

RWANDA

External Relations

(RWA_1) Reuters – 9/11

Western donors must lift an aid freeze on Rwanda, imposed over its alleged support for Congo rebels, to avoid damaging its economy and causing a new crisis in the region, the head of the African Development Bank (AfDB) said.

Rwanda, which relies on donors for about 40 percent of its budget, has recorded robust growth rates in recent years on the back of increased investments and consumption. But the Central African country's Finance Minister John Rwangobwa said last week the economy could take a hit after Washington, Berlin and other donors suspended some of their aid over accusations Rwanda was backing M23 rebels fighting in eastern Congo.

Aid to Rwanda should resume "as soon as possible and that means yesterday," said AfDB president Donald Kaberuka who is Rwandan. "The damage could be significant and the cost of recovery even higher," Kaberuka told Reuters in an interview on Thursday, adding the cutting of aid flows could create a crisis in the region. "There is no reason whatsoever to create an economic crisis in the Great Lakes because that would impact on all the countries in the Great Lakes."

The economies in the region are closely linked and any slowdown in Rwanda could hit cross-border trade with Burundi and other neighbors.

Kaberuka said the aid cuts risked reversing development in Rwanda's health, education and other social sectors, achieved as the country tries to recover from the 1994 genocide.

(RWA_4) National Times – 12/11

Former (Australian) federal Greens leader Bob Brown has been banned from entering Rwanda after the African nation's government cited "contradictory messages" in his visa application. Dr Brown received approval on October 30 to travel to the war-torn African nation to support the local Greens party. He was to depart today before the government's reversal on Sunday.

"This is very unfortunate, not just for the Greens in Rwanda, but for democracy in a country where political opposition is not wanted by the government of President [Paul] Kagame," Dr Brown said on Sunday. "I will continue to support the Rwandan Greens and to work for people pursuing democracy under far more difficult circumstances than we experience in Australia."

Dr Brown said he feared for the safety of members of the Democratic Green Party in Rwanda. Party deputy leader Andre Kagwa Rwisereka was found beheaded in 2010 and his killing remains unsolved.

"The last Greens conference was broken up violently with men wielding sticks and some people's arms and legs were broken," Dr Brown said. "The journalist who reported on, and

indicated that the government was involved in the break-up of that Greens conference was shot, so it's very tough going." "This is a test for the Commonwealth, whether President Kagame is going to be taken on."