

Government Claims Advances in Fight Against Poverty

Maputo, 14 April 2009

? Over the past four years, the Mozambican gross domestic product has grown at an average rate of 7.7 per cent a year, and GDP per capita has risen from 301 US dollars in 2004 to 473 dollars in 2008, according to the Minister of Planning and Development, Aiuba Cuereneia.

Republic, in response to a request from deputies of the ruling Frelimo Party for information on the government's strategy for the fight against poverty.

Other macro-economic indicators were also encouraging. Cuereneia said that the country's international reserves had risen from 961 million dollars in 2004, to 1.606 billion dollars in 2008, enough to cover five months imports of goods and service, considerably more than the three months of imports recommended by the Macro-economic Convergence Programme of SADC (Southern African Development Community).

Because the government had created conditions attractive to investors, he said, between 2005 and 2008, 688 investment projects had been approved which could create more than 81,000 jobs.

Cuereneia stressed the Local Initiative Investment Budget (OIIL), a government initiative under which, as from 2006, seven million meticaïs (about 280,000 US dollars) was transferred annually to each of the 128 districts to fund projects to increase food production and create jobs. With the addition of a component to fund local infrastructure, the sum allocated to each district has now risen to around 10 million meticaïs a year.

The Minister said that to date the total amount allocated to the districts from the OIIL stands at five billion meticaïs. This money has funded 26,000 projects, mostly in agriculture and small scale industry. It has created 108,000 new jobs (temporary and permanent) in the Mozambican countryside.

In agriculture, the areas under cultivation had grown, better production techniques were introduced, and agricultural yields had risen. The number of people living in "pockets of hunger", Cuereneia added, had fallen from about a million in 2004 to 120,000 this year.

Grain production, he continued, had risen from 1.9 million tonnes in 2004 to over 2.3 million tonnes in the 2008 harvest. This year, the government hopes for a further 17 per cent increase in grain production, thanks to its Food Production Action Plan.

There had also been a 14 per cent increase in the national cattle herd, rising from 1.4 million head of cattle in 2004 to about 1.6 million head in 2008. This, Cuereneia said, "has not only reduced beef imports, but has increased the area under cultivation, because of the greater availability of oxen for animal traction".

As for water supply, Cuereneia said that since 2004, 7,767 water sources (wells and boreholes) have been built or rehabilitated in the countryside. This raised the number of people with access to clean drinking water from 43 to 52 per cent of the rural population. Over the same period, the urban water supply coverage increased from 36 to 50 per cent of the people living in the towns.

Since the current government took office in 2005, a further 300,000 domestic consumers have been connected to the national electricity grid. Cuereneia pointed out that this was much higher than the target of 80,000 that the government had initially set.

Between 2005 and 2008, 32 district capitals had been electrified. Currently 83 district capitals are on the national grid, and a further 10 will be added this year.(AIM)