



Ernesto Max Tonela, Minister of Economy and Finance

Ernesto Max Tonela: Filipe Nyusi's new "superminister"

- Strategically, Nyusi has placed his new ally and "super-minister" in the Economy and Finance portfolio with the covert mission of consolidating his finances by facilitating state business for companies linked directly and/or indirectly to the President of the Republic. The strategy is to ensure, at all costs, financial muscle for the post-power period, which should begin in 2025. But the hypothesis of using public finances to finance a project for continuity in power through a figure close to Filipe Nyusi cannot be ruled out.

- The rise of Ernesto Max Tonela as Filipe Nyusi's "superminister" means the fading of the "star" of the government: Celso Correia. 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 "superminister". But in recent times, the "star" of Filipe Nyusi's government began to fade. Celso Correia stopped wearing the "conductor" shirt of Filipe Nyusi's government. Sustenta, presented as the biggest project that would revolutionize the agricultural sector in Mozambique, still does not give the announced results. And nobody talks about Sustenta. Not even the Minister himself.



The new configuration of the Nyusi Government

An economist and technocrat by background, Ernesto Max Tonela was making a career in companies of the energy sector, namely in Electricidade de Moçambique (EDM) and later in Hidroelétrica de Cahora Bassa (HCB). In the HCB, Max Tonela was managing the finances when, in January 2015, he was called to join the first government of Filipe Nyusi. He did his internship in the Ministry of Industry and Trade. From the beginning, he showed difficulties in adapting to his new duties and in a sector that was unfamiliar to him.

Filipe Nyusi understood Max Tonela's difficulties, but did not discard him. In December 2017, he took him out of Industry and Commerce and sent him, so to speak, back

home, in the Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy. Not as a technician, but a ruler. As a Ministry. As a such, he followed up on the expansion of the national power grid, including attracting renewable energy projects (photovoltaic plants), increased oversight of artisanal mining, and initiated the licensing of its operators.

The new minister led the work that culminated with Mozambique's entrance into the Kimberley Process, an international mechanism for controlling the diamond business to prevent it from being used to finance wars and/or armed conflicts. Here it should be noted that CDD's engagement was fundamental to Mozambique's accession to the Kimberley Process, allowing the country to exploit and

sell the diamonds that occur in the provinces of Gaza, Manica, Tete and Niassa.

In the hydrocarbons sub-sector, Max Tonela drove negotiations with the oil companies exploring natural gas in the Rovuma Basin, and it was under his leadership (2019) that the Final Investment Decision was made for the Area 1 Golfinho/Atum Project, currently cleared by France's Total. Budgeted at over USD 23 billion, this is the largest foreign direct investment in Africa, which has since been halted due to the attacks by violent extremists in Cabo Delgado.

Last week, when the President of the Republic exonerated six (6) ministers at once, it was clear that one of the objectives was to place Ernesto Max Tonela in the strategic

portfolio of Economy and Finance. In recent years, Max Tonela has been gaining Filipe Nyusi's trust until he became one of the closest and most trusted ministers of the President of the Republic. No wonder, therefore, his placement as head of the state business sector, the new strong man of public money.

As Minister of Economy and Finance, Max Tonela's main mission is to consolidate the finances of the presidential family by facilitating state business for companies linked directly and/or indirectly to the President of the Republic. The strategy is to ensure, at all costs, financial muscle for the post-power period, which is expected to begin in 2025. But one cannot rule out the possibility of using public finances to finance a project for continuity in power through a figure close to Filipe Nyusi.

The Ministry of Economy and Finance is responsible for the payments of all companies that do business with the state. As a general rule, companies connected to the ruling elite and that provide services and/or goods to the state have priority in the order of payment of invoices. Despite billing billions of meticaís,

these companies survive by evading taxes, and nothing happens to them.

For example, CDD knows that a company created in 2014 with links to the family of the President of the Republic provides meals, detergents, and other goods to the Ministries of Interior and National Defense. That is, all the meals and other goods consumed in the police stations and the barracks of the Armed Forces are supplied by this company.

In the fiscal years 2019 and 2020, this company had the highest turnover. A tax audit by the Tax Authority conducted in late 2021 found that the company has an accumulated debt with the tax authorities amounting to 2,762,422,312.00 Meticaís. This is about three (3) billion of debt referring to the fiscal years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. This situation was discovered during Adriano Maleiane's consulate as Minister of Economy and Finance. He is the new Prime Minister and today he will inaugurate as "head" of the Government in the ordinary session of the National Assembly.

Meanwhile, the ascension of Ernesto Max Tonela as Filipe Nyusi's "super minister" means the fading of the "star" of the Government:

Celso Correia. 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 "superminister."

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 Finance he intervened with the initiative "One District, One Bank", and in Health with "One District, One District Hospital". The list of interventions could go on.

But 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. Sustenta, presented as the biggest project that would revolutionize the agricultural sector in Mozambique, still does not give the announced results.



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