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## Africa

### **AU wants a bigger global role in 2012**

The African Union (AU) has unveiled an ambitious wish-list of priorities for Africa that would give the continent a stronger global voice, boost democracy and encourage peace and security. The first priority for Africa is the AU's resolve to review its international partnerships to ensure they bring greater benefits to Africa. The AU wants Africa to manufacture and export finished products to its trading partners rather than just selling them the raw materials as it does now. It had held talks on the new breed of partnerships with some countries such as China, India, the EU and US and other rising stars in trade with the continent, including Turkey and Latin America.

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=94630>

### **Challenging urbanisation myths**

Africa's cities are growing at a frightening rate as people flood from the countryside to the towns... It is a commonly held view, but a London-based academic, Deborah Potts, has been challenging this received wisdom, asserting that it is based on flawed data and that the rate of urbanisation is much lower than people assume.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95015/AFRICA-Challenging-the-urbanization-myths> (English)

## Medicines

### **Comics strips to fight against resistance**

The spread of antimicrobial resistance has dire consequences for Africa which is grappling with high levels of infection. Poor quality medicines, inappropriate use of medicines, as well as poor hygiene and waste management all facilitate the development of resistance. As a result, many first line treatments for diseases such as malaria, TB and infections that come with AIDS are no longer effective and the cost of care is inevitably increased.

These fun-to-read comic strips were developed by the Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network (EPN) to provide information for the general public and health professionals. The material is also available in French and Kiswahili. Volume 1 for the public: Take Responsibility for your Health. Tackling antimicrobial resistance, a story of a community playing its part. You too... can take action .

Volume 2 for health professionals: Standing up for your patients' Health. Tackling antimicrobial resistance, a story of health professionals playing their part. You too... can take action!

<http://www.aefjn.org/index.php/358.html>

### **The Carte Blanche of the Health and Solidarity Platform**

The Health and Solidarity Platform to which AEFJN belongs, has issued a Carte Blanche to denounce the primacy of economic interests over health in international politics, especially regarding the strengthening of Intellectual Property Rights. The negative impact of the patent system on research and development of new drugs, vaccines and medical equipment is also mentioned.

<http://www.aefjn.org/index.php/materiel-398.html> (only in French)

## Land Grabbing

### **GRAIN releases data set documenting over 400 global land grabs**

Since 23 February 2012, GRAIN has been making available a new set of data documenting 416 recent, large-scale land grabs by foreign investors for the production of food crops. The cases cover nearly 35 million hectares of land in 66 countries. Africa is the primary target of the land grabs.

<http://www.grain.org/fr/article/entries/4479-grain-releases-data-set-with-over-400-global-land-grabs>

## Natural Resources

### **Britain leads dash to explore for oil in war-torn Somalia**

Britain is involved in a secret high-stakes dash for oil in Somalia, with the government offering humanitarian aid and security assistance in the hope of a stake in the beleaguered country's future energy industry. Away from the public focus, talks are going on between British officials and Somali counterparts over exploiting oil reserves that have been explored in the arid north-eastern region of the country. Somali Prime Minister Abdiweli Mohamed Ali said his government had little choice but to entice western companies to Somalia by offering a slice of the country's natural resources, which include oil, gas and large reserves of uranium.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/feb/25/britain-oil-dash-somalia>

### **Gas flares still a burning issue in the Niger Delta**

Despite longstanding laws against gas flaring - the burning of natural gas during oil extraction - in Nigeria, the practice continues with serious health consequences for people living nearby. In the Niger Delta, where most of the flaring takes place, residents living near gas flares complain of respiratory problems, skin rashes and eye irritations, as well as damage to agriculture due to acid rain. While gas flaring has technically been illegal in Nigeria since 1984, the government sometimes grants exemptions to oil companies, and fines for flaring are criticized as being too light to act as a deterrent.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95034/NIGERIA-Gas-flares-still-a-burning-issue-in-the-Niger-Delta>

## Trade

### **Signing of EPAs risky for EAC region**

Signing of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) by the member states of the East African Community (EAC) will have deep ramifications for their ability to industrialise, former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa has warned. "If the entire EAC region signs the economic partnership agreements, least developed countries (LDCs) on the World Trade Organization (WTO) which do not have to take tariff cuts in the WTO trade liberalisation rounds will have to cut their tariffs to zero for at least 80 % of trade with the European Union". He also stated that signing the agreements would shrink the size of the local markets of agricultural products which small farmers depend on.

[http://www.tralac.org/2012/02/29/signing-of-epas-risky-for-region/?utm\\_source=Weekly+tralac+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=a616cc721e-NL20120229&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.tralac.org/2012/02/29/signing-of-epas-risky-for-region/?utm_source=Weekly+tralac+Newsletter&utm_campaign=a616cc721e-NL20120229&utm_medium=email)

## Arms

### **Meeting to prepare the July Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty**

From the 13th to the 17th February 2012, government delegates and specialists met at the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) at the UN in New York to discuss Rules of Procedure for the final Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

in July 2012. The week was dominated by debate and division amongst delegations over key procedural issues including: decision-making procedures, the status the basis for negotiations and the level of civil society access to discussions at the DipCon. The intense wrangling showed the difficulty of reaching a strong ATT in July. Ultimately, an agreement was reached to negotiate the treaty in July. In the time that procedural talks have taken place, an estimated ten thousand people will have lost their lives to armed violence according to the Control Arms Coalition, an international movement of NGOs. Progress toward the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which will be the first global treaty to control the international arms trade, was nearly derailed over disagreement about decision making and civil society access.

Find more information at Control Arms Campaign [http://www.controlarms.org/index\\_c.php](http://www.controlarms.org/index_c.php)

## Water

### **WATER – Alternative World Water Forum (AWWF), March 2012**

The AWWF (also known by its French acronym FAME) has been set up by solidarity movements that are combating the grabbing of common goods. Its theme is 'Water for Life, not for Profit'. AWWF intends to be a concrete alternative to the World Water Forum which is organised by the World Water Council whose guiding lights are transnational companies and the World Bank.

Site : <http://www.fame2012.org/en/>