



Comoros

Comoros: Introduction

Pierre Christian Tsopmo

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Chart 1: Political map of COMOROS

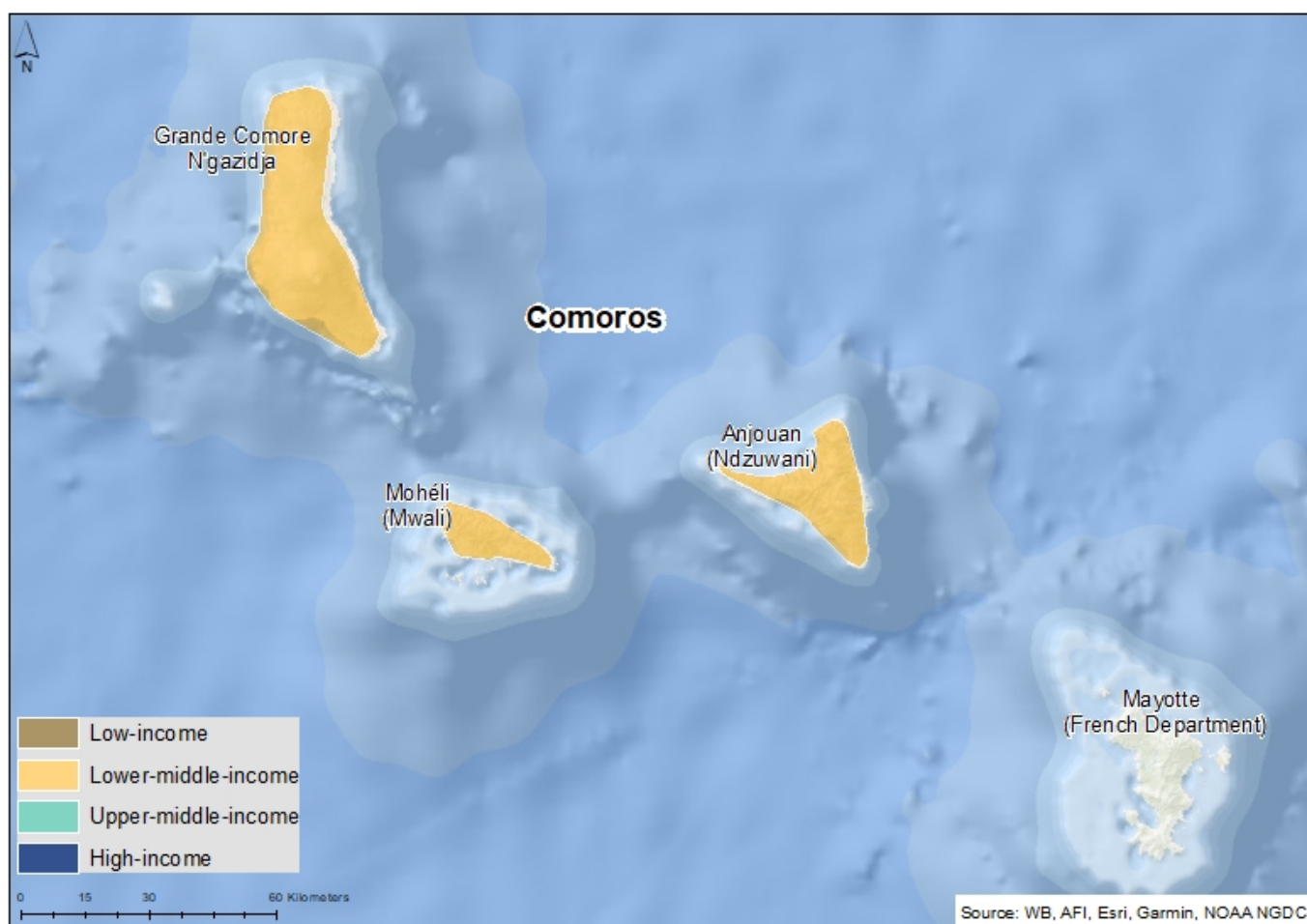


Chart 1 is a political map of Comoros.

Comoros is located at the entrance to the Mozambique Channel, between Madagascar and the east coast of Africa. The country has a total surface area of 2 236 km², made up of four islands: Ngazidja (Grande Comore), Ndzuwani (Anjouan), Mwali (Mohéli) and Maoré (Mayotte, under French administration). The capital city Moroni is located on the biggest island of Grande Comore (N'gazidja). The total population of Comoros in 2023 is estimated at 855 480. The country gained independence in 1975 after citizens voted for self-determination in a French-organised referendum in 1974.

The climate is tropical and characterised by two main seasons: Kashkasi (the hot, humid season marked by heavy rains and cyclones) and Kussi (the dry, cool season with north to north-westerly monsoon winds). The soil is of volcanic origin, with heavy rainfall especially during the Kashkasi season, which brings a wide variety of produce, such as tropical fruits, spices, aromatic crops, vegetables and cereals. The country's location in the warm Indian Ocean exposes it to intense tropical storms and cyclones. Seven tropical cyclones in the past four decades have caused devastation, with Cyclone Kenneth affecting 345 000 people and wiping out 80% of crop production in 2019. Recovering from the 2019 devastation caused by Cyclone Kenneth was complicated with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 that affected the country's tourism, service sector and export market of cash crops.

Comoros is a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States

(CEN-SAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and, on 27 February 2024, Comoros joined the World Trade Organization (WTO). Comoros is one of 23 lower-middle-income countries in Africa, according to the World Bank's income classification. Its economy is heavily reliant on subsistence farming and fishing while manufacturing is limited to the processing of agricultural products. Aid contributions from the EU heavily contribute to budgetary support.

While Comoros boasts great ecotourism potential due to its rich biodiversity and tropical climate, the country is paralysed by its turbulent political history. More than 15 successful, attempted and plotted coups d'état have taken place in the period after independence, severely hampering development. In 1990, democracy was established by President Djohar. This political system legitimised trade union associations. The numerous constitutional changes, both voluntary and involuntary, that Comoros has undergone have greatly contributed to its political fragility. However, since the last constitutional change in 2001, the country has constantly sought to turn into a true democracy. This desire is reflected in the country's numerous presidential and legislative elections. For instance, the Presidential elections of 2024 with the re-election of President Azali Assoumani for a third time after his previous election triumphs in 2016 and 2019 and his decade-long political absence.

The geographical isolation of the island state, its limited land resources, heavy agricultural subsistence reliance, political turmoil and the additional burden of climate change and natural hazards are all threatening the sustainable development of Comoros. Comoros' development prospects are examined in more detail in the subsequent charts and sections.

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About the authors

Dr Pierre Christian Tsopmo is a Research Consultant at AFI. He holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Yaounde II-Soa. He is an Development Economist with keen interest in political economy analysis, African governance and politics of development, natural resource management, social cohesion, climate vulnerability, climate mitigation, climate governance, sectorial forecasting analysis, FDI, growth, institutions compliance, state fragility, illicit flows and tax literacy, among others.

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