



## AFRICAN STOPOVERS

For a long time Africa has been bypassed more than properly served by major shipping routes. In the last ten years however, the continent has been carrying out a process of modernizing its port infrastructures to win its share of world trade. On both west coast and east coast, ports expand and become more professional. They open to both the rest of the world and the heart of the continent. Each region, however, faces specific development constraints.

### THE SEA, DRIVER OF WEALTH

The sea can be a source of great prosperity for Africa. The African Union (AU) has made the point and intends to bring about the creation of maritime wealth by a concerted action of the African States. In 2012, it adopted an *Integrated African Strategy for the Seas and Oceans for 2050*, in a comprehensive approach to African maritime policy. This strategy focuses on the blue economy. It also sets goals on land such as improving the land-sea connection to develop the volume of goods to be processed through ports. Although 90% of exports and imports are carried out by sea, the major African ports are not sufficiently integrated into the lines of the large ship-owners. The AU identified the structural and cyclical causes (size of ports, inadequacy of containerization, maritime insecurity, inadequacies of transport routes with the heart of the continent ...) and intends to provide answers with the modernization of ports, improved infrastructure management and openness to international investment. This policy seems to bear fruit: African ports are slowly but steadily attracting foreign companies interested in the dynamism and economic growth of the continent.

### MODERNISATION OF WEST AFRICAN PORTS

West Africa has recently developed deep-water ports, which are essential to reduce vessel wait times and facilitate trans-shipment. This modernization is also appreciated with regard to containerization: some ports now meet international standards and enter the world maritime trade, boosted by the competition between the countries of the Gulf of Guinea. The port of Kribi, in Cameroon, which was sold to the consortium formed by Bolloré Africa Logistics, CMA/CGM and the Chinese company CHEC (*China Harbor Engineering Company*) and the port of Lomé in Togo, for vessels of more than 12 000 TEU, have entered the competition.

The modernisation of ports has led to an increase in tonnage. The improvement of the link between coastal countries and the interior of the continent plays an equally important role, notably for Dakar, Abidjan, Lomé or Cotonou. The Bolloré Group intends to accelerate this process thanks to BlueLine, a mega railway loop project linking Abidjan and Cotonou. The West African economies, however, remain very marked by the exchange between exports of raw materials and imports of manufactured products from Europe and Asia.

### THE REGIONAL INTEGRATION OF THE EAST AFRICAN FACADE

East Africa has fewer ports of importance than the Atlantic coast and is, to date, less advanced in their modernisation. There are, however, a few exceptions, mainly in South Africa, such as Durban, the largest container port in Africa with 2.7 million TEU in 2015. There are in fact several integrated complexes that coexist and irrigate neighbouring landlocked countries: The first one lays in the Horn of Africa, on the road to the Suez Canal, whose main ports are Djibouti and Port Sudan. The second is organised by Kenya and Tanzania, gateways to the Great Lakes region. The latter includes Southern Africa and is dominated by South African ports, conveniently located near the Cape of Good Hope.

East African countries are geographically and economically inclined towards Asia and the Middle East. They increasingly concede their port and transport infrastructure to foreign players such as Dubai Port World (Berbera port in Somaliland) and EximBank of China (railway line linking Djibouti to Addis Ababa). While the economic indicators seem to be in favour of these investors for the moment, the political and social stability of these regions need to be preserved. Recent tensions in Ethiopia and Mozambique, the presence of Islamist militias in the region such as the Al-Shabbaab group and the authoritarianism of some governments could dampen this momentum.

The development of modern African ports has had a good start, thanks to a double dynamics of opening up hinterland and upgrading to international standards. It remains fragile due to its excessive reliance on domestic political stability and foreign investments.



Port of Zanzibar, Tanzania. © David Ashby