nominated now included former Prime Minister Kwesi Ahoomey-Zunu, Adji Oteth Ayassor, another former Cabinet Minister, the president of the University of Lomé, Prof. Dodzi Kokoroko and other personalities of public life. All of them were more or less associated with the Gnassingbé Regime, none of them was close to the opposition. The opposition regarded this step as another attempt of Mr. Gnassingbé to put into question the compromise on institutional reforms that had been reached already in 2006, mediated by the international donor community, within the framework of the Global Political Accord (APG). Therefore, it was no surprise that the president of the opposition coalition CAP 2015 (Combat pour l'Alternance Politique en 2015), Brigitte Adjamagbo-Johnson, objected to this commission of reflection. To mollify the opposition and as confidence-building measure, the government promised one week later first payments of compensation (about 3.6 m. Euro) for atrocities of political violence committed during the upheavals between 1958 and 2005 as proposed by the CVJR. The promise was honored at the end of the year (12. December) with reparations for 137 out of a total of 2,475 victims identified by the High Commission of

Reconciliation (Haut-Commissariat à la Reconciliation et au Renforcement de l'Unité, HCRRUN). According to this commission the financial compensation would be only one avenue of different compensation-options envisaged for the victims, like restitution of property, employment generation, granting of personal liberty and other human rights. On 6 January, the Head of State nominated the seven members of the High Authority to combat corruption. The agency itself had been created by law already two years before in July 2015 without being operational. The personalities nominated were selected for a three years period of office (one time repeatable). Again, the opposition doubted the neutrality and independence of the chosen members as well as their capability to control corruption effectively. It suspected, the main reason behind this exercise was window dressing, based on the ambition of the government to gain additional credit internationally to boost its candidacy as eligible model country with respect to the upcoming elections of the Millennium Challenge Account of the UN.

In response to the unyielding attitude of the government and the inconclusive negotiations with the divided opposition, forces of the so-called 'moderate opposition' created (9. January) a new informal opposition coalition composed of six smaller opposition parties, of which only two were represented in parliament, i.e. ADDI (Alliance of Democrats for Integral Development) and FDR (Democratic Forces for the Republic, an elimination of the former opposition party CAR). This informal coalition had no name nor leader, its principal aim was to promote political reforms, including devolution of power and the creation of local authorities. Apparently, it wanted to bridge the political stalemate between the major 'radical' opposition coalition CAP 2015 and the smaller 'moderate' opposition coalition Arc-en-ciel (CAEC) on the one side and the ruling party UNIR (Union pour la République) on the other. However, this exercise was unsuccessful too. The admission of another new political party, the African Democratic Socialists (DSA, Démocrates Socialistes Africains) led by Targone Sambiri into CAP 2015 on 6 February did not result in a new drive for political change either, apart from the augmentation of CAP to now five members: i.e. the ANC (Alliance Nationale pour le Changement), by far the biggest opposition party headed by J.P. Fabre who was the official opposition leader, the CDPA (Convention démocratique des peuples africains) led by Brigitte Adjamagbo-Johnson who was also the coordinator of CAP, the PSR (Pacte Socialiste pour le Renouveau), the UDS (Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social) and DSA. However, six months later, in August, an hitherto hardly known opposition party, the Parti National Panafricain (PNP), founded in 2014, thoroughly shuffled up the encrusted domestic politics in organizing huge demonstrations of all the 14 opposition parties (CAP 2015, group of 6 'moderate' opposition parties (*arc-en-ciel*), CAR, PNP, Santé du peuple). This was facilitated by a new approach to politics of PNP's charismatic leader, Tikpi Atchadam, a former student leader at the University of Lomé and 50 year old lawyer from profession, who originated from the Tem (Kotokoli) people of Kparatao, a village 7 km from Sokodé, Central Togo. His use of modern technics of diffusion of his message, like WhatsApp as well as DVD copies of his strong speeches, distributed up to the most remote villages, contributed to his success. He motivated the discontented with his outspoken language to come out *en masse* and to demonstrate for a speedy end of the autocratic reign of the Gnassingbé dynasty. Big anti-government marches with over 100,000 participants (according to amnesty international) in Lomé on 6 and 7 September aroused special attention. This all the more since social network organization had been systematically hindered by the government that had blocked access to WhatsApp, mobile phone and internet. The call of the ruling Union pour la République (UNIR) for a counter-

demonstration the same day attracted just some thousand persons even though some of the supporters admitted vis à vis RFI journalists on the ground that they had been paid 5,000 F CFA (7,50 €) each for participating. Shortly before, simultaneous anti-government demonstrations in urban centers of Lomé, Atakpamé, Kara, and Sokodé on 19 and 20 August had been violently reprimanded by the security forces. The violence resulted in at least two death, several injuries and the conviction of 14 out of 27 demonstrators, accused of rebellion, violence and aggravated theft, among them the general secretary of the PNP. Further big anti-government demonstrations were to come on 29. and 30. November and 2. December. Apart from that the opposition refused to participate in a consultative forum aimed at ending the crisis which was organized by the government in mid of December.

Meanwhile, the government had continued the process of national reconciliation according to its own agenda. It organized a new delimitation of municipal borders and with it of local constituencies. This was apparently deemed necessary as precondition for winning the envisaged local elections which had been postponed time and again since 1987. At the end of the year local elections were envisaged for June 2018, together with the likewise pending general elections. On 23 June the parliamentary majority of the ruling party UNIR voted a draft law on the creation of 116 municipalities. They were divided between the five regions and 39 prefectures of the country, including 14 new communes, whereby each prefecture enclosed at least two communes. The independent local election commissions (CELI) and their territorial jurisdictions had been reduced by decree from 42 to 38. The opposition denounced the method of delimitation as a tribalistic exercise which allegedly had the major aim to assure the maximum of communes in favor of the Gnassingbé regime. For example, the latter had created relatively more municipalities in the sparsely populated North, considered to be the traditional fief of the ruling party, compared with the densely populated South, held to be the stronghold of the opposition. The oppositional ANC recalled its disillusioning experience of the 2007 legislative elections when the opposition was defeated although it had gained by far the most votes, i.e. 1,2 m, against 0,9 m for the ruling party. However, due to the layout of the electoral constituencies (commune) in favor of the ruling party already at that time, and the seats in parliament being distributed per commune, the ruling party had gained nevertheless a large majority in parliament.

From 3 to 9 July the government organized in addition nationwide ‘purification ceremonies’. The latter made allusion to customary religious practices in order to “exorcise the evil”, i.e. to appease the victims of gross human rights violations committed in the period 1958 to 2005. Although the four big religious entities (catholic and protestant church, Islam and vodun) acknowledged the importance of such symbolic acts, the population in general was little impressed. Therefore, little later the church took sides with the opposition. On 18 September the Bishops Conference of Togo urged the government to carry out reforms requested by the people in accordance with the 1992 Constitution which had been revised by late General Eyadéma in favor of the Gnassingbé regime in 2002. The Episcopal Conference also denounced the wave of repression as well as “the excessive use of force against fellow citizens, sometimes even in their homes”. Last, but not least, it urged the Army to adopt a Republican attitude of political neutrality in accordance with the Constitution and advised the regime to refrain from inciting ethnic hatred in the media and social networks. In view of growing popular pressure the UNIR majority in parliament adopted one day later (19 September)

a law proposal for the review of the 1992 Constitution. However, that proposal excluded decisive points of contention with the opposition on this point such as the introduction of a retroactive presidential term limit in order to end the 50 years-rule of the Gnassingbé regime immediately. Yet, the government majority did not get the required quorum (four-fifths of the deputies of the National Assembly) because the opposition boycotted the vote. Therefore, the head of state had recourse to a constitutional referendum on the law to be held on a not yet determined date in 2018.

End of October (28. to 29.) the ruling party UNIR held its initial party congress at Tsévié (Maritime Region, 32 km north of the capital), the first congress since its making in 2012. The major aim of the convention was the renewal of party organs and personnel, including women members and young Turks of the party. Thus, the former prefect of Blitta (Central Region), Aklesso Atcholé, became executive secretary of the party and was therewith admitted to the inner power circle of the regime. Mme Mémounatou Ibrahim, nicknamed 'the combatante', who had been minister in various cabinets of late Eyadéma and his son Faure, became vice-president of the party. Two younger party members, Malik Natchaba (councilor of the President, 39 years) and Mazamesso Assih (38 years), daughter of the former president of the National Assembly, F. Natchaba, were elected leaders of the young members of UNIR (MJU) in early December. End of March, the government had already nominated Mme. Ingrid Asade, apostrophized Togo's 'Iron Lady', a close follower of Faure Gnassingbé, as new head of the national social security fund, the Caisse nationale de sécurité sociale (CNSS), thus replacing the powerful Koffi Kadanga Walla. The opposition suspected the replacement to be a strategic maneuver in view of the upcoming 2018 elections. Allegedly, the CNSS had often been used in the past as covered war chest of the Gnassingbé clan to finance election campaigns.

Human Rights violations continued to be a great concern. In January, eleven Ghanaians were shot dead and beheaded in Northern Togo near the Benin-Togo border. They were believed to be victims of 'modern day slavery' from Northern Ghana who were returning home from Nigeria. Ghana was said to be a source, transit, and destination country for children and women trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Apart from that, member states of the UN Human Rights Council (OHCHR, Geneva) as well as amnesty international (ai) in its annual report on Togo, published in February, were alarmed about continuing impunity, excessive violence of police and gendarmerie, arbitrary arrests, and restriction of freedom of expression. On 28 February, for example, the security forces dispersed demonstrations in Lomé against the rise in petrol prices with live ammunition, killing one person and wounding several others. According to observers the protesters had been peaceful until the police charged them with batons, tear gas and live ammunition. On 18 October, four people were shot dead (one in Lomé and three in Sokodé), several injured and about sixty arrested in the course of violently suppressed anti-government demonstrations in Lomé and Sokodé. The demonstrations took to the street although the government had forbidden demonstrations on weekdays shortly before, because of past experience with severe impairment of traffic because of demonstrator's violence, a decision which the opposition regarded as an illegal restriction of its basic rights. The demonstrations in Sokodé had been triggered by the imprisonment of an Imam close to opposition leader Tikpi Atchadam. The Imam had openly brand marked the violence of military personnel against opponents of the regime. Already before, on 20 September, one child had been shot and 25 injured during non-authorized demonstrations in Mango

in the extreme North of the country. The families of the victims brought charges at the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Hague, against the responsible army commander, general, Damehane Yark, one of the old stalwarts of the Gnassingbé regime, three days later.

In early February (6.2.) the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC) shut down a private radio and a TV station, *City FM* and *La Chaîne du Futur*, both of the group Sud-Médias, for allegedly breaching licensing rules. One day later, a journalist was severely beaten-up by the gendarmerie and arrested because he was documenting an eviction in Lomé. Shortly later, the general prosecutor warned anyone reporting this case of the risk of criminal prosecution for disseminating false news. Early June the HAAC suspended the newspaper *La Nouvelle* for one month for breach of journalist ethics and warned journalists to “shy away from publishing gruesome stories and images”. The HAAC statute did not provide any appeal possibilities for these decisions. According to ai, the criminalization of the media created a climate of fear and self-censorship and discouraged journalists and the civil society from criticizing HR abuses, notably on subjects such as corruption, the army, the President, and the President’s family.

Increasing encroaching on internet media freedom, taken various forms, ranging from subtly increasing regulatory powers over social media to wholesale internet shutdowns to thwart huge anti-government demonstrations in early September gave reason to growing concern according to the EIU democracy index 2017 for Togo that ranked Togo medias all in all as “unfree”. Government interference with the internet and mobile phones was of special concern in view of the growing reliance on digital information and communication technologies (ITCs) in the context of participatory development approaches of international donor agencies. According to the latest data available (2016) 75% of Togolese had a mobile-cellular subscription and 11.3% used the internet, a penetration rate well below the African average of 27.7%. In June, the French companies Téolis and GVA-Togo-Vivendi were awarded licenses as internet service providers in order to improve the low performance of Togo’s internet, and to end the duopoly of the state-owned operator Togo Telecom and the privately owned Café Informatique,. A national broadband infrastructure had already been established to connect public buildings in Lomé and Kara (Northern Togo) by a 250 km fibreoptic network. Affoh Atcha Dedji, member the direction of UNIR and deputy of Tchamba, a henchman of Faure Gnassingbé, was nominated DG of Togocom, a new body formed by the fusion of Togo Télécom and Togocel at the end of the year. Its president was another partisan of the President, Colonel Dokisime Gnama Latta, a Kabyé and former minister of security in the cabinet (2012). Thus, the control of electronic communication channels remained firmly in the hands of the securocrats of the regime. Nevertheless, the World Press Freedom Index 2017 of the global media watchdog ‘Reporters without Borders’ ranked Togo 86. out of 180 countries, i.e. an improvement by two points compared with past year (88, 2016).

Harsh prison conditions remained a problem, notably overcrowding with over 4,200 prisoners in the 12 prisons of the country designed to hold 2,720. Congestion of prisons was mainly due to abnormal length of pre-trial custody. In May, 63.8% of prisoners were still waiting for their judgement, several of them for years, as the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH, Lomé) in collaboration with the ministry of Justice revealed on occasion of the African Day for pre-trial custody. Apart from this,

there prevailed a general mistrust on the part of the general population vis à vis the Togolese justice system. According to a survey (published in May) by the independent Togolese NGO Centre de Recherche et de Sondage d'Opinions (CROP, Lomé) in conjunction with Afrobarometer, only 37% of a representative sample of interviewed admitted to trust the system. Additional 48% evoked problems of corruption and the long delay of cases.

All in all, Togo was still classified as 'partly free' according to Freedom House's overall 'Freedom in the World Rating – 2017', the same as in 2016 (Aggregate Score: 48/100), with political rights and civil liberties both scoring 4/7 (1=Most Free, 7=Least Free). In the global ranking of the quality of democracy 2016, published by the independent Democracy Ranking Association (Vienna) in February, Togo still ranked next to Nigeria among the countries with the lowest scores worldwide (rank 103 of 112 countries), although it counted among the 10 best improvers in democracy in comparison of the survey period 2014-2015 with 2011-2012. Economist Intelligence Unit's EIU-2017 Democracy Index ranked Togo 142 out of 167 countries worldwide, down by ten places from last year but considerably higher than the country's ranking in the first edition of the Democracy Index, i.e. 164th (rank 1.75) in 2006. With an overall score of 3.32, Togo is still classed as an "authoritarian" regime, like 22 of the other 44 Sub Saharan African countries in the index, along with Zimbabwe and Guinea.

In the 'World Database on Happiness - 2017' (an index of subjective wellbeing), Togo scored 3.9 points of 10 in average happiness for the revue-period (2016), a small improvement over the last revue-period (3.8, 2014). The UN World Happiness Report of 2017 ranked Togo as one of the lowest countries worldwide (rank 150 of 155 surveyed countries), nevertheless it was an improvement of change in happiness in the most recent survey period (2014 - 2016) compared with the last period (2005-2007) by five points. Yet, the still very low scores were an indicator of the depressed state of the general feeling of the population in view of its vain attempts to effect a change of power over decades.

Foreign Affairs

At the 51th ordinary ECOWAS summit, held early June in Liberia for the first time since 30 years, the Togolese head of state was elected the new chairperson (4 June) for one year. He replaced Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who had been the first female ECOWAS leader. The decision was hailed among others by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was one of the speakers to the summit. This was the first visit of an Israeli prime minister to Sub-Saharan Africa in 30 years. The renewed Israeli interest was last, but not least, due to its desire to secure Africa's diplomatic backing on Israel-related issues in international forums such as the UN. In addition, Israel offered cooperation in questions of counterterrorism and economic development. Among others, it signed a four-year US\$1bn treaty to develop green energy projects across the (ECOWAS). During the ECOWAS summit Netanyahu urged West African leaders to vote for an African-Israel summit in October to be held in Lomé in order to intensify cooperation. This summit, the first ever, was meant to consolidate the rapprochement between Israel and a number of African states which had been made a diplomatic priority of the Israeli government. Togo had long standing friendly ties with Tel Aviv, notably concerning close cooperation with Israel's security services (Mossad)

that had provided sophisticated advice, hard- and software already since the reign of late General Eyadéma. The latest remarkable provision had been in 2013, when Israel delivered listening and security material to the tune of more than 144 m €, i.e. about the double of the budget of Togolese's army. Togo counted also to the few developing countries that voted along with the USA against the UN resolution condemning President Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel at the end of the year. However, there was a controversy about the expediency of the Israel-Africa summit. It was questioned not only by the Togolese opposition in view of the actual political domestic crisis, but also because of reservations of Maghreb Africa, South Africa and Arab states concerning Israel's position on the Palestine question. Some Islamic African countries like Gabun, Niger, Mali, Mauritania looked on the official intrusion of Israel into Africa as a provocation and called for a boycott of the summit. Still in September, Senegal condemned Israel's creeping colonisation of Palestine territory. Member states of the OCI (Organisation de la Conference Islamique), to which Togo belonged already since 1997, furiously demanded reprisals against Togo. The king of Morocco, Mohammed VI had already boycotted the ECOWAS summit in Monrovia because of the presence of the Israeli Prime Minister. Faure Gnassingbé, who had visited Jerusalem in September succeeded nevertheless to convince most his pairs to held the Africa-Israel summit. The conference took place in Lomé from 24. to 26. October, with about 30 of 55 African states represented, among them Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Congo Brazzaville, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana.

In view of the increasing bloody violence in Togo and its possible repercussions on the whole sub-region, West African leaders broke finally their silence on Togo's domestic politics. On 25 October, the ECOWAS head of states, who were following a meeting in Niger, stressed the need for negotiations and condemned violent actions by the Togolese police against opponents of the regime while calling for sanctions for any perpetrator of violent actions. On the 52nd ECOWAS-summit in Abuja (Nigeria) in mid of December, which was dedicated among others to discuss the security crisis in Guinea-Bissau and the political crisis in Togo, the members elected its new President of the Commissions (as distinct from the Chairman). The present Ivorian minister of mines Jean-Claude Brou replaced Marcel De Souza from Benin who was married to one of the sisters of Faure Gnassingbé, Naka Gnassingbé.

Yet, most attempts to mediate in the Togolese crisis failed because the mediators proposed by ECOWAS apparently were not neutral. The first effort by the UN special representative for West Africa, the Ghanaian Mohamed Ibn Chambas, was refused by the opposition because the latter was apparently close to the Gnassingbé family. During his tenure as general secretary of ECOWAS (2002-2009) Chambas was suspected to have been one of the architects of the bloody and undemocratic enthronization of Faure Gnassingbé as Togolese head of state and heir of his father Eyadéma in 2005. The Togolese opposition therefore filed an action against Ibn Chambas at the UN Ethics Office on 29 September. A similar mistrust applied against another mediator, the minister of foreign affairs of Niger, Mme. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, who was meant to lead a mediation mission of the OIF in Lomé from 10 to 13 October which however was postponed *sine die*. A third mediation effort of the president of the AU, the Guinean President Alpha Condé mid of October in Lomé was postponed as well in view of the bloody repression of anti-government demonstrations on 18. to 19. October. End of October, Patrice Talon, the President of Benin, and the Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara tried to mediate in the Togolese crisis in vain too. The Nigeria leader

Muhammadu Buhari warned in November that the political instability in Togo could have regional consequences. Some month before, on 14 March, Buhari had signed a treaty with neighbouring governments to construct a highway linking the Nigerian commercial capital Lagos with the Ivorian capital Abidjan via Benin and Togo in order to facilitate international trade and exchange.

France, the former colonial power in Lomé, was concerned about the Togolese crisis as well. End of November, President Emmanuel Macron called for freedom of expression and for an electoral framework that would guarantee free and fair elections. In May, France, the biggest supplier of arms for Togo, had already been reluctant to proceed in the delivery of five French military helicopters type Gazelle to Lomé in view of the political crisis. At the same time, the Franco-Togolese lawyer, Pacôme Adjourouvi, a former classmate of Faure Gnassingbé, was nominated special councillor of the Togolese head of state in the rank of minister. This happened despite corruption-accusations against Adjourouvi, investigated by the French counter-espionage DGSE shortly before. He was accused of having facilitated corruption as go-between to hand over a 'gift' (7.5 Mio €) of Faure Gnassingbé to the then French prime minister Manuel Valls during his official visit to Lomé in 2016, in order to promote the latter's election campaign for the upcoming French presidentials in 2017.

The annual AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act) forum, which had been initiated in 2000 to promote the trade between Africa and the USA, took place in Lomé from 8th to 10th August. The prospects of this deal were gloomy in view of the bearish attitude of President Trump vis à vis Africa and decreasing American imports from Africa in recent years (from 26.8 bn US \$ in 2014 to 18.7 bn US \$ in 2025, i.e. – 30%), mainly due to decreased African oil exports.

In contrast, the EU approved disbursements of 16.5 bn US \$ in budgetary aid for Lomé in February, which was complemented by a generous German aid package of 60 m US \$ (equally divided between technical and financial cooperation), signed during a five day visit (8 to 13 June) of the Togolese head of state to Berlin. This aid package corresponded to a 50% increase in aid since the last government negotiations in 2014. On 22 June, the EU, France and Germany agreed in Lomé to harmonise their aid to Togo which amounted to about 715 m € in total for the period 2014 to 2020. Therewith, Europe remained the most important partner of development cooperation with Togo.

China, another influential partner, provided for the construction of a modern TV-complex for the state-run Togolese television (TVT) and Radio Lomé. The controversial construction of the joint Benin-Togolese Adjarala hydropower dam on the Mono river at the joint border, contracted by the Chinese company Sinohydro and financed with credits of the China Exim-bank by an amount of 551.08 m US \$, which had been stalled in 2016 because of financial problems, apparently continued. It was meant to significantly increasing electricity generation by 147 megawatts. However, environmental, economic and social impacts on the local population were a concern. Approximately 21,000 people will be affected on both sides of the border, including 12,000 people or 1,800 households in Togo. End of the year (22.12.), the AfDB provided about converted 11.4 m € under the Agribusiness Promotion Support Program (PAGAP) meant a. o. to improve conditions for inclusive growth, the development of agribusiness, the reduction of the agricultural trade deficit from F CFA 64 bn to 30 bn,

and the improvement of the tax burden ratio from 16.7% (2016) to 21% of GDP in 2018.

Since the beginning of the year the CFA franc debate attract again the attention of activists. A social movement developed to demand the joint withdrawal of African nations from the CFA franc. On 7 January, an NGO ('SOS Pan-Africa', 'Urgences Panafricanistes') organized anti-CFA demonstrations in several African and European cities. Alongside radical economists and intellectuals, the critics of the CFA franc included also Togo's Kako Nubukpo, economist and former minister for the evaluation of public politics in the cabinet of Faure Ganssingbé, ex-BCEAO banker, and since 2016 director of the economic and digital Francophonie. He was an outspoken critic of the F CFA. Critics considered the CFA franc and its peg to the Euro as a neo-colonial device that continued to destroy any prospect of self-reliant economic development. According to the critics, the CFA franc served mainly the interest of a small elite of the so-called *Monsieurs Afrique*, both in francophone Africa and France. The peg encouraged, last but not least, massive capital outflows. The argument was supported also by the gradual strengthening of the Euro against the US\$ since April which favoured imports to the detriment of the Togolese export market. The volatility of the US\$ vis à vis the Euro had been the main reason for the 1994 CFA franc devaluation that had caused widespread social and political upheaval in WAEMU member states. In December, Nubukpo was dismissed of the OIF because of his critical remarks on the F CFA as well as on the French President M. Macron and the latter's alleged dishonourable remarks for African leaders.

Togo continued to participate in peacekeeping missions in the sub-region, with about 1,400 soldiers and policemen, especially in Mali. On 1 April, the Togolese Gilbert F. Houngbo became the sixth President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). He previously served as Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and from 2008 to 2012, as Prime Minister of Togo.

Socioeconomic Developments

At the beginning of the year Lomé signed two new credit deals with the IMF (18. January, 238 m US\$ for 10 years) and the World Bank (WB; 31. January; 350 m US\$ for 3 years, 2017 to 2020). Both agreements were orientated by the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2018 to 2022 which was still not released at the end of the year officially. The NDP will replace the national *Stratégie de croissance accélérée et de promotion de l'emploi (SCAPE, 2013-2017)* and follow the same objectives. The latter were focussing on a more robust, inclusive and sustainable growth (4.8% in 2017), with due consideration of the low inflation pressure (estimated -1% in 2017), as well as a high, yet slowly decreasing poverty rate (55%, having come down from 61% in 2011, though it remained geographically concentrated), weak governance, leading to alarming dimensions of the current account deficit and debt. The latter were both well above the plafond authorized by WAEMO-regulations. Huge public infrastructure investments in the past years had contributed to a proliferation of public debt from 48.6 % of GDP in 2011 to estimated 81.5% in 2017 as well as a high current account deficit reaching 9.8% of GDP (2016), largely due to investment related imports. Therefore, the IMF advised an austerity programme. The first IMF financed three-year Extended Credit Facility

(ECF) which had replaced the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility, had already expired long ago (in 2011). A new ECF was delayed up to January when a staff-level agreement with the government for a three year ECF with SDR 176 million (about USD 238 million) or 120 percent of Togo's quota in the IMF was negotiated.

This fell in line with the policies of other aid-donors. Thus, the priority sectors of the World Bank (WB) were health, water, education, energy and agriculture. In September, the WB presented its new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the four year period July 2016 to June 2020, the first medium-term strategy since resuming IDA-financing in 2008. The increased poverty orientation of the new International Development Association's (IDA, a WB-branch) IDA 18 replenishment, which provided increased support for fragile states, resulted in the doubling of IDA resources for Togo. The latter increased to up to 230 US\$, available during 2018 to 2020, which – combined with the 113 US\$ IDA financing approved already in 2017 and other resources from the sub-regional IDA envelop - amounted to a total of over 350 m US\$ in grants and low to zero interest loans for the CPF period. The restructuring of the two large, but weak public banks (BTCI and UTB) that had been delayed several times, but envisaged a. o. by the most recent IMF's Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement, was still under way at the end of the year.

The African Development Bank assisted the government to cope with another serious problem, the man-made costal erosion. In the middle of the year it approved a 41 m US\$ loan to Togo and Benin for the construction of 28 groynes in order to stabilise the shoreline. According to expert's estimates the Togolese coastline receded by 10 meters per year on average, and even by up to 20 metres per year east to the deep water harbour of Lomé, constructed in 1968. Two national roads along the coast had already been washed away, and the former coastal colonial capital Aneho was threatened of submersion by 2030, which could lead to the displacement of thousands of people. Apart from the negative effects of the construction and extension of the port of Lomé with its impact on sedimentary accumulation by the produced change of sea currents, other human interference had accelerated coastal erosion too. Notably, the illegal harvesting for sand and gravel along the shore for construction purposes.

The low and decreasing ranking of Togo in the annual Human Development Report, published in March for the past year (2016), showed however that economic growth did not necessarily bring about improved human development. Togo's HDI ranking decreased by -52.0 units, from 114.0 (1990) to 166.0 (2015) to the bottom of 188 countries surveyed.

In addition, a WB publication on the geographical concentration of welfare, published in November, showed that there was an alarming variation in poverty between the so called leading and lagging areas of Togo. Nine out of 36 prefectures counted among the leading regions: Togare Bassar, Cinkassé, Danyi, Golfe, Lacs, Lomé, Ogou, Tchaoudjo, and Vo. Poverty in the far North of Togo was up to three times as high as in the South. Poverty rates observed varied between 15% in the top three prefectures (Golfe, Lacs, and Lomé) and more than 90% in the bottom three (Tandjoaré, Akebou, and Doufelgou). The largest poor population was concentrated in Oti prefecture, the most disadvantaged area in terms of income.

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According to official data presented by the government end of January, the unemployment rate had decreased from 6.5% in 2011 to 3.4% in 2015, including 55.1% poor unemployed, according to the national institute of statistics (Inseed). However, these figures were questioned as rather politically motivated calculus in view of reference levels of unemployment in neighbouring countries like Ghana (12%) or Nigeria (13%). In addition, the rate of under-employment had increased from 22.8% (2011) to 24.9% (2015), making a total of 28.3% un- and under-employed mostly young people. The National Agency of Volunteers (Agence Nationale de Volontariat au Togo, ANVT) which had tried to tackle this problem in the past five years by mobilizing 11,189 young people (out of 70,000 candidates) nevertheless succeeded to insert 2,284 only young unemployed into the labour market. Of the economically active population the majority (51%) were small farmers, 39% independent non-agricultural workers and 10% employed in the formal sector. The latter comprised 88,000 jobs, 67% in the public sector and 33% in the private sector.

Phosphate production, the major export industry, which had been nationalized under late Eyadéma Gnassingbé (the father of Faure) in 1974, was boosted by the completion of a 1.4bn US\$ project to mine 5 m tonnes per year of phosphate rock. The production was managed by the Société Nouvelle des Phosphates du Togo (SNPT) and supplemented by the construction of a phosphoric acid and fertiliser plant, built by Elenilto, an Israeli mining company. According to the African Investigative Publishing Collective (aipc, Accra), phosphate production was informally administered directly from the offices of President Gnassingbé by the Moroccan-Israeli family of Raphael and Liron Ederly. Evidence suggested that this special arrangement could have facilitated corruption. In 2016 and 2017, for example, close to 90% of Togo's phosphates had been bought well below world-market prices by 'privileged clients', i.e. the Indian family of shippers Gupta-Kalyan. Ashok Gupta had been already under investigation by the Australian Federal Police in another case for bribing of politicians in exchange for the phosphate resources.

Informal trade with neighbouring countries had unintended consequences. This the more so, as Togo belonged to the African countries with high reliance on the informal sector (over 40% of GDP). Spillovers from Nigeria's fuel price policy to Togo for example resulted in an unwanted subsidy of Nigerian transfers to the equivalent of at least 3% of Togo's GDP in 2011, three-quarters of which was captured by petrol smugglers according to IMF studies published in the course of the year. Additional negative externalities were reported on lowering the tax base on petrol in Togo. Other underestimated spillovers concerned regional shocks and the impact of a slowdown in Nigeria which could have significant impact on Togo too.

Of similar importance to aid from the international donor community was the contribution of Togolese migrants who were sending money home. According to the most recent data of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, a special UN agency to eradicate poverty) on remittances, published on 15 June, remittances of Togolese migrants totalled 287 m US\$ in 2016, or 9.1% of GDP. However, this indicated a slight decrease of importance compared with 2007, when Togo counted among the top five countries reliant on remittances worldwide with 11% of GDP. Still, the remittances market served mainly the population in urban centres. It had a comparative limited payout presence of 44% in rural areas. According to available data (2009) most inbound payments of remittances in Togo were handled by

post offices (38%), banks (23%) and micro finance institutions (14%) like Western Union and Money Express. This bottleneck could be overcome by mobile phone money adoption. A scholarly study, published in April, revealed that social groups, including religious and students organizations, were powerful vehicles for the adoption of mobile money in Togo. In contrast, being unemployed decreased the likelihood to adopt mobile money.

Unemployment of Togo's school leavers and dearth of prospects for the future continued to stimulate outward migration to Europe. However, their fate was uncertain. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM, Geneva) disclosed on 28. November that in 2016 more than 330,000 migrants had passed the frontier between Niger and Libya for European destination, among them at least 300 Togolese. Reports on gross human rights violations, trafficking in human beings and slavery in about 30 Libyan refugees-detention camps around Tripoli, harbouring more than 20,000 captured migrants, highlighted the hazards linked to this kind of migration.

Also ships under Togolese registration were reported to have carried clandestine migrants to Turkey and European harbours in 2015. In February, the national body responsible for state action at sea (ONAEM-Togo), created in 2014, revealed in its second annual report that of 566 vessels registered in Togo end of 2016 about 200 had to be radiated from the list because they had tarnished the image of the country and acted in illegality.

In addition, piracy remained a problem in the Gulf of Guinea off West Africa. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) recorded 92 ships boarded by pirates during the first three quarters of 2017, 13 vessels were fired upon, and another five hijacked. The vast majority of attacks (75%) took place along the Nigerian coast. But attacks included waters from Nigeria's neighbours, Togo, Benin and Cameroon too. Four reported "maritime incidents" happened "offshore" of Togo. However, not all incidents of piracy were reported, notably not the failed attacks.

Within the realm of education a representative WB-study on primary schools in Africa 'What do teachers know and do – Does it matter?', published in January, revealed worrying evidence. None of the teachers in Togo met the criteria for a minimum knowledge in language. When it came to understanding and solving a simple math story problem only about 30% of Togolese primary school teachers gave a correct answer and merely 5% could monitor and comment on the learning progression of their pupils. The minimum knowledge in general pedagogy was 3%. Consequently the student's knowledge stood well below the African average. Barely 16% could read a sentence, the overall comprehension score in literacy was 10 out of 100, and just 9% of pupils could solve a simple math story.

In July, the government concluded a contract with the English enterprise Bboxx to provide 300,000 domestic solar-home-kits to be distributed in rural areas in the next five years within the framework of the CIZO (enlighten, in Mina, the local language) initiative at an estimated cost of about 117 m US\$. Thereby, the electrification rate in rural areas was meant to rise from the present 6% to 35% in 2022. The government was to provide about 15 m US\$, and 102.5 m US\$ will have to be secured from private investors, i.e. to be sold on a pay-as-you-go model using popular mobile payment solutions by the sale of the kits via mobile payments (PAYGO). In the pilot stage, the first 10,000 kits will be delivered for the rural areas within the next year, assisted by an initial funding of about 1 m US\$ of the Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA), a multi-donor trust fund administered by the African Development Bank.

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The new budget for 2018 was adopted in parliament as usual at the end of the year (20th December). With a total of 1,321.9 bn F CFA it represented an 7.7% increase over the 2017 budget. 44% of the budget was consecrated to expenditures for health, education and to grass-root socio-economic development. The deputies of the opposition boycotted the vote en bloc in view of the political crisis. Notably they scathed the opacity of budget management and the violation of the financial law (LOLF), stipulating the justification of the foregoing budget before voting on the new budget. However, the National Assembly had not justified till then the budget of 2016, 2015 and 2014, apparently because the audit court had reported inconsistencies concerning the execution the 2014 budget which had not be cleared up to date. In addition, the opposition complained about impunity vis à vis tax fraud, mismanagement of parastatals like Togo Telecom, SNPT, the autonomous port of Lomé and the two state-owned banks, etc.

Aggregated indicators of Togo's economic freedom showed stagnation or even regression. The World Bank Doing Business Report 2018 on business regulation and the protection of property rights for 190 countries worldwide, published on 9. November, reported a slight deterioration for Togo from rank 154 (2017) to 156 (2018), both well below its peers in the WAEMU region and the Sub-Saharan average. Togo's political and administrative operating environment constituted a barrier to the growth of private direct investment and private sector activities. A thorough reform was prevented by vested interests, lacking administrative and judicial transparency and widespread corruption. Economic freedom, as measured by the Heritage Foundation's Economic Freedom Index 2018, published in November 2017, decreased as well from rank 137 (2016) to 144 (score: 67.2) of 183 countries surveyed. In short, Togo's economic freedom too remained with the overall status of 'mostly unfree'.