
Chapter 15

Sub-Saharan Africa in the Czech Foreign Policy¹

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In 2015, the trend of strengthening the relations with the traditional partners in Sub-Saharan Africa continued, and also the creation of new relations. The interest in Sub-Saharan Africa was traditionally exercised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also other departments, particularly the environmental, agricultural, healthcare, and also industry, including the Czech Chamber of Commerce and the Association of the Industry and Transport which was reflected by increased export to Sub-Saharan Africa. The key aspect considering the implementation of the Czech foreign policy was the approval of new Concept of the Czech Foreign Policy which also focused on the concerned region. Unlike 2014, when the public area focused on the Ebola epidemics, Africa was widely perceived as a region providing significant economic opportunities which was reflected by the number of events organised in relation to the export opportunities to Africa. In 2015, no topic related to Sub-Saharan Africa was politicalized except for the migration issues which became a subject of stereotypical and sometimes even racist media discussions. The Parliament did not develop a polarised debate on the issue of sending the Czech soldiers to Mali within the UN mission MINUSMA, unlike 2013 when the Czech army was sent to Mali within the Training Mission of the European Union EUTM.

THE AFRICAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Strategic documents

The new Concept of the Czech Foreign Policy was approved by the Government on 13. 7. 2015. Unlike the former concept of the Czech foreign policy approved by the Government on 20. 7. 2011, which stated solely two sentences with the focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, this new document pays more attention to Sub-Saharan Africa and it is more specific.

The security priorities of the new concept included the Sahel area and the security questions include the Union aim to stabilise the region. In regard to the bilateral rela-

tions, the concept includes the appointed priority aims to develop the relations with Ethiopia as the program country for bilateral development cooperation, Nigeria as the most populated country in Sub-Saharan Africa, and RSA which is the most developed economy in the region and a member of G20 and BRICS.² It does not mean that the Czech foreign policy focuses only on the states defined in the document; the centres of interest also include Kenya, Tanzania, Senegal, Ghana, and Zambia due to the security or economic reasons.

During the previous year, the partial concept document *Sub-Saharan Africa: Territorial Strategies for 2015–2018* was signed and its implementation started in 2015. The document identifies the opportunities particularly within the economic area and also names the challenges faced by the regions. The interests identified in the strategy include mostly ensuring stability and security in the region and minimising the risks for Europe, including illegal migration, diversification of foreign trade by means of strengthening the export in the region, traditional good relationships with Sub-Saharan Africa countries and deeper connection of the Czech policy in the region with the EU agenda. The fulfilment of the goals included the proposal of partial tools, such as the strengthening of the economic diplomacy, the visits abroad, and also the foreign development cooperation or cooperation within the academic and cultural area. In addition to the traditional partner countries, the document recommends restoring and strengthening the relations with the Lusophone countries, particularly Angola and Mozambique, which can provide many opportunities for the Czech companies.

THE AFRICAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

Political relations

The important indicator of the interest of the MFA in Africa was the official statement. In 2015, the MFA issued an official statement considering three events related to Sub-Saharan Africa, two focused on security and one on successful handing over of power. The first event, to which the MFA by the official statement, was the murder of Ethiopian citizens in Libya by the so-called Islamic State.³ In the statement, the MFA stated that the CR “*Considers Ethiopia as a significant partner in the international efforts to destroy all forms of extremism and terrorism worldwide*”. Another statement was related to the issue of the terrorist attack in Kenya where the terrorist group Al-Shabaab attacked the University in Garissa and killed 150 people.⁴ The third statement was related to the results of the elections in Nigeria.⁵ The MFA appreciated the democratic and peaceful process and the approach of President Goodluck Jonathan who acknowledged the loss and handed the function over to the opposition candidate Muhammad Buhari. President Miloš Zeman sent a congratulation telegram to the winning candidate and highlighted the cooperation between Nigeria and the CR and expressed his wish to continue in the process.⁶

Considering the pan-European point of view, the key topic of 2015 was the migration crisis. In this context, on 11.–12. 11. 2015, the Maltese city of La Valletta

hosted the summit on migration where the European Union negotiated with the African states. The Czech Republic was represented by Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, who also represented Poland at the summit because the constitutive meeting of the Polish Sejm took place at the same time.⁷

The Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, EUTF, was established at the EU–Africa migration summit in La Valletta in order to stabilise the source and transit countries of migration in Africa and remove the enforced resettling and reduce the illegal migration to Europe. The European Union activated the Trust Fund as a flexible tool enabling it to collect the finances of the European Commission (EC) and the member states. The EC released 1.8 billion EUR from the reserves of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) and the member states confirmed the sum of approximately 82 million EUR. All member states except for Croatia contributed. The Czech Republic became one of the foundation members of the Trust Fund. Considering its contribution of 0.74 million EUR (approximately 200 million CZK), the Czech Republic has no independent voting rights; they are only obtained by the countries with the minimum contribution of at least 3 million EUR. The Czech Republic decided to utilise the shared voting right within the “*pool of donors*” and made an agreement with the other Visegrad cooperation countries (V4) on joint representation in the control bodies of the Fund (Administration and Organisation Committee). The V4 countries have further agreed that within EUTF they would focus particularly on the area of the Horn of Africa.

Further negotiations at the Union level related to Sub-Saharan Africa included the meeting of the EU Ministers discussing the future relations between the EU and the group of ACP countries (Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific). The meeting took place on 26 October and the Czech Republic was represented by Deputy Martin Tlapa.⁸ In October 2015, the public debate commenced on the future relationships of the EU and the ACP states after 2020; it was initiated by the European Committee. The MFA was also involved in the debate. In this case, the Czech side acted very proactively by handing over two contributions; from the new EU member states, only Hungary, Poland, and Lithuania were involved, each by handing over one contribution.⁹

Czech visits to Sub-Saharan Africa

The year 2015 was quite rich with respect to the foreign visits and mutual meetings of political representatives of the CR and the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. On 26.–29. 5. 2015, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek visited Sub-Saharan Africa in the company of the business delegation. On 26 May, he visited Kenya,¹⁰ one day later Mozambique,¹¹ and on 28.–29. May Mauritius.¹² In Kenya, he met Minister of Foreign Affairs Amina Mohamed Jibril and Ministry of Defence Raychelle Omamo. The main discussed topics included the cooperation within the economic area and the security matters in the region of East Africa. Minister Zaorálek highlighted the importance of Kenya in the region, which was proven by the repeated opening of the Czech Representation Office in Nairobi in 2014. The Czech Minister sees the main options for the perspective cooperation particularly in the area of engineering, tourism, and defence. The Minister was accompanied by the business mission comprising of the Czech companies interested in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The business seminar was held in Nairobi on the occasion of the Czech visit; it was organised by the Embassy in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce of the CR, where the Czech business persons had the option to commence contacts with possible Kenyan partners. In addition to the economic area, a further important topic during the visit of Minister Zaorálek was the cooperation in the area of security and defence. On the occasion of the meeting with the Kenyan Minister of Defence, L. Zaorálek highlighted the important role of Kenya in the fight against terrorism in the region of East Africa. At the same time, he appreciated the cooperation in the area of joint training of the armed forces which was in progress and he also offered help concerning the supplies of technologies for the fight against terrorism. In Nairobi, the Minister met the Executive Director of the UN Environmental Program (UNEP), Achim Steiner.¹³

Another target country of the visit of the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs to Africa was Mozambique, where he met the Prime Minister, Carlos Agostinho do Rósário, the Minister of Defence, Atanasius Ntumuk, and the Minister of Industry and Trade, Ernest Tonela. It is the first visit to Mozambique at the ministerial level from 1986. Like in the case of Kenya, the focus was placed on the cooperation in the economic and security area. In the recent years, Mozambique has achieved economic growth and also the mutual volume of business between the CR and Mozambique has been growing. The opportunities for the Czech investors and business persons include particularly the mining industry, infrastructure, power projects, and agriculture. The strengthening of the cooperation options between the Czech and Mozambican companies was a subject of the business seminar in Maputo with the participation of almost thirty Mozambican companies. In addition to the economic cooperation, the negotiations focused on the cooperation in the area of security. In the representation of Martin Stropnický, L. Zaorálek signed the memorandum on cooperation between the defence departments of both countries with Minister of Defence Ntumuk, and the Mozambican side showed interest in the exchanging experience in the area of training and modernisation of technologies.¹⁴

His third stop in East Africa was the island of Mauritius, where on 28 and 29 May the meetings took place with President Rajkeswur Purryag, Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration, and International Trade Etienne Sinatambou. Since Mauritius is one of the most stable African countries and has recently enjoyed continual economic growth over 3%, the negotiations focused on the topics of developing business and the investment options. During the visit, a business seminar was convened and the Chambers of Commerce of Mauritius and the Czech Republic signed the Memorandum of Understanding. In regard to the popularity of this island for the Czech tourists, L. Zaorálek agreed on the signature of the bilateral agreement on air transport in the near future to simplify potential charter flights between these two countries. In addition to the meetings, Minister Zaorálek also offered the “*capacity in the area of radar and detection systems, potential the transport and monitoring aircraft*” which could be used for the protection of borders and fishing.¹⁵ After the return from the business trip, Minister Zaorálek published a comment in weekly *Euro*, and highlighted the significant economic potential of Sub-Saharan Africa and refused its stereotyped image provided by mainstream media.¹⁶

The Minister of Agriculture, Marian Jurečka, visited the region of Sub-Saharan Africa twice in 2015. In 2015, he participated in the opening ceremony of the Brewery Raya Breweries in Ethiopia where Czech company ZVU POTEZ supplied the technologies. During his visit, he met Minister of Agriculture, President of Ethiopia, and the Director of the Agricultural Development Agency.¹⁷ Minister Jurečka completed his second visit to Sub-Saharan Africa between 8. 7.–2. 8. 2015 when he visited Zambia. He met his counterpart Given Lubinda and then visited the Agricultural and Business Trade Fair in Lusaca with the President of Zambia, Edgar Lungu. The goal of the visit of the Minister of Agriculture was the support of the cooperation in the area of agriculture and trade.

During the following period, Zambia shall be included amongst the priority regions of the Czech development cooperation; therefore, according to Minister Jurečka, *“The development of mutual relations could follow the example of successful projects within the development cooperation in the area of agriculture, particularly the breeding of cattle”*.¹⁸

In the monitored year, the visits to the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa were realized at the level of Deputies too. Between 22.–25. 2. 2015, the Deputy of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Petr Drulák, went on a business trip to Ethiopia. The main point of the agenda was the fourth round of regular political consulting at the level of the Deputies of the MFA. Deputy Drulák also negotiated with the Peace and Security Director, El-Ghassim Wane, and the Executive Secretary of UNECA, Carlos Lopes; he visited two projects of ZRS CR and had a lecture for diplomats and general public focused on the topic of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the current Czech-Slovakian relations.

Between 12.–16. 7. 2015, Deputy of Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Tlapa visited Ethiopia.¹⁹ He was leading the Czech delegation at the Third International Conference on Financing the Development, which took place between 13–16 July with the aim to achieve the agreement on financing the development for the next fifteen years.²⁰ Additionally, he managed many bilateral meetings in Addis Ababa, for example with Berhan Gebre-Christos or the State Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Ahmed Shide. In particular, he negotiated on the options of cooperation with Minister Gebre-Christos within the area of economics and other topics included the security and migration. During the meeting with the state Minister of Industry Mebrahtu Meles, they agreed on the prospective areas of economic cooperation, including the identified sectors of the food industry and processing of agricultural products, the automotive industry, water management, healthcare, civil aviation, and defence. Deputy Tlapa was also accepted by the Executive Director of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), who was also in the position of a representative of the UN General Secretary. They have both agreed on the significant opportunities represented by Ethiopia and the whole African continent for the Czech export. Deputy M. Tlapa also met with Ethiopian graduates from Czech universities and representatives of the business sector. Ethiopia is one of the most significant and traditional political and economic partners of the CR in Sub-Saharan Africa and also one of the priority countries of the Czech foreign development cooperation.²¹

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lukáš Kaucký, participated in the inauguration of presidents in two Sub-Saharan countries. At the beginning of the year, on 15. 1. 2015, he participated as a special ambassador of M. Zeman in the inauguration of President Felipe Nyusi, a former Czechoslovak governmental scholarship holder.²²

During the meeting with Deputy Kaucký, the newly appointed President declared his interest in the cooperation between the Czech Republic and Mozambique in the area of industry, infrastructure, agriculture, and defence. In order to identify further opportunities for cooperation, President Nyusi promised to send an expert team to the CR under the management of General Director of Mozambique Centre for the Investment Support.²³ The inauguration of the third president of Namibia Dr. Hage Geingob was also attended by Deputy Kaucký on 21 March, on the day of 25th anniversary of the Namibian independence.²⁴ During his stay in Namibia, he also met Prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhilou and Chairman of National Assembly Prof. Peter Katjavivi. The negotiations on the Czech-Namibian cooperation, which has a long-term tradition, took place also with Selma Ashipala-Musavyi at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The cooperation between the CR and Namibia is also realized in the area of education; therefore, L. Kaucký negotiated with the rector of Namibian Polytechnics which had cooperated with J. E. Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem for many years, and in 2015 it concluded a memorandum on cooperation with the Prague Technical University.²⁵

The long-term cooperation between the environmental departments in Senegal and the CR was confirmed by the signature of the Memorandum on the Cooperation of the Czech Republic and Senegal in the area of environment on the occasion of the visit of the Deputy Minister of the Environment of the Czech Republic, Vladimír Dolejský, in Dakar on 20.–22. 5. 2015.²⁶

Visits of the partners from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Czech Republic

Like the visits of the Czech representatives to Sub-Saharan Africa, the visits of African partners in the CR were focused on different sectors. The visit of Minister Jurečka was followed up by negotiations in Prague on 9. 10. 2015 with the Director of the Agricultural Transformation Agency in Ethiopia, Khalid Bomba, on the possibilities of the cooperation in the area of agriculture; with respect to the import structure from Ethiopia, the most prospective area within the agrarian sector seems to be the support of the food industry.²⁷ The Minister of Foreign Affairs, L. Zaorálek, negotiated with the Minister of Foreign Affairs from Senegal, including the representatives of the Senegalese business sphere, in Prague on 24 February. The Senegalese Minister of Foreign Affairs was accepted by Minister Zaorálek and he also met the Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, Jan Hamáček.²⁸ On 8.–10. 9. 2015, the Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development of Senegal met his Czech counterpart Richard Brabec in Prague.²⁹ The visit followed up the conclusion of the memorandum on cooperation in the area of the environment of both countries signed in May by Deputy Vladimír Dolejský and Senegalese Minister Abdoulaye Baldé. During the visit, the consultations of the Senegalese delegation took place in the Ministry of the

Environment with the focus on forest management, the fight against deforesting, management of nature resorts, adaptation to the climate change, and the restoration or re-cultivation, and waste management. The Czech and Senegalese Departments of the Environment have cooperated since 1996, e.g. from 2000, the ME CR has supported the program in Senegal to save the endangered western type of eland also known as Giant eland organised in the country by the Czech University of Agriculture in cooperation with Derbianus CSAW. The Memorandum on cooperation concluded by both ministries was completed with the implementation contract which declared Derbianus together with the Czech University of Agriculture the sole executor of the memorandum in the Czech Republic.³⁰

The cooperation between the Czech Republic and the selected African states is realized within the defence and security area. Historically the first visit from Ghana took place in the CR between 16.–20. 3. 2015.³¹ It was the first meeting of the Defence Ministers of both countries and the Minister of Defence from Ghana arrived upon the invitation from Minister Stropnický. Both ministers negotiated the possibilities of cooperation in the defence area and the defence industry, and also possible training of both armies and the exchange of experience. The cooperation between Ghana and the CR in the area of security is appreciated particularly in relation to the aim to stabilise the Sahel region, and the fact that the Army of the CR is engaged in the EU training mission in Mali. In 2015, the involvement on the UN mission in the country was approved.³² The business trip of the Ghanaian Prime Minister also had an economic dimension which included a visit to significant Czech companies focused on the defence industry, e.g. LOM Praha, Aero Vodochody, Česká zbrojovka Uherský Brod, VOP CZ etc.

In January of the concerned year, Deputy to the Minister of Defence, Tomáš Kuchta, met the Nigerian delegation led by the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Defence, Ismail Aliyu Numan. The subject of the negotiations was the possibility of cooperation of the CR and Nigeria in the area of defence and defence industry. The result was the signature of the Memorandum of understanding between the Ministries of Defence of the CR and Nigeria; Daniel Koštoval, Deputy to Defence Minister authorised to manage the Defence Policy and Strategy Department, signed the document on behalf of the Czech Republic.³³ Between 11–15 May, the CR was visited by a group of participants in the *National Defence College of Nigeria*, NDC, who arrived upon the invitation of the Minister of Defence and visited the Chamber of Deputies, the MFA, the General Staff, and the University of Defence.³⁴

Further events

Between 4.–5. 12. 2015, Nairobi hosted the meeting of the ambassadors in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa with the main aim to define the specific economic diplomacy in Africa and its relation to the new Concept of the Foreign Policy of the CR. The attention was focused on the topic of migration from Sub-Saharan Africa in the EU.³⁵ The causes of migration and the solution options also included the unprecedented meetings convened on 9–10 November with the participation of Prime Minister Sobotka and Minister Zorálek, including the participation of the Czech Ambas-

sadors from Nigeria and Ethiopia. The goal was particularly the coordination of the foreign policy in the area of migration.³⁶

With respect to the humanitarian aid, on 5. 2. 2015 the humanitarian aid was approved by Minister of Foreign Affairs at 3 million CZK by means of the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent (IFRC) of Malawi and Mozambique, which were affected by the destructive flooding in the beginning of 2015.³⁷ The resolution No. 152 from 4. 3. 2015 issued by the government approved the provision of further finances to the international organisation at 10 million CZK for the fight against Ebola in West Africa.³⁸ The provision of humanitarian help at the amount of 16 million CZK for the selected countries in Asia and Africa, Central African Republic, South Sudan, and South Sudan refugees in Ethiopia and Uganda was decided on 27. 3. 2015 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The finances were provided for the financing of humanitarian projects of the Czech non-government organisations in the selected regions.³⁹ The development projects and the development agenda form a subject of a specific chapter in this book.

The activities of the Foreign Committee of the Chamber of Deputies related to Sub-Saharan Africa include the ratification of the Agreement between the Czech Republic and the Mauritius Republic on aviation transport (Parliament news 641) at the 23rd meeting on 16. 12. 2015. All present Deputies voted for the ratification of the contract which enabled regular flights between Prague and Mauritius.⁴⁰ The Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security in 2015 discussed many union documents related particularly to the security situation in the Central African Republic and in the Horn of Africa. It included the extension of the mandate of a Special EU Representative for the Horn of Africa and sending the army counselling mission of the European Union CSDP to the Central African Republic (EUMAM RCA).⁴¹

The activities of Czech Members of the European Parliament related to Sub-Saharan Africa are also worth mentioning. The Member of European Parliament for the party ANO, Petr Ježek, in an open letter to the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, appealed to the European Union to become involved in the mediation process in the Civil War in South Sudan. According to Ježek, the EU should become involved in the peace process in South Sudan and actively contribute to terminating the fights which claimed tens of thousands of lives.⁴² In October, the Member of European Parliament Ježek appealed to the European Union to introduce sanctions on the leaders of the parties at war in South Sudan and to consider the implementation of an arms embargo in the country.⁴³ In the first half of 2015, the Member of European Parliament Pavel Telička met a group of young Sudanese politicians who arrived upon the invitation of the European Parliament and his Group for the Support of Democracy and Coordination of Elections with the main topics being sharing the experience with the division of Czechoslovakia and peaceful neighbourhood, and also the elections in Sudan and the conflicts in the region even after the foundation of the independent South Sudan.⁴⁴ Czech diplomats are also successful in the employment of positions of EU ambassadors in Sub-Saharan Africa, e.g. Jana Hybášková is the EU Ambassador to Namibia and Tomáš Uličný is the leader of the EU delegation

in Sudan. Czech representatives often act as members of the monitoring missions sent to the region on the occasion of the elections.

Security

In the area of security, the CR follows the policy of the European union and it is involved in the international missions of the EU and the UN. With respect to the geographic vicinity, the Sahel region has been a long-term security priority of the EU which was repeatedly confirmed during 2015 in relation to the migration crisis. In 2015, 38 Czech soldiers were present in Mali within the European training mission EUTM. The task was the protection of the mission headquarters, escort of persons and convoys and partially also the training of Mali soldiers. In March 2015, the Chief of the General Staff of the Czech Army, Petr Pavel, visited the headquarters in Bamak and met the Mission Commander, Alfonso García-Vaquero Pradal. They agreed that the mission EUTM-Mali was successful in the efforts to stabilise the region and the Army General Pavel highlighted the European security interests in the region: *“Our goal is to support the stability in this region and prevent the expansion of extremism and migration waves to Europe. It is, therefore, important to support the development and training of the local security forces.”*⁴⁵ The Czech soldiers have operated as observers within the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) in the number of three persons and three more soldiers from the Czech Army were sent within the UN mission MINUSCA to the Central African Republic.⁴⁶ Upon the request of the head of the EU Mission, Major General Philipp Pontiese, the CR provided humanitarian help by supplying a temporary bridge connecting the city parts in Bangui. The construction was provided by the Italian engineers under the supervision of two Czech members of the 15th Corps of Engineers.⁴⁷ The bridge was named in a way resembling the CR – *“Le pont d’Agnès de Bohême”* and it was introduced at the International Defence and Security Technologies Fair (IDET), which took place in Brno on 19.–21. 5. 2015.⁴⁸ The delegations from the RSA and Ghana were officially invited to the trade fair because they are important partners of the Czech Republic in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁹

Its efforts of the repeated involvement in the UN missions on a larger scale were confirmed by the government with the proposal to send the Czech unit to Mali within the mission MINUSMA (*United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali*), approved by the Resolution No. 290 from 22. 4. 2015 on sending the Czech armed forces of up to 25 persons from the day of approval by the Czech Parliament until 31. 12. 2016.⁵⁰ The governmental proposal was negotiated by the Defence Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic on the 18th session, which took place on 7. 5. 2015. In his introductory speech, the Minister of Defence defined the mission by stating: *“It has been the long-term intention of the Czech Republic to return to the UN missions”*. The resolution was adopted by all present Deputies and Members of the Committee.⁵¹ In its decision, the Committee recommend the Chamber of Deputies to agree with the presence of the forces and devices of the Czech Ministry of Defence in the UN MINUSMA mission.⁵² The pro-

posal to send the Czech units within the UN mission was negotiated at the General Assembly together with the proposal to send the members of the Czech Army to the Golan Heights. Unlike the proposal to send the soldiers to the Golan Heights, the participation in the MINUSMA mission did not raise any great discussions in the Chamber of Deputies because the Czech soldiers were already present in the EUTM-Mali training mission. The presence of the army units within the UN mission in Africa was incorporated into the wider security perspective concerning the border security.⁵³ The Chamber of Deputies then proceeded to the independent voting on sending the units to UNDOF and MINUSMA, and the sending of 25 persons within the Mali mission was accepted, 120 Deputies from 148 present persons voted for the proposal. The Deputies from the whole political spectrum voted for the proposal; solely the KSČM deputies abstained from voting; Stanislav Grospič and Marta Semelová from KSČM voted against the proposal.⁵⁴ The proposal was then discussed by the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, in the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Security.⁵⁵ The proposal was approved at the plenum on 13. 5. 2015 by a majority of 54 from the present 62 senators.⁵⁶ Based on the approved mandate, the Special Operations Task Group of 25 persons appointed from the 601st group of special forces, was sent to Mali. The main goal of the mission is the *“provision of security and the creation of conditions for further humanitarian and political assistance for the Government of Mali”*.⁵⁷

Economic relations

The Czech export to Sub-Saharan Africa in the last five years has more than doubled. Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Industry and also Czech business persons are aware of the economic potential of this region for the Czech export. The requirement to diversify the Czech export is noticeable due to the economic sanctions on Russia and also due to the Rouble devaluation or the drop of the oil prices.⁵⁸ In Sub-Saharan Africa, the demand for the Czech products and services as well as the number of countries where the Czech companies export keeps increasing.⁵⁹ Furthermore, some Czech exporters try to return to the areas with historical relations with the Czech Republic and where success can be anticipated; one of such regions is Sub-Saharan Africa.⁶⁰

Despite the fact that the Czech export to the region of Sub-Saharan Africa forms only 0.5% of the total Czech export, it is a considerable volume considering the absolute numbers. In 2015, the Czech exporters exported goods to the countries in the Sub-Sahara region at the total value of 20.37 billion CZK. In comparison with the previous year, the growth of the export volume increased by approximately one billion CZK. In the concerned year, the Czech Republic imported goods at a total value of 11.4 billion CZK and the import grew approximately by 1 billion CZK within the annual comparison, which meant a percentage growth by almost 9%. The Czech trade surplus with Sub-Saharan Africa reached approximately 9 billion CZK in 2015, like in the previous year. The share of the South African Republic in the Czech export into the region of Sub-Saharan Africa exceeded 10 billion CZK and with 10.6 billion CZK in 2015, it accounted for 52% of the Czech export into the monitored region. A part

of the volume is re-exported to other countries associated in the South-African Customs Union (SACU).

Despite the fact that Nigeria exceeded SAR as the strongest economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Czech export to this country reaches approximately one fifth of the export to SAR with the total volume of goods of 1.8 billion CZK. In comparison with the previous year, the export to Nigeria grew by approximately 20%. With respect to the structure of the goods for Nigeria, it included mostly military material, engineering products, and razor blades in 2015. A significant growth of export occurred in the monitored year in case of Angola, with the imported goods amounting almost to 2 billion CZK, particularly the tubes and hollow profiles. Half a billion limit of the export was exceeded in Kenya, Ivory Coast, Mali, and Senegal. In terms of the structure, the export to Sub-Saharan Africa included mostly the products with high added value, i.e. the machines and transport tools. One billion comprises of the export of textile products, textiles from cotton wool aimed for Mali, Senegal, and Nigeria. The traditional large exporters to the Sub-Saharan region include the textile company VEBA Broumov, which export the “African brocade” to West Africa.

In the monitored period, the export of textile products to Africa dropped by approximately 40% due to the security situation in Sahel and due to the epidemic of Ebola in 2014.⁶¹ While in 2014, the company exported textile to Africa at the amount of almost 2 billion CZK; in 2015, the textile export to Africa reached 1.13 billion CZK.⁶² Due to the decline in export, the company was forced to dismiss hundreds of people in the region suffering from unemployment. The Sub-Saharan region exports mostly materials and food to the CR; the only exception is the import of filtering devices from RSA at the amount of almost 2 billion CZK and we can generally state that the business exchange with RSA does not include the post-colonial structure because many products imported to the Czech Republic have added value.⁶³

The growing trade exchange and increased interest of the Czech companies in the export to Africa were confirmed by the EGAP insurance company where the perspective can be seen in the area of power engineering.⁶⁴ The possibilities of the Czech companies to export to Sub-Saharan Africa are strongly limited by the fact that many African countries are included in OECD organisation in the lowest category of the insurance provision for the export loans, and the export insurance generates inadequate costs for the companies.

In 2015, the CR hosted many events focused on the promotion of Africa as the region with a great potential for the Czech export providers. One of them was the seminar organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 29. 6. 2015 titled the African Day. The seminar followed the Czech-Guinea Business and Investment Forum,⁶⁵ which took place in April 2015, and also the trip of Minister Zaorálek in the region in the company of the representatives of the Czech companies. The motto of the seminar was “Trading with Sub-Saharan Africa has a potential and future; however, its specific aspects must be considered”. Therefore, the seminar focused on providing information on the territory to the interested Czech business persons. The event took place with the participation of foreign experts, for example, the Ambassador of the CR to Nigeria for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Manager of the Embassy in Dakar, and the

business councillors from the Embassy in Ghana and Ethiopia. The representatives of CzechTrade, insurance company EGAP, and employees of companies with experience in the Sub-Saharan region had a speech.⁶⁶ Africa was introduced as a territory with great export perspective at the International Engineering Trade Fair in Brno on 14.–18. 9. 2015. The accompanying program of the trade fair included the conference on the topic “Africa – new markets and opportunities for the Czech exporters”. The speeches at the conference were presented by the Minister of Trade and Industry of the CR, Jan Mládek, the President of EC of the CR, Vladimír Dlouhý, the Deputy to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miloslav Stašek, the General Director of EGAP, Jan Procházka, Petr Karel from Managing Partner London Market, and the guests from the African bank institutions. The main potential in the region of Sub-Saharan Africa for the Czech companies was within the export of machines, industrial devices and technologies, and the tool of the Czech export should be particularly EGAP, according to Minister Mládek.⁶⁷ Other accompanying events included the seminar focused on the demand of technologies in ACP countries organised by the Business Platform for Foreign Development Cooperation with the help of the Czech Association of Industry and Transport. It included the defined potentially interesting countries for the export of IT technologies, for example Botswana, Ethiopia, Burundi or the RSA.⁶⁸ The seminar in June was followed by the conference of “Sub-Saharan Africa – the export opportunities and their financing”, organised on 14. 12. 2015 by the Department of Economic Diplomacy in cooperation with EGAP and the agency CzechTrade. The conference was focused particularly on the business options in Sub-Saharan Africa and financing and insurance of export.⁶⁹

Interesting events focused on the possibilities of economic cooperation between the Sub-Saharan countries and the V4 countries took place in the Republic of South Africa too. One of them included the V4 Business Forum in the capital of the South African province Mpumalanga Witbank on 11. 6. 2015 which included the presentation of business opportunities of the Visegrad group countries. Considering the sector focus, the event was focused particularly on the mining technology, metal processing, electronics, engineering, and transport vehicles, textile, and food processing.⁷⁰ A similar seminar took place just one week before in Durban, the capital of KwaZulu Natal.⁷¹ The Embassy in Abuja organised the participation at the food industry trade fair in Lagos. The region of Sub-Saharan Africa received also some trading missions. One of them was held by the Czech Economic Chamber, whose representatives accompanied Minister L. Zaorálek on his business trip to East Africa, during which he visited Kenya, Mozambique, and Mauritius.⁷² Another business mission comprised of businessmen from Třebíč was organised by the Regional Economic Chamber between 18.–24. 2. 2015. The goal was to introduce and promote Třebíč and offer specific investment and business opportunities for South African partners, particularly within power engineering and construction.⁷³

As for the big contracts from the latest period, we can mention the completion of the brewery construction of Raya Breweries in the North Ethiopian town of Maychew, where the Czech company ZVU POTEZ⁷⁴ supplied complete brewery equip-

ment including the construction works and spare parts with the approximate value of 764 million CZK. Another engineering company, Hutní montáže from the Vítkovice Machinery Group, commenced the construction of the third boiler in the South African coal power plant in Kusile, which had been in progress since 2013. The contract has an approximate value of one-quarter of a billion CZK and the assembly of the third boiler should be completed in September 2016.⁷⁵ In addition to the large companies and the Czech subcontractors of supranational companies, many smaller Czech companies operate in Africa. One of them is Next, which exports security doors to Ghana,⁷⁶ or Liberec based company Pavlů-Komplex, which designed a factory for plastic windows and the insulating glass in the RSA and supplied the required machines.⁷⁷ The company Micos from Prostějov has operated within the telecommunication and high-speed internet in the RSA since 2014 and it supplied the distributors for the South African fibre-optic network.⁷⁸ Thermont Napajedla concluded a contract within the monitored period for the supply and assembly of the aluminium fittings, screening technology, and facade housing for the hospital in Gabon Libreville.⁷⁹ The development of healthcare in Africa is related to the growing volume of export of medical technology and material exported for example by LINET or Medica Filter.⁸⁰ In 2015, the aviation technology included the sale of aircraft L-410 from the Kunovice-based company Aircraft Industries to Mozambique. The customer is ACIA Aero, the air transport provider in the regional transport.⁸¹ The Czech companies are traditionally successful in the export of military material to Africa. In 2015, the army company Excalibur Group supplied the Nigerian Government with modernised tanks T-72 M1, the combat vehicles for the infantry and rocket propellers to fight the Boko Haram terrorist organisation in the north of the country; the contract value reached approximately 197 million CZK.⁸² The Czech army material has a good reputation and tradition; and, therefore, in the previous years, its export abroad was growing; generally, about 10% of the Czech military export went to Africa.⁸³

The defined examples include only some of the Czech *success stories* in Sub-Saharan Africa. We can generally state that the Czech companies keep increasing the focus on more exotic markets due to the efforts to diversify the export, and Sub-Saharan Africa provides the expected opportunities within that respect. However, it still applies that the region of Sub-Saharan Africa did not include the realization of any larger direct foreign investment. On the other hand, the RSA owns direct foreign investments in Czechia in the area of beer production (South African SAB Miller owns Pilsner Urquell) or in the area of Internet sale (Mall.cz or Heureka.cz are owned by the South African group Naspers).⁸⁴ The Czech companies keep focusing on the export of their products and their direct sale to local partners. The positive trend affecting the Czech export is the continual cooperation between the MFA and the MIT which resulted e.g. in the issue of the Map for Global Filed Opportunities prepared by the Ministries in cooperation with CzechTrade. It includes the support tool for the economic diplomacy by means of identifying the key sectors and the destination for the Czech export.⁸⁵ More information on the economic dimension of the Czech foreign policy is defined in the respective chapter of this book.

IDENTIFYING AND CHARACTERIZING THE KEY ACTORS

The agenda of Sub-Saharan Africa is still dealt with by the Department of Sub-Saharan Africa States at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2015, the civil service law became valid, and it included the restriction of the minimum department size on the merge with another trade. Finally, a solution was found to maintaining the department as independent and preventing sending a negative signal to the foreign partners. Jaroslav Siro was in the management of the department in the first half of 2015; Ivan Jančárek took it over in June, and he also executes the function of the representative of the Deputy for the Section of Non-European Countries and Economic and Development Cooperation. At the department, he is represented by J. Sir. With respect to the Embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa, after the repeated opening of the embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, their number was stabilised to the current seven and the Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, still resides in the areas hired from the Embassy of the Netherlands, and it is managed by Lenka Pokorná in the function of the chargé d'affaires. Other Czech diplomatic offices are located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Harare, Zimbabwe, Abuji, Nigeria, Akkra, Ghana, and Pretoria in South Africa. In 2014, an Embassy was opened in Nairobi, Kenya, in the form of a complete office administered by the exceptional and authorised Ambassador. In regard to the personnel changes in the functions of the managing embassies, Michal Král replaced Blanka Fajkusová at the Embassy of Pretoria from October 2015. In addition to the Czech Embassy in Pretoria, the Visegrad House is still in the South African Cape Town, which was established on the principle of collocation, i.e. the representatives of Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland take turns leading it on a weekly basis. The Visegrad House has mostly a consular function but it participates in the organisation of the cultural events and economic seminars. The Czech Republic has a network of honorary consulates in Sub-Saharan Africa with the task to promote economic, business and cultural interests of the Czech Republic, and to help the Czech citizens in need. On 1. 10. 2015, the honorary consulate was reopened in the Seychelles and Sabina Panovská, the widow of the former Honorary Consul, became the manager of the office.⁸⁶

To simplify the export of Czech businessmen to Sub-Saharan Africa, there is an allocated office of CzechTrade in the RSA, the only one in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2015, it was decided to open other offices; this time in Lagos, Nigeria. The importance of the economic agenda is noticeable in the strategy of strengthening the foreign Embassies with the economic diplomats who will focus directly on the business opportunities for the Czech companies and business persons.⁸⁷ The strengthening of the Embassies for the economic employees is enabled due to the cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Industry and Trade which aims to support the export opportunities of the Czech companies abroad. The Czech Embassies to be strengthened in the African states should include Nairobi and Dakar⁸⁸ and then all other ones with the exception of Harare. This is a clear deviation from the policy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karel Schwarzenberg, when some Embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa were closed. During the term of office of Minister Zorálek, the Embassy was re-open in Nairobi, Kenya, and the number of Embassies

within the region was stabilised; the decision was made on strengthening the offices with economic diplomats.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC AREA

In the monitored period, Africa started to be perceived as a continent which included many interesting opportunities for the Czech exporters and the business persons. In 2015, the media included the articles with the titles such as “Golden Mine Africa”⁸⁹ or “Billion business in Africa”.⁹⁰ Unlike 2014, when the newspaper articles and other reports in media were dominated by information on the epidemic of Ebola in West Africa, the media focus changed significantly. An increased attention was paid to the business opportunities in Africa which was proven by the issue of the June enclosures to the newspaper *E15* and newspaper *Euro* that were focused on Africa.⁹¹ However, Africa was not depicted by the media solely as the area of great opportunities for the Czech export and also in relation to the topic of migration to Europe. In relation to the region of Sub-Saharan Africa, the media focused mostly on the area of the Horn of Africa,⁹² since most of the migrants arrived in Europe from Eritrea, and due to the tragic events in the Mediterranean, such as the drowning of almost 400 people due to the shipwreck.⁹³ The migration also included the stereotyped, negative, and often racist perception by the Czech population. This was highlighted by the HateFree platform in their analysis of the media and public perception.⁹⁴ Negative media information was provided on the Czech public policy in relation to the visit of Deputy Kaucký to Namibia. They criticised the fact that he was accompanied at the inauguration of the President of Namibia by the Director of the Property Management Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his party colleague Petr Kyslík.⁹⁵ Similarly, the media and the public criticised the planned journey of the Deputy Mayor of Třebíč to the RSA where he was supposed to accompany the business mission. The pressure from the media and the opposition in the town council resulted in the cancellation of the African journey by Deputy Mayor Pacala.⁹⁶

The media also broadcasted more positive topics, such as the continuous effort of the Czech University of Agriculture and Derbyshire to save Giant eland in Senegal,⁹⁷ or the return of the hippo cow to the National Park Mkomazi in Tanzania from the ZOO in Dvůr Králové nad Labem.⁹⁸ The organisation Save Elephants fights in Central Africa against the poachers and ivory smugglers.⁹⁹ The media also focused on the activities of the Czech-Slovak non-profit organisation International Humanity, which opened a hospital in Malawi in 2015.¹⁰⁰ Various fund-raising activities continued with the motivation to provide humanitarian help in relation to the migration crisis, such as Choceň Music Evening Afrikafest.¹⁰¹ During the monitored year, the collection events continued, for example, the collection of bikes for the transport of children to schools in Gambia,¹⁰² or the bikes for the employees in national parks in Chad and Cameroon who would be able to effectively guard the animals.¹⁰³ Gifts purchased by means of the charity e-shop Real Present run by the non-governmental organisation People in Need were sent to Africa.¹⁰⁴

In 2015, academic events also took place with respect to Sub-Saharan Africa. One of them was the traditional conference *Viva Africa*, organised between 22.–23. 10. 2015 by the Metropolitan University in Prague under the patronage of the Czech Association for African Studies in cooperation with the Faculty of Politics of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Hradec Králové University and the citizens association *Cultural Africa* with the main topic “Knowledge on and within Africa”.¹⁰⁵ The conference “Africa Days” with the subtitle “Africa in the local, regional, and international context” focused on the actual events in Sub-Saharan Africa and was organised by the Centre for African Studies, which operates at the Philosophical Faculty of West Bohemian University in Pilsen.¹⁰⁶ Popularisation activity related to Sub-Saharan Africa was also provided by *Humanitas Africa*,¹⁰⁷ which commenced, in 2015, a series of events related to the events in Africa, for example in May 2015, it organised a series of events titled the Africa Day under the patronage of nine Ambassadors of African countries in the CR.¹⁰⁸ Other events with African topics are organised by, for example, the Internet platform *African Information Portal* under the patronage of the non-profit organisation *FUTURE*, o.p.s.¹⁰⁹ The popularisation of the Czech culture, history, and products in the region of Sub-Saharan Africa is realized mostly by the Czech embassies. One of the events included the exhibition mapping the Czech-Ethiopian relations in the 20th century commenced in Addis Ababa on 1. 10. 2015 by Czech Ambassador Karel Hejč. The exhibition called “Rediscovered 20th century: The relations between Czechoslovakia and Ethiopia” was prepared by the Centre of African Studies of the West Bohemian University in Pilsen in cooperation with the Ethiopian universities in Addis Ababa and in Jimma and with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.¹¹⁰ The work of the Czech glass makers was presented on 13. 11. 2015 at the event “The marriage of Czech Glass with South African Wine”, organised by the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Pretoria in cooperation with the Red Hot Glass Studio, with the Spice Route Wine Estate, and Mrs. Elsie Pells, an oenophile.¹¹¹ The exhibition of photographs by Tom Jůnek financed by the MFA, which maps the activity of the Czech University of Agriculture and the Derbianus Association focused on saving the Giant eland, was opened on 21. 1. 2015 by the manager of the Embassy in Dakar, Lenka Pokorná.¹¹²

CONCLUSION

The agenda of Sub-Saharan Africa, which is more on the edge of the foreign policy attention, does not expect radical changes but a more continuous development. Despite the events in the region, the year 2015 can be evaluated positively. The region was given space in the new Concept of Czech Foreign Policy, which identified opportunities in the area of economics and also security, economic, and political issues. Sub-Saharan Africa is perceived as an integral part of the Czech foreign policy. The positive aspects relate to the approval and gradual fulfilment of the partial ‘African strategy’ which helps the implementation of the Czech foreign policy in this region.

During the monitored year, the increased interest in Sub-Saharan Africa is noticeable in other departments, particularly the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Industry and Trade, and Health, in addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Minister of Agriculture, Marian Jurečka, visited the region of Sub-Saharan Africa twice in 2015.

The security area can be evaluated by the Czech foreign policy as reactive since the identification of the main security interests is defined by the Union agenda. In 2015, the Czech involvement in the Union training mission EUTM-Mali continued in Mali, and it was approved by the Government and then by both Chambers of the Parliament of the Czech Republic that Czech soldiers would be sent within the UN MINUSMA mission. Unlike the reports which accompanied the approval of sending the Czech units within the mission EUTM-Mali in 2013, the topic was not politicised in the Parliament. The repeated involvement of the Czech army in the UN missions is a goal which is generally accepted across the political spectrum.

The Czech Republic was actively involved on the level of the whole Union in the solution of the actual migration crisis at the summit in La Valletta and by the participation in the establishment of the EU Trust Fund for Africa. Also, in the debate on the future relations between the EU and ACP countries, the Czech side was active by handing over two contributions which demonstrated the efforts actively participate in the creation of the whole union policy concerning the monitored region.

Also, the economic area witnessed with the development of the relations of the CR and Sub-Sahara Africa, and the Czech policy can be assessed as proactive in this region. The cooperation between the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Industry and Trade enabled the processing of the Map for Professional Opportunities which simplified the orientation in the region and in the perspective areas to the Czech exporters. The necessity of the export diversification is clear in relation to the continuous sanctions imposed on Russia. In this context, Africa is perceived as a region with great dynamics which was reflected by the long-term growth of export to the region. Despite the fact that the export to Sub-Saharan Africa reaches approximately 0.5% of the total Czech export, in absolute numbers, it reaches significant 20 billion CZK. In the case of the Broumov company VEBA, it is apparent that Africa is important for some Czech companies, and the failure of the African market can have a direct impact on the employment in the regions in the Czech Republic. The continual growth of the Czech export in the region can be perceived as a result of the efforts to raise the profile of Sub-Saharan Africa by means of various tools including the seminars and the active support of the Czech export. An increase of the business exchange can be facilitated by the new proposed sending of the economic diplomats which could strengthen the Embassies in the region, and the opening of another branch of the agency Czech-Trade in Sub-Saharan Africa, this time in Lagos, Nigeria. There is an obvious effort to maintain the independent Department of States in Sub-Saharan Africa on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to stabilise the number of the Czech representative offices in Sub-Saharan Africa and strengthen them further on. In the region of Sub-Saharan Africa, the business success is significantly affected by the presence of the Embassy in

the location; it is a strategy for strengthening the Czech export. Despite Sub-Saharan Africa still being a rather marginal agenda, all the aforesaid reasons indicate that it keeps receiving a deserved space within the Czech foreign policy.

Endnotes

- ¹ Jaroslava Šírová, the Deputy Director of the Department of States in Sub-Saharan Africa of the MFA of the CR, has my gratitude for the interview with her and her comments on this chapter, and I also thank Michal Jeřábek, the Manager of East and South Africa at the MFA, who I interviewed on 26. 5. 2016. I also thank Ondřej Horký Hlucháň. Possible factual errors and the interpretations of the Czech Foreign Policy are my sole responsibility.
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