

GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE

Nyusi bets on “close” ministers and increases control over strategic sectors of the economy

●Filipe Nyusi carried out the most profound government reshuffle. He has re-positioned some ministers, such as Adriano Maleiane, Ernesto Max Tonela and Carlos Mesquita. He has dismissed others, notably Carlos Agostinho do Rosário (member of the Political Commission) and João Osvaldo Machatine, the ‘big father’ of the illegal tolls on the Maputo Ring Road. It would be good if he also started paying out of his own pocket, as thousands of mistreated citizens of Mozambique do.



● The reshuffle comes three (3) years before the end of his mandate, but also five (5) months before the Congress that will elect the Frelimo candidate for the 2024 presidential elections. What does Filipe Nyusi want to convey with these changes in the government? Is it the old refrain of a new dynamic? Is he repositioning the stones with the war for succession in mind? Was it a strategy to “sacrifice” dissatisfied or misaligned leaders? Or to promote certain leaders? What will change? Or rather, will there be change in the desert of ideas that is Nyusi’s Government? Questions that only time will answer.

Over the last two days (Wednesday and Thursday), Filipe Nyusi carried out the most profound reshuffle of the government since he became President in January 2015. The “chair dance” took place in the strategic sectors of economic activity, where the President of the Republic dismissed the holders of Economy and Finance (Adriano Maleiane); Natural Resources and Energy (Ernesto Max Tonela); Public Works, Housing and Water Resources (João Osvaldo Machatine); Industry and Trade (Carlos Mesquita); and Sea, Inland Waterways and Fisheries (Augusta Maíta).

Carlos Siliya was also removed from the Ministry of Combatants, a central government body whose function is to register and pay pensions to combatants (and their descendants) who fought for Independence and those who were involved in the civil war. On Thursday, while waiting for the announcement of new ministers, Nyusi brought down the Prime Minister (Carlos Agostinho do Rosário) and the Deputy Minister of Health (Lídia de Fátima Cardoso).

As is customary, the President of the Republic of Mozambique does not explain to citizens the reasons which led him to dismiss members of the government. Suffice it to say that he did so in the use of the powers conferred on him by paragraph b) of Article 159.1 of the Constitution of the Republic. The people - his Boss - are “satisfied” and await the announcement of the appointments.

And the communiqué announcing the new

● In any case, Filipe Nyusi now has control over Finance, through Ernesto Max Tonela, one of the ministers who is part of the hard core of the President of the Republic; he maintains control in Natural Resources and Energy - where he promoted a former subordinate of Max Tonela; he has total control over Public Works, through his “old friend” Carlos Mesquita. Being new to the Government, Silvino Moreno (Industry and Commerce) and Lídia de Fátima Cardoso (Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries) are bound by the principle of obedience to the boss.

ministers was released late this Thursday afternoon. With several new features, first of all the appointment of Adriano Maleiane as Prime Minister. His resignation from the Economic and Finance portfolio where he served as minister for the last seven (7) years seemed to signal a well-deserved retirement. At 71 years of age, Maleiane is the oldest member of Government. He deserves to go into retirement.

But his appointment as Prime Minister could also mean “rest”. In Filipe Nyusi’s governance, the Prime Minister has been a symbolic figure, without political weight over the ministers. Despite having been one of the most experienced leaders, Carlos Agostinho do Rosário was an opaque Prime Minister, always overshadowed by brilliant ministers (Armando Tiago, of Health) and others close to the President of the Republic (Celso Correia, of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the now “discarded” João Machatine, who served in Public Works).

Under the Constitution of the Republic, the Prime Minister is responsible for, among others, advising the President of the Republic on the creation of ministries and commissions of ministerial nature, and on the appointment of members of the Government and other government leaders; preparing and proposing the work plan to the President of the Republic; ensuring the execution of decisions of State organs by the members of the Government; presiding over meetings of the Council of Ministers to deal with the implementation

● In the current system of governance, the Prime Minister is a symbolic figure, without political weight over the ministers, much less influence over the President of the Republic. He only appears when the government goes to the Assembly of the Republic. This is why Nyusi may have offered a pre-retirement internship to Adriano Maleiane, the oldest member of the Government. He is 71 years old enough to rest and unroll his memories of leadership in a book.

of defined policies and other decisions; coordinating and controlling the activities of ministries and other government institutions.

Carlos Agostinho do Rosário did not fully exercise these powers. There are several reasons for this. For example, the superpowers attributed to the figure of the President of the Republic usually leave the holder of the office without much sensitivity to listen to advice from his subordinates, especially when it comes to appointing members of the Government. And more: it is unthinkable that Carlos Agostinho do Rosário coordinated and controlled the activities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, whose holder is Celso Correia, the “super minister” and trusted man of Filipe Nyusi.

The only powers that Carlos Agostinho do Rosário exercised in full are those that fall within the scope of the relationship between Government and Parliament. He led the Executive in the presentation of the Government’s Five-Year Programme; of the proposed Economic and Social Plan and the State Budget; and in the Government’s briefings and questions to the Government. From time to time he would appear to invest the heads of public institutes and other State institutions. And he was a regular visitor to the victims of natural disasters. The question that remains is whether Maleiane will be one more symbolic figure in Filipe Nyusi’s Government.

Without much news was the appointment of Ernesto Max Tonela for Finance, as CDD had advanced on its digital platforms on Wednes-

day afternoon. An economist by training, Ernesto Max Tonela is one of the few ministers who has “rotated” through three ministries in Filipe Nyusi’s two governments. In 2015 he left Hidroeléctrica da Cabora Bassa (HCB), where he managed finance, to serve as Minister of Industry and Trade. This is where he did his apprenticeship as a ruler, before being appointed to lead the strategic Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy in December 2017.

He continued the expansion of the national electricity grid, pushed forward the 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 Golfinho/Atum Project, of Area 1, currently released by the French Total. Budgeted at over USD 23 billion, this is the largest foreign direct investment in Africa, which has since been interrupted due to the attacks by violent extremists in Cabo Delgado.

Ernesto Max Tonela led the work that culminated in Mozambique’s admission to 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 is necessary to highlight the engagement of CDD, which was fundamental for the adherence of Mozambique to the Kimberley Process, allowing the country to exploit and sell the diamonds that occur in the provinces of Gaza, Manica, Tete and Niassa.

It remains to be seen whether Ernesto Max Tonela will bring new dynamism to the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, whose performance over the last seven years has not gone much beyond the traditional functions of collecting revenue to pay for public expenditure, including civil servants’ salaries and state debt. In fact, not a single economic policy is known to have emerged from that ministry during the “consulate” of Adriano Maleiane.

Another minister close to the President of the Republic and who is in the third ministry is Carlos Mesquita. In 2015 he “disengaged” from business to take up the position of Minister of Transport and Communications. It was not long before his companies (Cornelder) were associated with state business, raising the old problem of conflict of interest. He survived the “turmoil”, with demands for resignation mixed in. He ended his mandate (five years) without managing to solve the problems of lack of urban transport, especially in the metropolitan area of Maputo, of corruption in the institute responsible for land transport and without a consistent solution for cabotage.

In January 2020 he was placed in the Ministry of Industry and Trade, but his performance had not yet flourished. He will now head an-



other strategic ministry with big challenges: road construction and rehabilitation; housing for young people, drinking water and watershed management to avoid droughts and cyclical floods. His predecessor (João Osvaldo Machatine) was the “champion” of direct awards for works to rehabilitate school toilets and create hygienic conditions as part of the COVID-19 prevention measures. Dozens of millions of dollars were handed out to handpicked companies to carry out work of terrible quality and some of it unfinished.

João Osvaldo Machatine leaves with the reputation of being the minister responsible for installing tolls on the Maputo Ring Road, a million-dollar deal that will enrich the elites in power. All the processes that culminated with the installation of tolls on the Maputo Ring Road (a road built with public funds) were not transparent, from the extinction of the public company Maputo Sul, which was responsible for the Maputo-KaTembe Ring Road and Bridge, to the creation of the private company REVIMO; the concession of the toll business on the Maputo Ring Road and other roads to REVIMO; the fixing of the fees to be paid.

To safeguard the right of citizens to development and social justice, the CDD launched a campaign against the tolls on the Maputo Ring Road, and even went to the Administrative Court to bring a popular action and later an injunction to stop the tolls from being charged. But the former Minister João Machatine always assumed an arrogant posture, never opened up to dialogue and managed to use the Administrative Court to enable the collection of toll charges. The big question is to know how Carlos Mesquita will position himself on the issue of tolls on the Maputo Ring Road. The CDD will not give up the fight.

The reshuffle has brought new faces into Government, with Carlos Zacarias, the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, standing out. Zacarias was serving his second term as CEO of the National Petroleum Institute (INP), the regulator of the hydrocarbon sector. As minister, he will now deal with the energy transition debate; Vale’s announced exit from the Tete coal mines; negotiations for the resumption of natural gas projects under complex security and human rights conditions; respect for the human rights of communities in the areas of natural resource extraction and the contribution of the extractive industry to socio-economic development.

Lídia de Fátima Cardoso left Health (she was Vice Minister under Armindo Tiago) to lead the Ministry of Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries, replacing Augusta Maíta. After fulfilling the role of defeated Frelimo candidate in the race for the presidency of the Beira municipality in 2018, Augusta Maíta was appointed General Director of the former Na-

tional Institute for Disaster Management. She joined Filipe Nyusi's (second) government in 2020 to head the portfolio of Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries. He showed dynamism, but the work of that ministry seems to go little beyond decreeing fishery sales, licensing foreign boats to fish for shrimp, tuna and other species, and carrying out enforcement.

Silvino Moreno will "be inaugurating" in the Government as head of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. He is the new interlocutor of the private sector in discussions on improving the business environment. He will certainly take up the discourse of the industrialization of Mozambique, a failed promise of Filipe Nyusi. Who will also mark his first ap-


pointment in Government is Amílcar Tivane, appointed Deputy Minister of Economy and Finance. Tivane is a Finance official and was formerly National Budget Director. Max Tonela has two important assistants in Finance, which means two vice-ministers. The successor of Carlos Siliya at the Ministry of Combatants has yet to be appointed.



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