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Togo – 2019
Domestic politics, foreign affairs, socio-economic development

Dirk Kohnert [1]

Africa Youth Movement statement on protest in Togo [2]

Abstract: Controversial constitutional and institutional reforms voted in May in parliament opened the way for President Gnassingbé to stand for a fourth and fifth term (2020 and 2030) because the law does not apply retroactively. The first local elections since more than 30 years resulted in the victory of the ruling party. Grand expectations of the opposition which had hoped for a fundamental change at least at the grass-roots were again dashed. The human rights situation sharply deteriorated due to growing political and social tensions related to the prospects of the head of state running for a fourth term. Islamist terrorist violence spread from Mali to the northern frontier region of Togo. The autonomous deep-water port of Lomé developed as a growth pole and hub for the sub-region. China became the major partner beside the established partners the EU, France and Germany. The informal sector still dominated the economy. Economic freedom remained with the overall status 'mostly unfree'.

Résumé: Des réformes constitutionnelles et institutionnelles controversées votées en mai au Parlement ont ouvert la voie au président Gnassingbé pour se présenter aux quatrième et cinquième mandats (2020 et 2030) car la loi ne s'applique pas rétroactivement. Les premières élections locales depuis plus de 30 ans ont abouti à la victoire du parti au pouvoir. Les grandes attentes de l'opposition qui avait espéré un changement fondamental au moins à la base ont de nouveau été déçues. La situation des droits de l'homme s'est fortement détériorée en raison des tensions politiques et sociales croissantes, liées aux perspectives d'un quatrième mandat du chef de l'État. La violence terroriste islamiste s'est propagée du Mali à la région frontalière nord du Togo. Le port autonome en eau profonde de Lomé s'est développé comme un pôle de croissance et un hub pour la sous-région. La Chine est devenue le principal partenaire aux côtés des partenaires établis, l'UE, la France et l'Allemagne. Le secteur informel dominait toujours l'économie. La liberté économique est restée avec le statut global «pour la plupart non libre».

Keywords: countrywide study, Togo, West Africa, domestic politics, foreign affairs, socio-economic development, African Studies, ECOWAS, WAEMU, UEMOA

Jel-codes: F35, N97, O17, O55, Z13
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Domestic Politics

The new year began with a **government reshuffle** following the victory of the ruling party Union for the Republic (Union pour la république, UNIR) in the legislative elections on 20 December last year. Although prime minister Komi Sélom Klassou had offered to resign because the victory of his party had been not as spectacular as expected, President Faure Gnassingbé reinstalled him again on 4 January in order to form the new cabinet. As announced on 25. January, Klassou made only slight modifications of his old team. Of the 23 ministers selected (four less than in the former government), 13 kept their portfolio, notably the politically most important, i.e. Yark Damehane (Security), Robert Dussey (Foreign Affairs) and Gilbert Bawara (civil service). Of the nine persons who newly entered the cabinet, the most remarkable was Kodjo Adédzé who changed from the powerful post of the General Commissioner of the Togolese Revenue Office to the Minister for Commerce and Industry which had been attributed additional competences. The new cabinet included five women, of whom the most remarkable was the newcomer Mme Demba Tignokpa for Planning and Development Cooperation. The most important chair of the minister for defence remained again with President Gnassingbé himself to shield-off any coup attempts. Apparently, the cabinet was still incomplete, because the chairs of important ministries, notably that of Agriculture, which will be decisive to implement this key sector in the National Development Plan 2018-2022, remained vacant.

On 23 January, the deputy Mrs Yawa Tségan of the UNIR was elected president of the National Assembly. She replaced Dama Dramani (also UNIR). Tségan had held before the powerful office of the national inspector of taxes and was said to be very close to the Gnassingbé clan. This was the first time in the history of the Togolese parliament that a woman was elected as president of the parliament. Shortly before, during the legislative elections of 20. December 2018 (boycotted by the opposition coalition), altogether 15 female deputies (16,5%, all of the ruling party) had been elected into the 6. legislature, a small reduction vis à vis the 17 women deputies in the previous parliament.

On 8 May, the UNIR majority in parliament voted on the controversial proposals of the ruling party for **constitutional and institutional reforms** which allowed a maximum of two consecutive five-year presidential terms. The initial UNIR proposal of a mandate of seven years, renewable only once had been withdrawn after heated debates within the ruling political class. The vote on the new law passed with 90 out of 91 members to enact article 59 and further 28 articles of the Togolese constitution. Members of the National Assembly, as well as the senator's terms, were limited to three six-years, and members of the Constitutional Court to two six-years. For president Gnassingbé, who came into power in 2005, and had been re-elected twice in 2010 and 2015 by undemocratic elections, this meant in fact that he was allowed to stand for a fourth and fifth term (2020 and 2030) because the law does not apply retroactively. That disposition could only be modified by a referendum, which in fact opened already a loophole for a life-long prolongation of Gnassingbés rule. Last, but not least, the incumbent would be guaranteed immunity for life for acts performed during presidential terms. According to the new law, the president is elected by uninominal majority ballot in a two-round majority system and by the absolute majority of the votes cast.

Although the opposition coalition C14 (initially comprised of 14 opposition parties) had waged protest at varies diplomatic channels (including ECOWAS, EU and AU) as well as by big anti-government demonstrations in the past year, its resistance against this renewed usurpation of political power suffered from growing internal divisions. This had materialized first in dwindling popular support. The big anti-government demonstrations of 2018 had given way to rather weak protest on the streets of Lomé mobilising on 26. January distinctly fewer people. Moreover, the by far biggest opposition party, the National Alliance for Change (ANC, Alliance Nationale pour le Changement) of former opposition leader, Jean-Pierre Fabre, fell apart with the C14 because of irreconcilable differences about its tactics and direction, followed suit by the established CAR (Comité d'action pour le renouveau) of former prime minister, Yawovi Agboyibo, and the new opposition party Pan-African National Party (PNP, Parti National Panafricain) of modernizer Tikpi Atchadam.

However, it was clear beyond doubt that this state capture by the ruling party had been facilitated not only by a weak and disorganized opposition but also, if necessary, by brutal military repression of any opposition in the interest of the Gnassingbé clan, one of Africa's oldest political dynasties. The latter could and would not accept any attempt to curtail its power for five decades. Thus, Togo will remain a dictatorship in disguise of an enlightened authoritarian regime for the foreseeable future.

The long-expected first **local elections** for over 30 years (1987), reported many times, took finally place on 30 June. It was a proportional multi-member election using the strongest remainder method to replace the "special delegations" appointed by the President of the Republic, used up-to-date. The municipals were seen as an important step by all political parties because the local elected officials would be entitled to elect two-thirds of the future Senate. In fact, the new constitutional law provides in its article 52: "The Senate is composed of : two thirds (2/3) of personalities elected by the representatives of the territorial collectivities; a third (1/3) of personalities designated by the President of the Republic." Thereby, the common practice in Togolese politics of old politicians (both the barons of power and their historic opponents) to afford up to 12 years of senatorial life, including all benefits that came with it, ceased to exist. In order to prevent politically motivated transboundary migration Togo's land borders with neighbouring countries, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Benin had been closed on election day. Yet, the pious wishes of the opposition which had hoped for a fundamental change at least at the grass-roots were again utterly dashed.

Hitherto, the municipalities had neither benefited from real transfers of skills nor adequate structures. The local elections could guarantee a transfer of power for the first time. According to the new **decentralization** law of 2018, there exists only one type of communes in the country which is directed by locally elected delegates who constitute the municipal council. That is, the council has a state budget allocation as well as other endogenous resources through local taxation. With these funds, the municipalities can design, program and implement improvements within their territorial jurisdiction in the economic, cultural and social field. On 25 June, only a few days before the local elections, scheduled for June 30, the law on decentralization and local freedoms was amended by the modification of 33 articles in total and the introduction of five new ones. Basically, the new text establishes the limitation of the mandate of local elected officials to 6 years, renewable twice. Moreover, it stipulated that the countries'

administration will be reorganized at two levels of local authorities, namely municipalities and regions. Thereby, the prefecture-level was abolished as a local authority but not as an administrative subdivision.

For the 1.527 seats in the 117 municipalities, countrywide over 11.000 candidates, distributed over 643 lists, had registered for participation. Finally, a total of 570 lists of political parties and independents and 114 municipalities had been approved by the Supreme Court. Five municipalities, Oti-Sud 1, Bassar 4, Wawa 1, Zio 4, and Avé 2, did not take part in the polls for "technical reasons". Of the opposition parties, the PNP did not take part, because its leader, Tikpi Atchadam, lived since 2017 in exile in fear of political persecution. He had demanded in vain the release of PNP's detained activists, including three leaders imprisoned following demonstrations against the government on 13 April. But except for the (PNP), all parties, that had boycotted the December 2018 legislative elections, and thus had no longer any representation in Parliament, participated. Thus they hoped to establish a firm political presence at least at the local level.

However, their dreams did not come true also in this respect. UNIR gained 65% of municipal councillor seats, i.e. 895 of 1490 seats, according to the provisional results, as proclaimed by the National Election Commission CENI on 5 July. The leader of the opposition-coalition C14, Brigitte Adjamagbo Johnson, contested the results because of multiple reports of the parties' election observers on frauds like ballot stuffing and buying conscience. Already before the elections, the opposition had tried in vain to draw the attention of the international community on the alleged fraud, e.g. concerning the revision of the voters register on 16 to 19 May and the precipitation with which the election was organized which made that several voters had not sufficient time to register. However, the so-called 'Group of 5' (G5)[3], composed of German, US, French, EU delegation embassies, as well as the coordination of the UN system in Togo, remained silent.

As expected, the victory of UNIR had been especially huge in northern localities, the traditional fief of the ruling party. The oppositional ANC, the Opposition Coalition (C14), the Union of Forces for Change (UFC) and Nouvel Engagement Togolaise (NET) had to be content with 134, 131, 44, and 33 municipal councillors respectively.

Also, the CENI reported deplorably **low participation**. Just 52,5% of the 3.466.524 voters enrolled went to the polls, the lowest participation rate since the presidentials of 2005 that brought Faure Gnassingbé to power. Participation was particularly low in Lomé where certain groups of the opposition had called for a boycott of the elections and the participation rate in the poll stations attributed to the opposition was on average below 25%. Apparently, the population had grown tired of the cumbersome registration and election procedures and/or developed growing fatalism vis à vis repeated attempts of the UNIR to remain in power whatever the cost. According to the CENI, altogether 2.435 national election observer and 37 international election observer followed the electoral process that apparently passed off in calm without major incidences, with the exemption that three regime-critical NGOs the Association des chrétiens pourl

[3]. Not to be confounded with the G6 (EU), a group of the largest West European countries nor the five nations which have joined together for an active role in the rapidly evolving international order ("Group of five") or with G5 Sahel, an alliance of five countries in West Africa.

l'abolation de las torture (ACAT), the Concertation de la société civil au Togo (CNSC-Togo) and the Commission épiscopale nationale justice et paix (CEJP) did not get their accreditation for observation.

The by-elections in five remaining municipalities Oti-Sud 1, Bassar 4, Wawa 1, Zio 4, and Avé 2 on 15 August resulted in a majority for UNIR as well which got 42 of 63 seats. The independent 'Avé en marche' got 6, the ANC 4 and the CAR 3 seats.

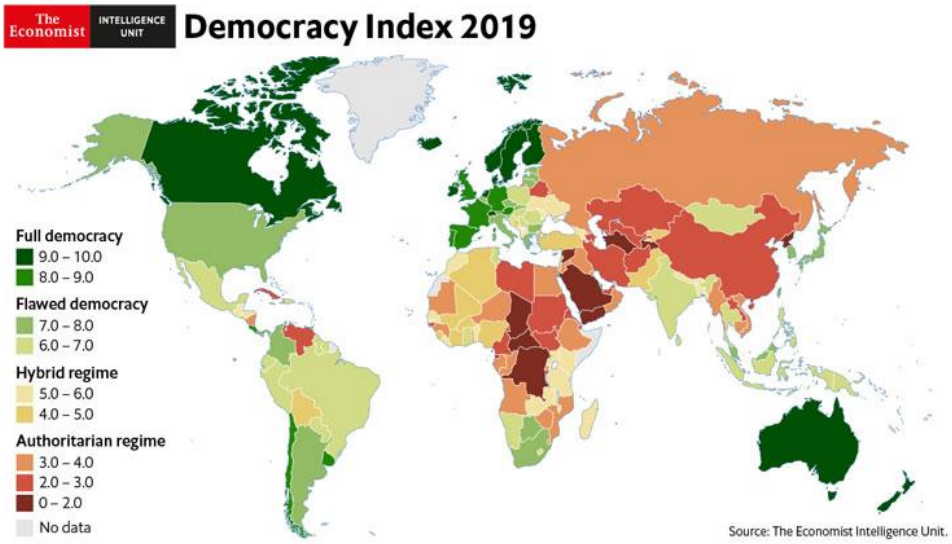
The mayoral election in the municipality of Amou 2 (Amou-Oblo, in the prefecture of Amou, Plateaux Region) on 13 September brought another victory of UNIR, when the younger brother of the President, former project manager at the presidency and deputy of the National Assembly, Meyebine-esso Kwamé Gnassingbé, called Mey Gnassingbé, was unanimously elected mayor of Amou 2 by the 11 municipal councillors.

On 6 December, the government fixed the **date for the next presidential elections 22 February 2020**. In case no candidate would get the absolute majority, a second tour would be required. Formally, the mandate of Faure Gnassingbé which had started on 4 May 2015 would end 3 May 2020. This would be the fourth successive vote with the incumbent Faure Gnassingbé contesting. The electoral campaign was scheduled to take place from 6 to 20 February. To participate, candidates would have to pay a deposit of 20 m F CFA each. By End of November, already a dozen politicians had announced their candidature. Apart from the President, who had been prompted by the young turks and managerial staff of UNIR to contest, this concerned the leaders of major opposition parties, among them ANC-leader Jean-Pierre Fabre and Agbéyomé Kodjo, former prime minister of late Gnassingbé Eyadema, as well as independent candidates. One week before, the president of the CENI, Tchambakou Ayassor, had fixed the revision of the electoral list at the national level as well as the census of the 212.538 Togolese citizens in the diaspora entitled to vote from 29 November to 1 December 2019. The vote of the diaspora had been endorsed by parliament on 5 November the first time in the countries' history.

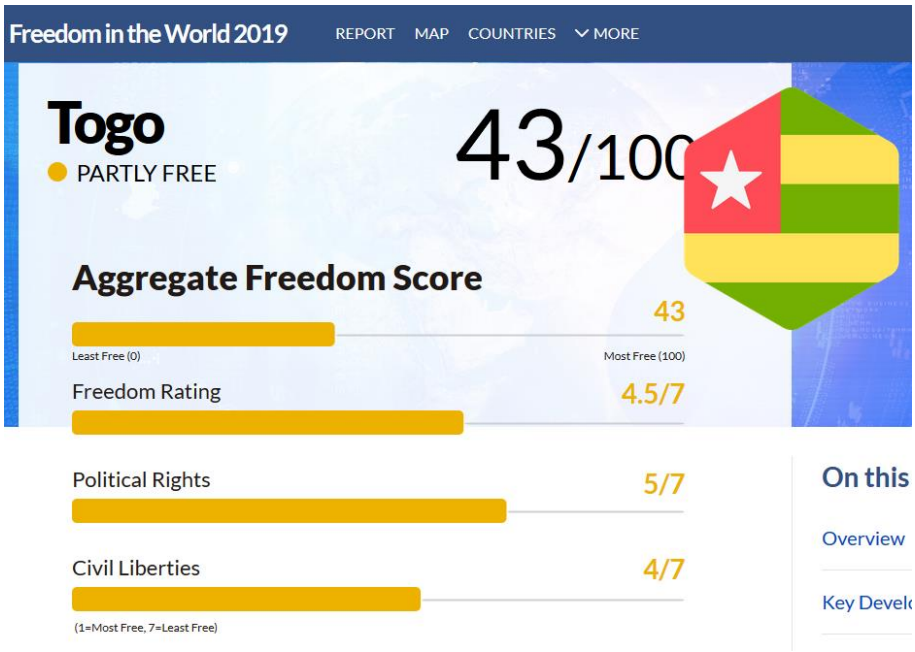
However, on 13 November the government decided that the **Togolese diaspora**, represented by the newly created Togolese High Council, organized by the government in Lomé, can only vote in six selected countries: France, United States, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon, Nigeria and Morocco. The numerous Togolese living in Germany, who had developed an especially critical stance against the ruling regime because most of them had been politically persecuted by the Gnassingbé dictatorship in the 1990s, were denied the right to vote. Over the past decades, hundreds of thousand Togolese refugees had migrated to Europe because of political persecution during the political crisis of the 1990s and 2005, notably to France and Germany. However, many of them had to return. End of 2018 only 10,870 migrants from Togo still lived in Germany. On the other hand, there was also immigration to Togo mostly for economic reasons. The migrant stock in Togo totalled 276,844 migrants (according to the latest available figures of 2015), most of them from neighbouring Benin, Ghana and Nigeria. On 1 August, 117 West African labour migrants, among them 43 Togolese, on passage to Gabon, were rescued at large of the sea-side town Kribi, South Cameroon from their damaged self-constructed zodiac, filled to overflowing. In Gabon exists a relatively strong Togolese community. The two countries had been connected by the common interest of their power elite to up-keep their autocratic Dynasties.

As usual, the security forces would be allowed to vote 72 hours before the general poll to assure the security of the voting process. Several opposition parties, as well as CSOs like the bishops of Togo, demanded on 13 November the suspension of the electoral process and the opening of a dialogue about their previous demands repeated several times in vain, i.e. to permit a re-composition of the Constitutional Court and the CENI and the creation of a reliable electoral list.

On 28 November the cabinet adopted a decree to create a special force to secure the presidential election of 2020. This '**Security Force Presidential Election 2020' (FOSEP)** will be responsible for guaranteeing security before, during and after the presidential election and is placed under the supervision of the CENI. Already for the legislative elections of December 2018, an 8,000-unit (FOSE-2018) had secured the electoral process.



According to the EIU, 2019 Democracy Index, Togo was still ranked among the **'authoritarian' regimes**, though among the countries with notable improvements, with an overall score of 3.30, global rank 126, and a regional rank 28, behind Ethiopia and before Niger. Neighbouring Ghana (6.63, 55, 5) and Benin ranked far better (5.09, 97, 14). In the Freedom House's 2019 Freedom in the World rating (published on 20 January 2020) Togo ranked (for the year 2018) as '**partly free'** and attained in Political Rights 5 of 7, Civil liberties 4 of 7 (1=Most Free, 7=Least Free) and an aggregate score of 43 (least free: 0 – most free: 100).



In the UN World Happiness Report of 2019, Togo ranked 139 (2016-2018) on the ladder of 156 countries evaluated, behind Zambia and before Liberia; bordering Ghana (98) and Benin (102) again ranked far higher.

Afrobarometer revealed that 85% of Togolese "agree" and "strongly agree" for a two-term limit on the presidential mandate. However, the survey was outdated (2012), and whether this opinion referred also to a retroactive application of the two-term limit was not clear. 45% of the respondents felt that political leaders are more concerned with advancing their own ambitions. Besides, 43% expressed their dissatisfaction with health services in their country and gave the government poor marks for its performance in this sector.

According to the African Governance Report for 2019 of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation Togo was the only country in which the Education Quality, which measures the quality of basic, secondary and tertiary institutions, had improved during the period 2014-2017 (by +8.3)., while the **Education Quality** scores of other West-African countries like Ghana, Liberia, and Niger deteriorated by more than -15.0 points during the period 2014-2017, only Togo has shown an improvement (+8.3). The same applied concerning **the absence of undernourishment**, the only indicator in Health exhibiting African average decline since 2014, with 26 countries registering deterioration. The largest improvements were made by Chad (+5.1), Djibouti (+3.4) and Togo (+3.3). Concerning the absence of **Corruption** in the Public Sector, for example, the latter improved by +2.4 points since 2014, with Egypt (+20.0) showing the largest progress, followed by Togo (+19.4) and Benin (+16.8). However, one has to bear in mind that they still all score below 50.0 out of 100.0. No progress had been made in the absence of **Cross-border Tensions**. Most African countries (46) have seen no change in score. Yet, a negative trajectory is driven mainly by five countries, Lesotho, DRC (both -50.0), Burundi, Djibouti and Togo (-25.0 each). Whereas **Gender** had improved every single year since 2014, in 19 countries it deteriorated, with an especially pronounced year-on-year deterioration for Guinea-Bissau and Togo. The same applied concerning the access to **Justice**. While 30 countries have improved their score since 2014, it deteriorated in

24 other, including Namibia (-12.4), Togo (-12.0) and Comoros (-10.8) that observed the largest decline.

According to an report of Amnesty International on the **human rights situation** in Togo to be presented at the UN-Human-Rights-Committee 2 to 27 March 2020, the human rights situation in Togo sharply deteriorated due to growing political and social tensions related to the prospects of the head of state running for a fourth term and the contested 2019 constitutional reforms. Moreover, laws were revised to further curtail peaceful dissent. Thus, Lomé failed to revise its criminal procedure code to build in fair trial standards and legal safeguards against torture and other ill-treatments. Last, but not least, the government adopted legislation which does not meet international human rights standards, including the 2019 law on national security, the 2019 law on assemblies and the 2018 law on cybersecurity. At any rate, the Constitutional revision of 2019 enabled the President of the National Human Rights Commission to seize the Constitutional court to assess the constitutionality of laws passed by parliament (Article 104).

The **harassment of journalists and media** continued. On 19 January, the Criminal Court of Lomé sentenced activist Folly Satchivi of the CSO '*En aucun cas*' ('*Under No Circumstances*') to 36 months in prison, with 12 months suspended, for "rebellion", "apology of crimes and offences" and "aggravated public disorder". He had been arrested on 22 August 2018 while attempting to hold a press conference on the crackdown on protests. On 10 October 2019, the Court of Appeal reduced his sentence to 28 months in prison, with six months suspended. He was released on 16 October following a presidential pardon. On 13 April, the Panafrican National Party (PNP) of Tipki Atchadam organized nationwide protests to call for constitutional reforms. These protests were banned by the Ministry of Territorial Administration, except in Lomé, Afagnan and Sokodé, on the grounds that they would "undermine public order". They were dispersed by security forces using tear gas and batons. Dozens of protesters and bystanders were injured. At least one man died during demonstrations in the northern town of Bafilo. At least 30 people were arrested during the 13 April protests and 19 were sentenced to 24 months imprisonment, with suspended sentences ranging from 12 to 24 months, for aggravated public disorder. Following the protests, at least three PNP leaders were also arrested, including the PNP treasurer Sébabé Guéffé Nouridine, the permanent secretary Kéziré Azizou and the special advisor Ouro-Djikpa Tchatikpi. Nouridine and Azizou were accused of rebellion, assault, and not respecting the ban and restrictions on protests' itineraries. On 7 May, they were sentenced to 24 months in prison, with suspended sentences of 12 to 24 months, respectively. Tchatikpi was released on bail on 10 August.

On 25 March, the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication, HAAC) withdrew the license of the newspaper *La Nouvelle* because it published "unverified information", incited ethnic and religious hatred, abused the privacy of citizens. On 15 October, two pro-democracy activists from the CSO *Tournons la page Niger* (Turn the Page Niger, TLP Niger) and TLP Côte d'Ivoire were denied access to Togo.

In August, the parliament passed a **law on national security** which enabled the Minister of Territorial Administration, in some cases even local authorities, to order

house arrests, identity controls and interpellations of up to 24 hours. Besides, they had the right to evict foreign nationals, to ban assemblies, suspend associations, and close establishments, including places of worship, hotels and "other meeting places". The law also allowed the Minister of Territorial Administration to order the removal of or blocking access to internet online content and to shut down online communications.

On 2 September, the High Commission for Reconciliation and Strengthening National Unity (Haut Commissariat pour la réconciliation et le renforcement de l'unité nationale, HCRRUN) disbursed nearly 7 bn F CFA (10.68 m €) to compensate 7,660 victims of political violence instigated by the security services in the past decades. The HCRRUN had been installed in 2015 on the recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ('Commission Vérité, Justice et Réconciliation', CVJR).

Togo's 12 **prisons** remained overcrowded. The Togolese Human Rights League (Ligue togolaise des droits de l'Homme, LTDH) blamed slow court cases and procedures, arbitrary arrests as well as the detention of petty offenders without the option of bail among the factors causing prison congestion. According to an official census, in December 5,352 people were detained (3.2% female detainees) despite a total prison capacity of only 2,881. 62% of all prisoners were still awaiting trial, half of them had not even been charged. At the Lomé civil prison, detainees frequently had to pay 16,000 F CFA (25 €) or more to have a place to sleep if they could afford it, or else they would be forced to spend the night sitting between each other's legs due to overcrowding. Detainees often had no access to adequate medical care, were given only one meal a day and had no access to a lawyer. At least 267 prisoners died in detention between 2012 and 2019, mostly from preventable or curable diseases, including malaria and intestinal infections.

The intolerable prison conditions might have instigated a **wave of prison outbreak attempts**. On 3 June there was a mutiny or a break-out attempt at Tsévié prison. According to the CNDH, the security agents counted a dozen wounded, including 7 who had to be evacuated to hospital. Only a few days after the Tsévié prison break-attempt, the same passed at the prison of Vogan (located 57 kilometres northeast of Lomé). Three months before, on 18 March about 30 prisoners at the Dapaong civil prison (at the northern border to Burkina Faso) had tried to escape as well. 12 could be apprehended while 18 were still running.

Child labour still exists in Togo. The U.N. Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery revealed on 7 June in Dakar that an estimated 50,000 people were treated as slaves among the 7,4 m people of the country. Thereby, Togo ranks 45th out of 167 countries on the **Modern Slavery** Index. Many children had been forced into domestic servitude or hard labour, driven by poverty and cultural tradition of '*confiage'* which involves sending a child to a relative or friend to attend school in a larger town or city. This could place children at risk of exploitation by internal human trafficking. Parents are often complicit in child trafficking, and many traditional chiefs and leaders do not discourage the practice. On the contrary, boys, known as *talibés*, are sent to Koranic schools for education and subsequently forced by their teachers to beg in the streets.

Moreover, **transnational migration of children** in search of labour or out of cultural reasons is common not only in Togo but in the whole of West Africa. A project of Terre

des Hommes registered about 7 million migrant children (November 2018) in the corridor Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Bénin and Nigeria, including about 1 m children from Togo. In April, Interpol rescued 157 child slaves from neighbouring Benin and Nigeria.

In April there were alarming reports, based on Burkinabe intelligence, about **jihadists** hunted down in eastern Burkina Faso to have taken refuge in Northern Togo, Benin, and Ghana. The UN reported on 19 February that more than 100,000 refugees had been internally displaced by factional fighting in the country, 60,000 of whom after an upsurge in fighting in January. **Islamist terrorist violence** had spread from Mali over the past years, where the violence had killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands. In fact, it was rampant in the whole Sahel region since decades, fuelled by local grievances between local resident peasants and militant Fulani herdsmen. Ethnic militias linked up with jihadists exploiting communal tensions. This comprised groups of armed men on motorbikes, including minors in possession of large sums of money. Most of the terrorists hunted down in April in the border-region of Ghana, Togo and Benin were returned to Burkina Faso. However, in May a Benin tourist guide had been killed during the kidnapping of two French tourists in the Pendjari National Park near the Burkina border. Jihadists also ambushed a vehicle crossing the border from Togo and murdered a Spanish Catholic missionary. In recent times there were growing attacks on Christian communities on both sides of the border by Islamist terrorists demanding the communities to convert to Islam. These incidences showed that the jihadists were still rampant in the region. The Sahelo-Saharan organisation Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) founded in 1998, joined by Togo in 2002, met on 13 April in Chadian capital N'Djamena, to hold its first summit since 2013. The summit focused on the growing security challenges, notably Islamist terrorism and drug trafficking, as well as on security risks of the porous borders and inadequate security presence in remote areas. In July, a new mixed contingent of 140 Togolese security forces was deployed to Mali as part of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Shortly before, up to 20 June, the joint forces of Egypt and Togo staged an anti-terrorist exercise at the Egyptian Mohamed Naguib Military Base, the largest military base in the Middle East, constructed in 2017 and located close to the port city of Alexandria near Alexandria. It was the second exercise of Sahel countries that had been organized by Egypt the precedent had been joined by Sudan, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. On 14 September the ECOWAS announced at its summit in Ouagadougou a US$1bn plan to combat terrorism in West Africa during 2020-24.

The president of the Togolese Muslim Union (UMT), El Hadji Inoussa Bouraïma, called on his fellow believers to stand up against all forms of terrorism during the celebration of Eid al-Fitr. Later-on, 21 November, a large joint common security operation within the framework of the fight against **terrorism** and cross-border criminality, called Koudanlgou III, led to the arrest of 427 suspects at the Togo-Ghanaian border in five regions of Northern Ghana and the Savanes region of Togo, comprising 333 Ghanaians and 94 other nationalities. Whereas the Ghanaians were tried before Ghanaian courts, the 25 foreigners from Burkina-Faso, 2 from Benin, 6 from Cote D'Ivoire, 9 Nigerians and 3 Togolese were put before the court and repatriated to their respective countries. A total of 3,000 troops made up of 1,800 from Ghana and 1,200 from Togo had been involved in this exercise.

Foreign Affairs

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA; ZLECA or ZlEC, in French) which had been signed also by Togo in March 2018 was ratified on 9 January 2019 and deposited 2 April. It is a key element of the AU's ambitious *Agenda 2063* and had been heralded as a milestone for regional integration and continental unity, leading ultimately to a future African Economic Community (AEC). The latter would be the last of six successive stages that involve sectoral cooperation, strengthening Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and finally a continental customs union, a common market and a monetary and economic union. On 30 May the AfCFTA, which had been signed so far by 52 of the 55 African Union (AU) member states, came into force legally, ahead of a planned launch of a continental single market on 7 July. As of December, there were 28 ratifying countries and 54 signatories. The AfCFTA got international financial support for instance from the EU (€ 50m for 2018-20) for facilitating its implementation.

Yet, there were still serious limiting factors of regional integration, like the poor infrastructure development, the large informal sector, contested rules of origin and other non-tariff barriers to trade. Last but not least, lacking political will to yield sovereignty, missing sense of regional identity, trust and common interests will impede the implementation because they had been identified already before as major causes of poor performing regional institutions. The latter is in the end only what individual member states wish them to be. Repeated resurgence of pan-Africanism since the early days of African independence in the 1960s, and the call for African Renaissance in the 1990th, have been countered by new waves of nationalism impeding effective regional integration. In short, the AfCFTA is based on high-flying visions indeed given the ambiguous progress of regional integration since the surge of African RECs in the 1970s and the varying commitment of governments to support it. While characterized by ambitious targets, they have had a dismally poor implementation record.

Moreover, the ethics of integration in Africa concerned mainly an elite-driven process of regional and continental integration. That is, a discreet policy of integration, pushed by governments and background lobby groups of major economic players, is involved. In this respect, the ethics of African integration resemble that of European '*integration by stealth*' (an expression coined by Bellamy & Warleigh). That is, in the early phase of integration the general public has been treated largely as passive and acquiescent. However, the newly created institutions and forums of integration and conflict resolution provided also for an ongoing and gradual shift of loyalty of national elites to new supra-national (regional and continental) centres of decision and created thereby additional trans-national arenas of power-play with repercussions on the national and sub-national level. Guidelines for ethical leadership in Africa would have to respect the actual cross-cultural commonalities and differences of the multitude of 'ethics brewed in the African pot'.

Following Togo's first axis its national development plan (2018-2020, PND) and to make the nation a logistics hub in the Gulf of Guinea as well as a first-class business centre in West Africa, Lomé confirmed on 15 May the country's adhesion to the international maritime transport convention which it had signed already in London on 9 April 1965. The convention aims at simplifying administrative procedures related to the

arrival, stay and departure of ships, in the framework of international trips and to get more overseas partners to implement its PND. Thereby it not only profited by its excellent strategic geographical location but also by its deep-water port of Lomé, with 16,60 meters the only deep-water port on the West African coast that can accommodate 3rd generation ships. In the same vein, it ratified the 1988 protocol on load lines relating to the international convention on load lines of 1966, to ensure ships' safety, by preventing overloading and to boost maritime trade and security.

In recent years the autonomous port of Lomé had already overtaken Lagos as West Africa's leading port. Thanks to the harbour's modernization and the politics of commissioning the Lomé container terminal (LCT) to Bolloré Africa Logistics [4]that handles about 75% of containers shipped, the Port of Lomé tripled its capacity from 311,500 twenty-foot containers (TEU) in 2013 to 1,1 m in 2017. Togo's port also services neighbouring landlocked countries Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. According to the Dutch shipping information services Dynamar, the West African container cargo is expected to grow by 5% p.a. to reach 4,3 m TEU by 2021. Nigeria's Apapa port in Lagos (1 m TEU), on the other hand, lost in the past five years about 30% of its container traffic due to chronic congestion, poor quality of services and increasing insecurity. The Ghanaian Tema port, for long the second behind Lagos, dropped to the third position with 956,400 TEU, before Abidjan (663,600 TEU).

However, the port of Cotonou in neighbouring Benin, a long-time competitor to Lomé port as well, gained a competitive edge when Benin and Niger signed on 23 January a bilateral agreement to build a new US$ 2 to US$ 4 bn 2,000 km oil-export pipeline between the two countries to export Niger's crude oil from the oil fields of Agadem. Thereby, the countries' current production of about 20,000 b/d was expected to rise to estimated 110,000 b/d by 2021 and possible 200,000 b/d at long-term. Benin would profit from the transit-fees. The pipeline which has been lauded as a model of South-South cooperation will be managed by the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), that extracts the oil already since 2011, with the participation of the governments of the two concerned countries. The construction is subject to prior environmental impact studies. The competitive project of an alternative pipeline through Chad and Cameroon had been dropped due to Chad's political instability, the growing terrorist threat, limited capacity and other technical and financial problems.

Because of increasing threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, drug-trafficking, and illegal fishery in the Gulf of Guinea, the EU, pushed by Paris and London that had a long-standing interest in protecting international maritime traffic to their former colonies in the Gulf, promised the co-funding of regional maritime security to the tune of € 155 m (US$ 173 m) during the ECOWAS' maritime stakeholders meeting in the Nigerian capital, Abuja on 8 May. According to the International Maritime Bureau, the

[4] On 19 July the French magazine ‚*Le Point*' revealed the outcome of the lawsuit against Bolloré before the Paris Court of Appeal. The latter recognized the prescription of the facts of "corruption" and "forgery and use of forgery" in Guinea, facts for which Bolloré and his group were prosecuted. Besides, the French billionaire remained charged with breach of trust in this same Guinean case, and for the second part of the investigation which concerns similar accusations in the Togolese case. On 24 April 2018, Vincent Bolloré had been placed in police custody in Nanterre, to answer accusations of "bribery of a foreign public officials" (among them the Togolese head of state), and to determine whether the Bolloré group used its political advisory activities, via its Havas subsidiary, to manage the ports of Lomé in Togo and Conakry in Guinea.

Gulf of Guinea is still the most dangerous region for international seafarers due to piracy. This was confirmed by ECOWAS which stated that its member states lose US$ 2 bn p.a. to illegal fishing and other forms of resource theft, such as oil-theft by militant groups such as Nigeria's Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, illegal trade in tropical hardwoods, etc. off the Gulf coast. The EU move was complemented by the NATO Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG) that provides a 24-hour manned service of military experts and guidance on vessel operating patterns as well as security risks within the Gulf of Guinea. On 4 November, a big crude-oil tanker 'Elka Aristotle' (94,143 t DWT) flying the Greek flag, had been attacked about 18 km of the Togolese the port of Lomé by armed pirates who took four crew member as hostages and injured one.

ECOWAS – West African neighbours

Togo and Burkina Faso signed 14 cooperation agreements on 8 October, including one on trans-border military cooperation, during a meeting of the 3rd session of the Great Mixed Cooperation Commission between the two countries in Lomé. On 10 October the Togolese government adopted a law Project to ratify the AU-convention on cybersecurity that had been adopted on 27 June 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

On 20 August the Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari surprisingly closed Nigeria's borders and suspended imports and exports across all of Nigeria's land borders. His primary goal was to stop rampant informal trade and smuggling from Togo and Benin across the notorious porous frontiers. Shortly before, on 24 June, the Nigerian government had warned already Ghana and Togo to stop attacking Nigerian traders in their countries who had been maltreated because of accusations of unfair competition and lawbreaking. The 'partial closure' (maritime export, e.g. of crude oil, was excluded) was considered an early warning sign for the African free trade deal's optimism concerning the AfCFTA. It was also inconsistent with Nigeria's commitment since 1975 to guarantee free trade within the ECOWAS. Yet, to the government in Abuja, the border shut-down, and the introduction of protective duties served also the interest of Nigeria's agricultural producers and infant (agro) industries as well as the interests of the Nigerian consumers. The closure that had no timeline for reopening the borders, not only had devastating effects on neighbouring Benin and Togo, key exporters of foodstuffs to Nigeria, but it also pushed up prices for staples such as rice at markets around Nigeria. It was especially hard for Togo's tomato producers and their Nigerian clients because the tomatoes rotted during transport at the frontier. It was not the first time Nigeria's borders with Benin (including trans-border trade from Togo and Ghana), Niger, Chad and Cameroon have been closed. In April 1984, the Government closed them already to combat the black market in the country's ailing currency, to tackle its balance of payments difficulties and to stabilize its currency, the naira. Only one year later, in May 1985, the borders were re-opened again, mainly to expulse 700,000 illegal immigrants mostly from Ghana who had been attracted to Nigeria in part by the oil boom in the 1970s, but 1985, when the country suffered under deep economic problems and an increasing crime rate, attributed in large measure to the immigrants, they were chased out.

China is one of Togo's major export partners (15.4% of total exports) alongside Burkina Faso (16.6%)[5]. The Port of Lomé had been envisaged as a hub of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in West-Africa and beyond. The traditionally close relations between **China** and Togo were re-enforced when a Togolese follow-up group for the past Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC, 2018) visited Peking on 26 June, to track potential partnerships and investments. The headquarters of the China Road and Bridge Corporation were of special interest because that construction group had been keen to handle Togo's transport corridor project falling under Togo's national development plan. It centres on the construction of a new heavy haul railway line of about 760 km, in combination with upgrades for road and telecommunication infrastructure systems, extending from the Port of Lomé to the Northern border post of Cinkasse on the borders with Burkina Faso and Ghana. It lies about 38km from Dapaong and is proposed to be the location of a so-called 'dry port'. The only existing, but outdated railway finishes at Blitta, some 400 km south of Cinkasse. It ceased operations mid-1990. The new railway will complement the Tema - Ouagadougou mainline in neighbouring Ghana to which it will constitute in fact a modern and more performant alternative, connecting sea-ports of the Bight of Benin to the hinterland. The Chinese long-time partner also built major road infrastructures such as the Lomé and Alédjo bypasses as well as the 60 km Lomé-Vogan-Anfoin road project in Southern Togo and rehabilitated the Amakpapé Bridge over the Haho river in the Plateau region, about 75 km north of Lomé on the national highway No. 1, that collapsed during the floods of 2008, a transport bottleneck for northern Togo.

On 24 April, President Gnassingbé inaugurated the new administrative services centre for the education-, health-, and agriculture ministries in the Lomé II area, near the new presidential office, constructed by the Shanghai Construction Group for around US$ 31 m. Additional seven major Chinese construction projects, promised during the FOCAC-meeting, were still in the pipeline. On 18 November, the University of Lomé launched a new Faculty of Chinese Language Studies in collaboration with the Confucius Institute. The latter had trained already thousands of Chinese language students over the past decade, most of them since worked as interpreters or translators in Togo and the neighbouring countries. Its services meet growing demand. For the first semester of the academic year of 2019, about 600 students registered in the Institute, compared to 300 enrolments five years earlier. Their high demand is explained by a deepening China-Togo, given the growing presence of Chinese firms which create jobs to Chinese-speaking young Togolese students. The Chinese Language Faculty will allow students to receive official bachelor degrees after successfully completing their Chinese language courses.

Since the resumption of **EU cooperation** in 2007, state consolidation and regional security had been in the focus of cooperation. For the past 7 years, the EU had been the major development partner of Togo, granting in total more than € 270 m, including €216 million for the 2014-2020 period of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

[5] According to the latest available figures Togo's imports from *China* amounted to US$ 492,38 m (2016), US$ 317,06 m (2017) mostly agricultural imports, its exports to US$ 105,33 m (2016), US$ 73,18 m (2017) and US$ 145,76 m (2018), mostly palm nuts, cereals and pineapple (foreign trade, all products, ITC Trade-Map, 2020). – Togo's imports from *Burkina Faso* added up to US$ 4,09 m (2016) and 7,38 m (2017), its exports US$ 116,46 m (2016), US$ 122,21 (2017), and US$ 129,88 m (2018), the latter mostly phosphate, clinker and cement.

From 13 to 14 June the first Togo-EU Economic Forum, labelled 'Le Rendez-vous des opportunites' had been held in Lomé, to mobilise higher levels of private investment in priority sectors in Togo. At the end of the year (3.12.) the EU disbursed € 17 m for the current year within the framework of the EU grant of € 33 m for 2019-2020 to support the PND. Also, nearly all West-African regional EU development projects benefited Togo either directly or indirectly. Thus, the regional food-reserve project (€ 56 m) was of particular interest, because two of its four components (total € 34.5 m) were implemented by the Regional Agency for Food and Agriculture (ARAA, the ECOWAS food agency) based in Lomé. On 24 June the Togo-EU chamber of commerce (EUROCHAM-Togo) chaired by Charles Kokouvi Gafan, the CEO of the notorious Bolloré Transport & Logistics Togo, was officially launched. Already on 13 April, Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1997 to 2007, had been contracted as coach of President Gnassingbé to consult the government in fulfilling the aims of the PND.

Apart from the EU, France and Germany were the most important bilateral partners of Togo because of their historic links to their former colony. Yet, foreign trade relations with France in the past years remained by far more important than with Germany, though inferior to China's foreign trade with Togo[6]. The long-time special relations between **France** and Togo were confirmed by support from French military cooperation. On 5 February, instructional material for the Training Center for Peacekeeping Operations (CEOMP) had been handed over. The centre, created in 2008, has the mission of preparing Togolese contingents before their deployment in peacekeeping operations: 1400 Togolese soldiers are permanently serving under the UN blue helmet to MINUSMA and UNAMID mainly. On March 22, a new military obstacle course for student officers of the National School of NCOs in Témédja (ENSO-T) was established, to complete the French contribution to the ramp-up of this school, created 5 years ago as part of Franco-Togolese defence cooperation.

According to a survey by Afrobarometer on the much-criticised **F CFA currency**, published on 13 February, two out of three Togolese believed that the CFA should be replaced. 66% responded that "the currency profits France more than members of the Franc zone such as Togo". The richest and most educated among the surveyed were most hostile to the neo-colonial currency (73%). Accordingly, eight West African nations, adopted at a meeting of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in November a proposal to withdraw their currency reserves from the French central bank, evoked controversial reactions. The proposal was an outcome of the long-standing controversy on the ill-adapted and increasingly **anachronistic** CFA franc, harshly condemned as neo-colonial heritage by internationally renowned (former) African officials and critics of the CFA franc, including Togo's Kako Nubukpo, ex-officer at the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) and former Togolese minister. Already in July, the leaders of the sub-region had adopted a proposal to introduce a single currency, labelled '***eco'***, for the entire region by 2020. In the first phase, countries with their own currencies (Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) are to launch the eco. In a second phase, the eight UEMOA (West African Economic and Monetary Union) member countries that have in common the CFA franc

[6] According to the latest available trade statistics Togo's bilateral exports to France amounted to US$ 17,65 m (2017), US$ 23,28 m (2018) and US$ 125,6 m (2019), and its imports to US$ 175,61 (2017) m (ITC Trade-Map, 2020).

(Ivory Coast, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo, Niger, Benin and Guinea-Bissau) would follow-suite. Even though these eight West African countries had gained independence years ago, they continued to vest their foreign exchange reserves with the French central bank. Now they decided to vest the reserves with the Senegal-based Central Bank of West African States. Ghana, that had expressed its determination to join the '*eco'* on 29 December, although it did not belong to the CFA-zone, but had its own currency the *cedi*, urged the members of the currency union to ditch a planned peg to the euro.

Furthermore, Togo's foreign affairs minister Robert Dussey had been selected in 2019 as the ACP's chief negotiator for negotiations on the post-Cotonou treaty in 2020. He is seen by many in Brussels as an ally of Paris.

German development cooperation with Togo, which had resumed in late 2012, continued in the following priority areas: decentralisation and good governance, rural development and agriculture, and sustainable economic development with a focus on vocational training and youth employment. Within the framework of these programs, the promotion of decentralization processes in Togo (ProDeGoL) continued because of the local elections of 30 June. Besides, a support project to improve the competitiveness of the pineapple industry in Togo was launched in Adangbé on 17 January, co-financed by Germany and the EU for € 1.25 m and € 4.7 m respectively over four years. The last intergovernmental negotiations on development cooperation took place in Lomé in March. In the following summer, a Togo-European Union Economic Forum was held in Lomé. German development cooperation commitments since 2012 amounted to up to € 181.4 m. Moreover, Germany development aid is involved in sub-regional programs like the West African Power Pool including the rehabilitation of the Nangbeto hydropower plant, environmental protection and the preservation of biodiversity. However, development by trade, according to the neo-liberal call for 'trade not aid' was still insignificant[7].

Despite the little attention which President Trump had shown for Africa up to now, the assistant secretary for the US State Department's Bureau of African Affairs, Tibor Nagy, confirmed on 12 August the US's commitment towards trade and investment in Africa [8]. This, however, just in passing, at the AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act) Forum in Abidjan. The **USA** had already reacted on 5 October 2018 to the increasing economic and political influence of China in Africa, notably to the China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), by passing a US$ 60 bn agency, the Better Utilisation of Investments Leading to Development (BUILD) Act. It is meant to fund development projects in favoured countries. Paralleled by the EU's Connectivity Strategy, the BUILD Act means that African countries could now benefit from several pools of development assistance owing to US-Sino-European competition. Yet, this surge in global 'aid competition' was not restricted to the USA, countries as India, the Arab states of the Persian Gulf states, Turkey [9] and Russia [10] took part in the race as well. India, too,

[7] Total bilateral exports of Togo to Germany amounted to US$ 3,69 m (2016), US$ 2,77 m (2017), and US$ 7,06 m (2018) and its imports to US$ 48,99 m (2016) US$ 50,63 m (2017).
[8] Bilateral trade with Togo amounted to Togo's export to the US of US$ 15,32 m (2017), US$ 13,78 m (2018) and US$ 13,70 (2019); its imports to US$ 32,46 m in 2017.
[9] Turkey's foreign trade with Togo was on about the same low level as that of Russia. Togo's exports to Turkey amounted to US$ 12 m (2017), US$ 17 m (2018) and US$ 11 m (2019), its imports to US$ 27 m (2017).

counted among the top trading partners of Togo. Total bilateral trade in the period 2018-2019 amounted to US$ 998 m (Togo's imports US$ 694 m, exports US$ 304 m). Thus, Togo's foreign trade with India was on about the same level as that with China. [11]

From 23 to 24 October Faure Gnassingbé and his delegation attended the first-ever Russia-Africa summit in Sochi, Russia, to attract investments for the PND 2018-2022.

Socioeconomic Developments

According to the most recent country-wide business survey conducted by the national statistics institute (INSEED) in January and March 2018, released on 24 June 2019, more than 85% of business in Togo operates in the **informal sector**. The Lomé region hosted by far the most businesses (63,4%), the Plateau region followed far behind (10,1%), the Maritime region (outside Grand Lomé) (8,3%), Kara (6,8%), the Central region (6%) and Savanes region (5,4%). Therefore, the following official figures on economic growth and development should be interpreted with caution, because much of activities in the informal sector remain unrecorded.

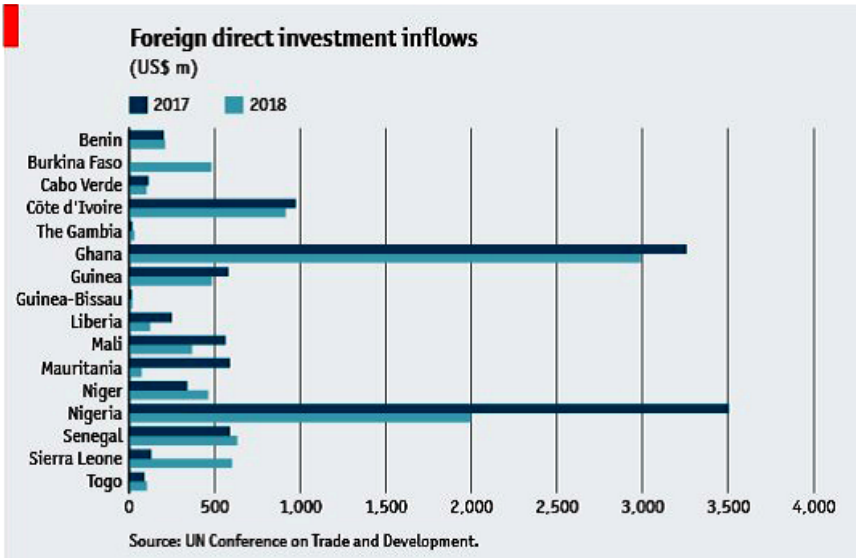
On 19 September, the government adopted the 2019 management finance bill that brought the **national budget** to nearly US$ 2.5 bn, an increase of 2.8%. An amending finance bill, management 2019, allowed the government to readjust expenditure forecasts according to the revenue initially expected. It was projected at F CFA 1,501.9 bn (US$ 2.524 bn) against F CFA 1,461 bn (US$ 2.455 bn) in the initial finance law. Furthermore, according to the government, the implementation of the PND required modifications to certain provisions of the general tax code. For the period 2018-2020, the PND was based on three axes with a total cost of US$ 8.3 bn, 65% of which were expected to be mobilized from the private sector.

In its end of mission report, released on 19 December, the **IMF** attested the Togolese government a firm **economic recovery**, with economic growth estimated to have accelerated from 4.9 % in 2018 to 5.3 % in 2019 and probable 5.5 % in 2020. Furthermore, the IMF confirmed a significant **reduction of the budget deficit and public debt** which had increased from 43.2% of GDP at end 2011 to 77% of GDP at end 2018 but was still above the maximum public debt stock of 70% of GDP recommended by UEMOA. However, fiscal deficit reduction is limited owing to the continuing tense socio-political situation, which will warrant also higher security spending.

The IMF confirmed that **structural reforms** are progressing, including the creation and harmonization of tax identification numbers, tele-procedures to reduce compliance costs, provisional deposits to secure revenue collections, internal controls against corruption, and reduction of tax exemptions. The IMF furthermore emphasised that a prequalification notice for the privatization of the two public banks had been announced in international financial news outlets and that the prequalification process is underway.

[10] Togo's imports from Russia amounted to US$ 48,53 m (2016) and US$ 30,10 m (2017), and exports to US$ 5 m each for 2106 and 2017.
[11] Togo's imports from India amounted to US$ 48,29 m (2016) , US$ 57,53 m (2017) and its exports to US$ 132,26 (2016), US$ 145,54 m (2017) and US$ 282,70 m (2018).

It underlined that it was essential to finalize the reforms in these two public banks to safeguard financial stability and minimize risks to the State budget, considering that non-performing loans in the banking sector remain high. Last, but not least the IMF lauded a highly commendable progress to improve the business environment as proven by the latest **Doing Business Indicators** according to which Togo is ranking amongst the best-reforming countries in the World although it remained well below that of its UEMOA regional peers. This could constrain Togo's ability to attract sufficient FDI which could induce the government to resort again to debt-financed infrastructure development. The shortfall would be financed by FDI and external loans. Widespread corruption and concerns about the protection of property rights could aggravate these problems.



Economist Intelligence Unit, London, EIU, 3/19, p. 26

From 4 to 17 December the IMF delegation discussed the sixth and final review of the program supported by IMF's **Extended Credit Facility** (ECF) with the Togolese authorities. They concluded that growth was mainly driven primarily by domestic demand, while some export sectors showed signs of weaknesses. According to the provisions as of end-September, credit to the private sector expanded by 3.6 % p.a. and inflation stood at 0.4 % p.a. The fiscal consolidation, which had started in 2017, remained sustained with the overall fiscal deficit estimated at 2.2 % of GDP.

Togo also joined the G20 **Compact with Africa** **initiative**. However, for many potential investors, compact countries like Togo are too small to be of any interest. Togo did not receive any private foreign infrastructure funding after the CwA launch according to the PPI database (May 2019).

On 21 October, the Minister of Economy and Finance, Sani Yaya, deplored the high-risk investment structures operating illegally in Togo and ordered them to immediately cease their activities. According to him these fundraising structures irregularly collect funds from the public against equity or investment securities by promising returns of up to 360% of the initial stake and annual interest rates of around 90 % on investments. They cast a damning light on the 200 formal **microfinance** **initiatives**, with ca. 500 service points nationwide. These initiatives were assisted by the Association Professionelle des Institutions de Microfinance du Togo (APIM-Togo) which was

created in 2004 to promote the development of the microfinance industry in Togo. In October, the government banned 7 microfinance structures.

On 26 March the government launched a two-year project (January 2019-December 2020) "promoting the rights to sexual health and the local integration of refugees and the population", financed by German aid to the tune of 500,000 €. The project, based on an initiative of the Togolese Association for Family Welfare (ATBEF), aimed to seek a lasting solution for refugees and host populations in Togo through their socio-economic integration by working to strengthen the mechanisms of local integration, health care and protection of refugees. It was focused on five localities in the Maritime region with 3,128 refugees and 9,500 members of host communities.

In August, the government expropriated more than 10,000 hectares in the Zio river flood valley (North of Lomé) in order to protect the population against the harmful effects of recurrent floods, as experienced during the scourges in 2008, 2010, 2012. The area had been classified as a "non-building area" already by the Master Plan and Urban Planning (PDU) of Lomé in 1981. But the populations had continue to erect precarious habitats there, subject to recurrent floods. On 340 hectares of the area, the Rural Development Project of the Djagblé plain was being implemented.

The 2019 **transhumance** campaign review, presented at a conference from 16 to 17 December in Blitta, revealed for the transhumance-period 2019, there had been no deadly conflicts as in 2018 and 2017, but only 8 minor incidents. In total 10,370 head of cattle had been registered for a tax collection of F CFA 56,548,000 (€ 86,206).

Illicit African gold exports came in the spotlight on 29 May. Although in Togo there is hardly any domestic gold production, it was listed as the seventh-largest source gold exports to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which indicated significant illicit cross-border movement of gold, probably from Ghana, a key source of gold for the UAE, including illegal mining.

Economic Freedom, as measured by the Heritage Foundation's **Economic Freedom** Index 2019 improved slightly by 2.5 points to 50.3, making it's economy the 158th freest in the 2019 Index. This was due to improvement in fiscal health and rising scores for the tax burden and property rights. Togo ranked 35th among 47 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, and its overall score was below the regional and world averages. In short, Togo's economic freedom too remained with the overall status of 'mostly unfree'.