



ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A "SUPER-MINISTER"

After failing to deliver on his promises, Celso Correia begins to contradict himself

- In Filipe Nyusi's first term (2015 - 2019), the former Minister of Land, Environment and Rural Development (MITADER) did not need much time to reveal himself as the Government's "super-minister." Celso Correia was the Minister who appeared to help Filipe Nyusi's Executive whenever it was faced with a problem of greater political and social repercussion. No matter the problem, the "super-minister" had the power and mandate to intervene in any sector. In the Finance Sector, he intervened with the initiative "One District, One Bank", and in the Health with "One District, One District Hospital". The list of interventions could go on.



Celso Correia promising the completion of the Matlemele landfill by the first quarter of 2019.

Recently, the “star” of Filipe Nyusi’s Government began to fade. Celso Correia stopped wearing the shirt of “maestro” of Filipe Nyusi’s Government, and started focusing on his sector: the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. More than the aura of “super-minister”, many unfulfilled promises were left behind. In his golden moments, Celso Correia promised more and did less. Moreover, it was in this logic of endless promises that in 2015 he appeared promising that by the end of 2017, the Hulene Dump in Maputo City would be closed, and a landfill would be operating in Matlemele, in Matola City.

The Matlemele landfill was budgeted at USD 60 million, of which USD 48.6 million would be financed by South Korea’s Exim-Bank, and the remaining USD 12.2 million by the Government of Mozambique. The project included solid waste treatment and recycling and energy production from biogas. The year 2017 ended with the Hulene Dump receiving all kinds of garbage and posing a public health hazard. Moreover, in Matlemele, the 100-hectare space identified for the construction of the landfill was being invaded not by solid waste, but by families who saw that huge unexplored wasteland as a place to set up residences. In other words, the year 2017 ended and Celso Correia’s promises made in 2015 remained promises.

In addition, in February 2018 came the tragedy of Hulene. A mountain of garbage collapsed on several residences built around the dump and caused the death of 17 people. There were more than five injured and almost 270 families saw their homes destroyed, totally and partially. The dump collapsed following the heavy rains that fell on that early morning of February 19, 2018. Nevertheless, the real cause of the tragedy was human: the authorities’ neglect to close a dump that has posed a danger to public health for decades.

With dozens of bereaved families and more than two hundred homeless, there was a



Behind him are the mayors of Maputo (David Simango) and Matola (Calisto Cossa)

one-off problem to solve. Moreover, the “super-minister” appeared to help: he announced that the Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development would allocate funds to the Maputo City Council to subsidize the rents for families who had lost their homes. Each family would receive 10,000 meticaís, while construction of permanent houses in Marracuene District was underway.

The houses were supposed to be ready in 2019, but the deadlines have always missed. Just as the monthly subsidy transfer of 10 thousand meticaís for families to pay the rent of the houses has failed.

However, there are other things that have failed. After the tragedy, Celso Correia “updated” the promise he had made in 2015, saying that by the first quarter of 2019 the Matlemele landfill would be receiving the first waste deposits. Two years have passed and in Matlemele

there is nothing similar to landfill. Regarding the closure of the Hulene Dump, this time the “super-minister” was cautious, stating that the process would take at least five years and USD 110 million would be needed. The budget included the resettlement of about 550 families living near the dump. Since 2015 to this part six years of eternal promises have passed. Hulene continues to receive garbage produced in the capital of the country and in Matlemele there is no landfill.

Celso Correia is aware that he has not kept the promises he made as Minister of Land, Environment and Rural Development and he does not like the press to confront him with this inglorious past. This week, for example, the current Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development reacted badly when STV confronted him about the promises he made in 2015. He advised the reporter to revisit the

TV archive, conveying the idea that in 2015 he did not promise the closure of the Hulene Dump and the completion of Matlemele landfill for 2017. "Are you sure of the promise? Go and see the promise properly and then ask the question solidly so as not to be mis-messaging," were the Minister's words.

Actually, it is the Minister's reaction that induces wrong messages. People with little information about the subject may think that the Minister never made the promises mentioned by the journalist, and that the journalist was not being professional. But the fact is that in the archives of STV there is the Minister making promises: "I hope that we meet, and I am sure that we will, at the end of 2017, not only in the ceremony of closure of open dumps in the cities of Matola and Maputo, but also in the inauguration of this infrastructure (Matlemele landfill) so important for Mozambique"¹. At the same ceremony that took

place in Matlemele in 2015, Celso Correia promised the following: "It is urgent to close that dump (Hulene) because it already generates health problems, it is an open air dump and we want to close it in the next two years because it no longer has sustainable environmental conditions".

Six years later, the ruler says he only promised to close the Hulene dump, not the construction of the Matlemele landfill. However, STV archive footage shows Filipe Nyusi's former "super-minister" at the Matlemele site, surrounded by the mayors of Maputo (David Simango) and Matola (Calisto Cossa), promising to complete the first phase of the landfill by the first quarter of 2019. Faced with the reporter's insistence, Celso Correia admitted that he made the promise and, to justify his failure, he blamed the families who claim ownership of some land that lies within the perimeter of the future Matlemele landfill.

Moreover, in an attempt to evade his responsibilities, Celso Correia said in the interview that he was not in a position to give detailed explanations because he was no longer the Minister responsible for the Environment. But the fact is that the construction project of the Matlemele landfill has always been under the responsibility of the National Fund for Sustainable Development (FNDS), an institution under the tutelage of Celso Correia, both when he was Minister of Land, Environment and Rural Development, and now as Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. When he left the Ministry of Land and Environment in 2020, Celso Correia took with him the FNDS, one of the main Governmental channels for receiving foreign aid after the extinction of Direct State Budget Support due to the "hidden debts" scandal.

Tragedy at Hulene dump killed 17 people and left more than 270 families homeless

¹ <https://www.opais.co.mz/promessas-cumpridas-poderiam-ter-evitado-a-tragedia-de-hulene/>



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