Africa

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Africa

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Africa


This article details important legal developments in Africa in 2015.

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I. North Africa

A. Algeria

1. Domestic Violence Law

In March 2015 Algeria criminalized domestic violence against women.Penalties include up to twenty years’ imprisonment for injuries and a life sentence for killing. The law however grants clemency to a survivor who pardons her offender; a provision criticized by Amnesty International as providing an incentive for further violence to force victims to withdraw complaints.

B. Egypt

1. Morsi Sentence Upheld

The criminal trials of ousted Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and Muslim Brotherhood members continued in 2015. The court consulted the Grand Mufti in upholding the death sentence against Morsi and his supporters for conspiring with foreign militants during past political uprisings.

2. Anti-Terrorism Law

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi’s regime continued to target the Muslim Brotherhood in 2015 by signing a new anti-terrorism law. The law “effectively bans the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association,” according to Amnesty International.

C. Libya

1. Gaddafi Son Receives Death Sentence

In July, a Libyan court sentenced the deposed leader’s son, Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, and eight others to death for war crimes from the 2011 revolution. Former Gaddafi Head of

2. Id.
5. Id.
7. Id.

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Intelligence Abdullah al-Senussi and former Prime Minister Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi were among those facing the firing squad, pending appeal. 9

D. Tunisia

1. New Counterterrorism Law Enacted

Tunisia’s 217-member parliament, the Assembly of the People’s Representatives, adopted a counter-terrorism law in July 2015, following the March attack on Tunis’ Bardo Museum, in which twenty-three people were murdered.10 The new law has been criticized, inter alia, for giving security forces broad surveillance powers, extending “incommunicado detention from six to fifteen days, and permitting courts to close hearings to the public.”11

E. Morocco

1. Islamic Banking and Business Law

Implemented on March 5, 2015, Law 103-12 strengthened international banking standards applicable to Moroccan banks and introduced Islamic banking rules.12 In August 2015, Law 12-78 amended the law on limited liability companies strengthening the role of external auditors and protecting minority shareholder rights.13

2. Public-Private Partnership Law

Law 86-12 established public-private partnerships as a new contract form under Moroccan law.14 The “development also builds on Morocco’s role as pioneer in promoting contracts between the public and private sectors” beginning with the 1997 Jorf Laslar power plant, the first BOT (Build, Operate, and Transfer) in Africa and in the Arab world.15

F. Western Sahara

1. Meeting ‘Violates’ International Law

In February, the president of the disputed territory of Western Sahara, Mohamed Abdelaziz, objected to plans by Morocco and the Swiss-registered Crans Montana Forum to hold a meeting in Western Sahara. Abdelaziz held that Morocco unlawfully occupied

9. Id.
11. Id.
13. Id.
15. Id.

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Western Sahara and that its use of the territory ‘violated’ international law. He also called on the U.N. Secretary General to find a lasting political solution to the Western Sahara conflict.

II. West Africa

A. Benin

1. Election Date Imposed

With municipal and local elections postponed since 2013 by the Independent Permanent Electoral Commission without explanation, in 2015 Benin’s Constitutional Court responded to an injunction request and set election dates. Municipal and legislative elections were held following this decision, avoiding impasse.

B. Burkina Faso

1. Electoral Restrictions and Attempted Coup

In April, the National Transition Council amended the Electoral Code restricting former leaders of the Blaise Compaoré regime from running in October’s elections. The change barred “those who had supported the ‘anti-constitutional change’” of lifting limits on presidential terms of office. Officers loyal to Compaoré, who was driven from power in 2014 when he tried to extend his twenty-seven-year rule, staged a failed coup in September, seizing interim President Michel Kafando and Prime Minister Lt. Col. Isaac Zida.

C. Cape Verde

1. Refuelling Expansion

To capitalize on its geographic location and become a mid-Atlantic refueling hub, the Maritime and Port Agency published Bunkering Regulations in April, setting rules and procedures for refueling in Cape Verde’s ports. A new General Framework for Cape

17. Id.
19. Id.
21. Id.
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Verde Port Concessions was approved May 18, 2015, allowing private entities in the maritime and port sectors. 24 In June 2015, Resolution 54/2015 created an Installation Committee to operationalize the International Business Center of Cape Verde and establish “free zones, where properly licensed operators can develop economic activities.” 25

D. CÔTE D’IVOIRE

1. Post-election Cases

The Ivorian government failed to arrest any pro-Ouattara Republican Forces implicated in post-election violence but surrendered pro-Gbagbo militia leader Charles Blé Goudé to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in March. 26 The ICC confirmed charges against former President Laurent Gbagbo in June. 27 Former First Lady Simone Gbagbo, “charged by the ICC with four counts of crimes against humanity, remained in detention in Côte d’Ivoire.” 28

E. GAMBIA

1. HIV/AIDS Prevention Law

In March, the Gambia National Assembly enacted a law for the first time on HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control. 29 The act was an achievement in “HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support.” 30

F. GHANA

1. Safer Gold Mining and Mercury Exposure

A 2015 report by international NGO Human Rights Watch called on Ghana to lead the way in Africa in developing a comprehensive strategy for safe, child labor-free gold mining. 31 In 2014, Ghana had signed the Minamata Convention on Mercury which aims to reduce mercury exposure globally. 32

24. Id.
27. Id.
28. Id.
30. Id.
G. Guinea

1. New Petroleum Code

A new Petroleum Code entered into force January 1, 2015, covering oil operations and hydrocarbons activities, including natural gas treatment, but excluding the refining and distribution of petroleum products.33 The code simplifies the tax regime for oil subcontractors, lowers the oil company corporate income tax to thirty-five percent (previously set at fifty percent), and sets VAT at the standard rate of eighteen percent.34

H. Guinea-Bissau

1. New Taxes

Law 2/15 of April 21 enacted the 2015 budget that “introduces material changes to Guinea-Bissau’s tax framework,” by adding new tourist and development taxes.35 The law also enacts transfer pricing and anti-avoidance rules, such as limitations on the deduction of interest paid to related companies and presumptive taxation in the event of external signs of wealth.36

I. Liberia

1. Sanctions Lifted

The United States and the United Nations significantly lifted Liberian sanctions in 2015. On November 12, 2015, United States President Obama signed Executive Order 13710, terminating economic sanctions in place since 2004 that blocked many assets of and transactions with the Charles Taylor regime.37 The U.N. Security Council kept some sanctions—including an arms embargo on non-state groups—but similarly dismantled asset and travel sanctions against specified persons.38

J. Mauritania

1. Guantanamo Bay Release

In October, the U.S. government released Mauritanian Ahmed Abdel Aziz from its Guantanamo Bay base.39 Aziz, detained since being turned over to the United States by

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34. Id.
36. Id.
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Pakistani authorities in 2002, was never charged with a crime. The Mauritanian government stated that Aziz would not face prosecution in Mauritania.

2. **Anti-Slavery Law**

In August 2015, the National Assembly adopted a new anti-slavery law that created special tribunals and increased penalties. The new law doubles the maximum sentence for slavery to twenty years and gives civil society organizations the right to act on behalf of victims. The law also criminalizes other forms of slavery such as forced marriage.

K. **MALI**

1. **Peace Agreement**

In June, Mali signed a peace agreement with the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (an alliance of Tuareg rebels) and with the 14 June Platform (a coalition of armed groups). Attacks have continued despite the peace accord and the presence of French troops and U.N. peacekeepers deployed since 2012, following a military coup that coincided with Islamist armed groups taking control of the north.

2. **ICC Arrest**

The International Criminal Court (ICC) arrested Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, accused of ordering and destroying mausoleums and a mosque in Timbuktu. He appeared in court on September 30, 2015.

40. Id.
43. Id.
45. Jean-Hervé Jezequel, Mali’s peace deal represents a welcome development, but will it work this time?, THE GUARDIAN (July 1, 2015, 10:00 AM), http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jul/01/mali-peace-deal-a-welcome-development-but-will-it-work-this-time.
48. Id.

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L. NIGER

1. Human Smuggling

Niger adopted a law in May imposing twenty- to thirty-year prison sentences for human smugglers, and a fine of up to CFA 30 million (US$51,000) for aggravating circumstances such as smuggling pregnant women or children.49 A smuggler helping migrants obtain illegal papers faces between five- and twelve- years imprisonment with fines of up to US$5,000.50 The law aims to stem the thousands of illegal immigrants crossing the country’s borders headed for Europe.51

M. NIGERIA

1. Human Trafficking

In May 2015, then-President Goodluck Jonathan signed the Immigration Amendment Act 2015 tackling human trafficking, border security, and the employment of immigrants.52 In March 2015 Jonathan had assented to the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015 to address trafficking specifically.53

2. SIM Card Deactivations

In August, the Nigerian Communications Commission and the National Security Agency mandated all Nigerian telecommunications operators deactivate unregistered SIM cards within seven days or face penalties.54 This step was taken in response to the use of unregistered SIM cards by insurgents to commit crimes in Nigeria.55

N. SÃO TOME AND PRÍNCIPE

1. Oil Block Sale

Approved by the National Petroleum Agency, in October 2015, the U.S.-based ERHC Energy agreed to transfer its rights to Block 11 of the Exclusive Economic Zone to Texan

50. Id.
51. Id.
55. Id.
Kosmos Energy. ERHC retains one hundred percent of the rights to Block 4 and the option to acquire up to a fifteen percent working interest in each of two other blocks of its choice that are unlicensed. An oil boom has been predicted since 2005.

O. SENEGAL

1. Habré Trial Commences

The trial of former Chadian dictator Hissène Habré commenced at the Extraordinary African Chambers in Dakar in July 2015 and resumed in September 2015 after a 45-day suspension ordered when Habré refused to cooperate. Habré is accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and torture, with as many as 40,000 killings and unlawful detentions alleged from his eight-year rule that ended in 1990.

2. New Mining Code

A new mining code is set to become law by the end of 2015. Expected changes remove the restriction against foreign investors owning all of the shares in a Senegalese company and introducing an optional ‘production-sharing agreement’ with the state under which product recovered will not be subject to mining tax, but profits are split between the state and the investor. Existing mining titleholders will be bound by the mining code that was in force when their title was awarded.

P. SIERRA LEONE

1. Margai Complaint

Acting Chief Justice Valesius Victor Thomas filed a complaint against legal practitioner Charles Francis Margai with the General Legal Council Disciplinary Committee alleging that he had disparaged the Chief Justice’s reputation by implying that he and other judges had taken bribes in the case against former vice president Chief Alhaji Sam-Sumana. Mr. Margai was the lead counsel for Chief Alhaji Sam-Sumana, who had challenged his dismissal by the president in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court dismissed the suit.

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57. Id.
59. Id.
61. Id.
62. Id.
64. Id.

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Q. Togo

1. Presidential Dynasty Continues

In April, Togo’s election body declared President Faure Gnassingbe as the winner of its 2015 presidential elections with a provisional fifty-nine percent of the vote. Gnassingbe assumed power in 2005 after the death of his father, Gnassingbe Eyadema, who had previously ruled Togo for thirty-eight years.

III. Central Africa

A. Cameroon

1. Investment

A decree defining operations of the Cameroonian Economic Zone Promotion Agency was enacted April 6, 2015. The Agency, subject to the joint authority of the Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Finance, was created to develop economic zones.

2. SMEs

Law No 2015/010 of July 16 has overhauled the legal framework applied to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Companies from any sector that employ up to one hundred employees with annual turnover not exceeding CFA 3 billion (US$5 million) may be eligible for SME treatment, “subject to 51% of the share capital being held by Cameroonians.”

B. Central African Republic

1. U.N. Peacekeeping Mission Allegations

The U.N. Secretary General demanded the resignation of its peacekeeping mission head, Senegalese Babacar Gaye, after allegations of misconduct including rape and killing were brought against the mission.

66. Id.
68. Id.
70. Id.
72. Id.
Rwandan peacekeeper with the mission shot and killed four colleagues and wounded eight others at their base before being killed himself.  

C. CHAD

1. Boko Haram Death Penalty

In August, Chad executed ten Boko Haram members, taking a lead with Cameroon, Benin, Niger and Nigeria against the Nigerian insurgency. The executions were the first use of the death penalty since the country bolstered anti-terrorist measures in July and an about-face from its draft penal code from September 2014 that abolished capital punishment.

D. CONGO (DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC)

1. Monopoly Ends

SOMAS’ monopoly ended with Law 15-005 of March 17, 2015, which approved the Insurance Code. The Code fosters market liberalization, creating an insurance regulatory agency responsible, inter alia, for issuing licenses and authorizing insurance contract portfolio transfers.

2. Single Tax Return

Two inter-ministerial decrees of May 12 improved the business environment by establishing a single tax return for payment of taxes, social contributions, and employer contributions.

E. CONGO (REPUBLIC)

1. Money Transfers

Decree 2015/248 of February 4 regulated in-country transfers by money remittance offices. For transactions abroad, transmitters must use the services of a Congo-based credit institution, subject to prior approval from the Minister of Finance.
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2. Term Limits Referendum

More than ninety-two percent of an arguably-low voter turnout in Congo-Brazzaville’s October referendum supported constitutional changes to allow President Denis Sassou-Nguesso to extend his decades-long rule.80 Sassou-Nguesso first came to power in 1979 and ruled until 1992, when he lost his election. He returned as president after a brief civil war in 1997 and since has won two elections.81

F. Equatorial Guinea

1. Death Penalty Moratorium

In February 2015, two weeks after executing up to nine people, the “Obiang government announced a temporary moratorium on the death penalty.”82 The Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries had admitted “Equatorial Guinea on that basis, believing it was a first step toward eliminating the penalty.”83 In July, however, “President Obiang stated in an interview that he continued to support the death penalty.”84

G. Gabon

1. CEMAC Treaty Ratified

Gabon ratified the revised Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) treaty through Law 18/2014 of January 30.85 CEMAC is a regional economic community established to promote cooperation and exchange among its members.86

2. Mining Code Gives State 10-25%

Gabon enacted a new mining code on January 30 that entitles the state to a ten percent interest in the share capital of companies in production phase, with an option to increase to twenty-five percent.87 New rules also have been introduced with respect to mining companies and subcontractors that require subcontractors operating in Gabon to incorporate local companies.88

81. Id.
83. Id.
84. Id.
88. Id.
IV. East Africa

A. Burundi

1. Unconstitutional Re-election

In 2015 the Burundian Constitutional Court upheld President Pierre Nkurunziza’s bid to run for a third term, amid unrest that argued the bid was unconstitutional as it violated the two-term limit. Nkurunziza reasoned that his first five-year term in office did not count as it was the result of a 2005 parliamentary vote. Protests and violence have increased since his re-election in July.

B. Djibouti

1. Horn of Africa Pipeline

In September, Djibouti and Ethiopia signed framework agreements for the construction of a 550-kilometer pipeline to import fuel from Djibouti to central Ethiopia. Valued at US$1.55 billion, project developers include Blackstone Group-backed Black Rhino Group. The project is scheduled to be completed by 2018.

2. U.S.-Djibouti Binational Forum

Following a May 2014 meeting between U.S. President Obama and Djibouti President Guelleh, the two countries launched the U.S.-Djibouti Binational Forum in Washington D.C. in February 2015. The countries are committed to implementing legislation—“Djibouti First”—giving preference to Djiboutian companies for goods and services contracts at Camp Lemonnier. Camp Lemonnier, located in Djibouti, is the only permanent U.S. military base in Africa. A second binational forum will be hosted in Djibouti in 2016.


In June, representatives from the Djibouti Armed Forces and the Kentucky National Guard met and ratified a state partnership agreement aimed at expanding defense and
security cooperation. Under the agreement, Kentucky will fund joint military engagements such as training. The agreement also provides for civilian partnerships with Kentucky’s state agencies, universities, and civic organizations.

C. Eritrea

1. New Civil and Criminal Codes Adopted

Eritrea adopted new civil, civil procedure, penal, and criminal procedure codes in May to replace transitional codes that have operated since 1991. The Minister of Justice stated that the new codes would guarantee a stable justice system and indicated that a commercial code is also being finalized.

2. U.N. Human Rights Report

In 2015, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights reported that the Eritrean government was responsible for widespread human rights violations that may constitute crimes against humanity.

D. Ethiopia

1. Ruling Party Wins Elections

In May, the ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front, in power for nearly twenty-five years, won a landslide victory in parliamentary elections. Prime Minister and party leader Hailemariam Desalegn dismissed claims of abuse, with the electoral board reporting turnout that exceeded ninety percent.

E. Kenya

1. Tax Exemption Lifted

Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 67 lifted withholding tax requirements on foreign lenders investing in energy, water, roads, railways, or aerodrome projects. The fifteen percent withholding on interest had put foreign lenders at a disadvantage vis-à-vis banks

2. Mining

The Mining Bill of 2014, expected to become law in 2015, entitles the state to a free ten percent interest in mining projects. Additionally, mining companies with capital expenditure projects will be required to offer at least twenty percent of their shares to the public on a local stock exchange. The new law will allow companies to hold prospecting licenses and mining leases without use of an agent and, to increase transparency, it will require publication of project information online including mineral agreements, revenues paid to the government, and production volumes.

F. Rwanda

1. Presidential Term Limit Referendum

In October, Rwanda's Supreme Court ruled in favor of allowing a referendum that could change the country's constitutionally-set term limits and allow President Paul Kagame to run for a third seven-year term. The constitutional changes would have to pass a referendum, although Kagame's control of the process makes it unlikely that they would fail.

G. Seychelles

1. Female Chief Justice

In August, Judge Mathilda Twomey became the first woman Chief Justice of the Seychelles Supreme Court. Before her appointment, Twomey was the first Seychellois woman to be appointed as a judge. She is the third Seychellois national to serve as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.
H. SOMALIA

1. ICJ Appointment

In February, Somali judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf was elected vice-president of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and will serve a three-year term.105

2. Further Restrictions to Press Freedom

The Somali parliament deliberated a draft news media bill that passed the Council of Ministers in 2014.106 The bill punishes media reports about government corruption and officials’ lack of capacity to govern, and mandates the disclosure of confidential sources to the Ministry of Information.107

I. SOUTH SUDAN

1. UNMISS Extended

In October, the U.N. Security Council announced that it was extending the U.N. Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) to December 15, 2015.108 The mission’s aim is to foster peace and security in this conflict-ridden area.109

J. SUDAN (REPUBLIC)

1. Al-Bashir Avoids Arrest

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir departed a South African summit in June despite an order barring him from leaving.110 In August al-Bashir continued to flout the ICC’s six-year arrest warrant with plans to visit China.111

106. Somali Parliament Set to Vote on Media Law, RADIO DANAN (DBN) (June 17, 2015), http://radiodanan.net/?p=36932
109. Id.
K. TANZANIA

1. Burundian Refugees

Following pre-election violence in Burundi, Tanzania has received over one hundred thousand Burundian refugees since May 2015,112 its first large-scale influx since the 1990s.113 The U.N. High Commission for Refugees reopened three former refugee camps (Nduta, Mtendeli, and Karago) to ease congestion in the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp.114

2. Presidential Elections

Presidential and parliamentary elections took place in Tanzania on October 25 in what was described as the “tightest race in Tanzania’s post-independence history.”115 Incumbent party Chama Cha Mapunduzi (CCM) extended its fifty-four-year control of the presidency with its anti-corruption candidate John Magufuli winning the election.116

L. UGANDA

1. Bride Price Refund Ruled Unconstitutional

In August, the Ugandan Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the refund of “bride price” upon a failed marriage, holding that it violated the country’s Convention and compromised women’s dignity. The court declined, however, to declare demanding a bride price unconstitutional.117

V. Southern Africa

A. ANGOLA

1. ‘Special Contributions’

Pursuant to Law 3/15 of April 9, the National Assembly approved the Revised 2015 State Budget, introducing “special contributions” on foreign exchange transactions

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qualifying as “invisible items of trade.” The ten percent contribution is levied on payments due to non-residents under foreign technical assistance and management contracts.118

B. COMOROS

1. New York Convention Accession


C. BOTSWANA

1. High Court Judges Suspended

On August 27, President Ian Khama suspended four Botswana High Court judges for inquiring about the Chief Justice’s fitness for office regarding allegations of fraud over housing allowances and the Chief Justice’s opposition to continuing legal education for Botswanan judges.121 Subsequently, the Botswana Federation of Public Sector Unions called for the Chief Justice’s resignation.122

D. LESOTHO

1. SADC Convened after Killing

Lesotho’s security situation destabilized after the June 25 killing of former army chief Maaparankoe Mahao, who was purportedly shot “during an attempt to arrest him for alleged mutiny.”123 A ten-member Southern African Development Community (SADC) inquiry commission was deployed to Lesotho in September and concluded its work in November.124

120. Id.
124. Id.
E. MADAGASCAR

1. New Petroleum Law Underway

Madagascar plans to license three on-shore and up to fifty off-shore exploration blocks in 2016 once its new petroleum law is passed. President Rajaonarimampianina, who took office in January 2015, has pledged to woo foreign investors and alleviate poverty that deepened after the 2009 coup.

F. MALAWI

1. Human Rights Commission

In August, Malawi president Peter Mutharika appointed seven commissioners to the Malawi Human Rights Commission, each of whom will serve a three-year term that will conclude in August 2018.

2. Insolvency Bill

Ranked 166 out of 189 countries in the World Bank’s 2015 Doing Business Index, Malawi introduced the Insolvency Bill of 2014 to consolidate individual and corporate insolvency laws. The law is expected to reduce the cost and increase the ease of doing business in Malawi.

G. MAURITIUS

1. Budget Aims to Boost Growth

Mauritius’ Banking Act was amended to exempt foreign banks that lend to global businesses from the requirement of having a moneylender license, and a special Financial Sector Incentive Scheme was established to encourage asset and fund managers to relocate operations to Mauritius.

126. Id.
129. Id.

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H. Mozambique

1. Bank Branches

On February 18, 2015, the Bank of Mozambique approved rules for the opening of new bank branches that would ensure a balanced geographic distribution among provinces. On March 13 the Bank set out terms governing connection to the Single, Common, and Shared Network for National Payments.

I. Namibia

1. Independence Celebrations

On March 21 Namibia celebrated twenty-five years of independence, crediting outgoing president Hifikepunye Pohama, a 2015 recipient of the Mo Ibrahim Award for excellence in African leadership, with “an impeccable record of democratic governance, peace, and stability.”

J. South Africa

1. Turquand Rule Upheld

In One Stop Financial Services the High Court confirmed the common law Turquand rule, which stated when authority has been provided for an individual purporting to bind a company, the contracting party may assume compliance with internal requirements authorizing its representative.

K. Swaziland

1. AGOA-Indigible

The U.S. Government excluded Swaziland from its African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) after determining the country was not adequately protecting internationally-recognized worker rights. It cited the country’s use of security forces, arbitrary arrest to stifle peaceful demonstration, and lack of legal recognition for labor and employer federations.

132. Id.
136. Id.
L. Zambia

1. National Pension Scheme

The National Pension Scheme Act No. 14 (2015) became effective August 14 enabling Zambians to retire at the age of sixty.137 The revised law increases the maximum age requirement for pensionable employment to sixty-five years old and lowers the minimum age to qualify to fifty-five years old.138

2. Industrial Development Corporation

The Zambian Government created the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) in 2014 to promote the country’s economic growth and diversification. In September 2015, the IDC announced plans to issue US$500 million of private bonds in the international markets.139

M. Zimbabwe

1. Presidential ‘Insult Law’ Struck

In January, Zimbabwe’s Constitutional Court quashed an “insult case” brought by the State against activist Gilbert Kagodora whom prosecutors accused of undermining the authority of or insulting President Robert Mugabe in contravention of the criminal law.140

VI. African Institutions

A. African Economic Community

1. Free Trade Area

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), East African Community (EAC), and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) signed a free trade agreement in 2015 bringing the three communities closer to a continent-wide African Economic Community.141

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138. Id.
B. AFRICAN UNION

1. Mugabe Appointed AU President

Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe was appointed Chairman of the African Union for a one-year term in January. The largely-ceremonial chairmanship rotates between Africa’s five regions.142

C. ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

1. Common External Tariff

Initiated with a 2006 decision to foster growth through a common tax administration, the ECOWAS Common External Tariff came into effect January 1.143 The tariff aims at regional customs regulations uniformity to, inter alia, curb the dumping of inferior goods in the region.144

D. EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

1. US/EAC US$64 Million Trade Hub

A new five-year, US$64 million Trade and Investment Hub in East Africa focuses on increasing exports under AGOA to the United States and other countries, expanding and diversifying regional agricultural trade, and facilitating investment and access to technology.145 U.S. exports to the EAC totaled US$2 billion in 2014, while imports totaled US$743 million.146

E. AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

1. Female Board Membership

In June, the African Development Bank (AfDB) commissioned the first study of female board membership in Africa.147 The report recommended baseline research on female board membership, public reporting on competition and board diversity, and mandating female board membership, starting with state-owned companies.148

144. Id.
146. Id.
148. Id.
F. **African Export-Import Bank**

1. *Corporate Governance*

Afreximbank hosted its second Annual Customer Due Diligence and Corporate Governance Forum in October to address corporate governance issues facing African financial institutions. Bank president Dr. Benedict Oramah cited a lack of confidence in African institutions as reasons why investors have shied away from investing in the continent.

G. **U.N. Economic Commission for Africa**

1. *Third Financing for Development Conference*

The ECA and the AU held a regional consultation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, ahead of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which was held in July. The conference was designed to look at sources of finance for sustainable development to ensure resources are directed where they are most needed.

H. **Southern African Development Community**

1. *Energy*

An October report indicated that the regional trade bloc will invest up to US$233 billion by 2027 to improve electricity generation through renewable-energy projects.

I. **Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa**

1. *Competition Law Changes*

COMESA’s competition rules were amended in March to reduce its US$500,000 filing fee cap and introduce a threshold before a merger becomes notifiable to the Commission.

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150. Id.


J. Economic Community of Central African States

1. Boko Haram Fund

An extraordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa resolved to establish a fund to combat Boko Haram. Participants agreed to support Cameroon and Chad with emergency aid of FCFA 50 billion (US$81 million) in troops and other assistance.

K. Union du Maghreb Arabe

1. Regional MOU

On June 5, 2015, UMA signed a regional technical cooperation MOU with the Food and Agriculture Organization aimed at promoting youth employment in the agricultural sector in Maghreb countries. The MOU follows a conference held in Morocco in April 2015.

L. Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa

1. Insolvency Act

OHADA adopted a revised Uniform Insolvency Act during its fortieth Council of Ministers’ meeting in September. The Act, thought to improve SME access to finance in seventeen countries, received World Bank and IFC technical assistance.

M. U.N. Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals

1. U.N./Netherlands Agreement

On February 23, 2015, the United Nations and the Netherlands signed an agreement relating to the U.N. Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (UNMICT), the residual mechanism for carrying out a number of essential functions of the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (UNICTY) and the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (UNICTR) after completion of their
mandates. The transfer of all UNICTY closed cases to UNMICT was completed July 1, 2015, with the transfer of all UNICTR records expected by the end of 2015.

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