



Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Chair: Senator Michael Forshaw*

Australia's relations with Africa

The Federal Parliament's Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence & Trade will conduct an inquiry into Australia's relations with Africa.

Announcing the new inquiry, Committee Chairman Senator Michael Forshaw said the Committee would explore a range of issues including bilateral relations, economic opportunities, security, human rights and development assistance co-operation and capacity building.

"Africa faces many challenges in such areas as governance, security, health, migration, food production and the impact of climate change. There are also a number of serious and prolonged conflicts which have both regional and global impacts," Senator Forshaw said.

"Whilst Australia has long-standing relations with Commonwealth countries in Africa we have also participated in peacekeeping missions and contributed to development aid and co-operation in other parts of the continent.

"The Federal Government is actively pursuing a policy of increased engagement with Africa. Australian companies also recognise the future trade and investment opportunities," he said.

Along with exploring ways to improve bilateral and economic relations, the Committee will examine educational, scientific and cultural exchanges.

"The last major Committee inquiry into Australia's relationship with Southern Africa was back in 1996. It is timely that the Committee now undertake this broad ranging inquiry given the significance that Africa and issues affecting the continent have in international affairs," Senator Forshaw said.

The Committee will receive written submissions until 11 December 2009 and will commence public hearings in early 2010. Contributions are welcome and encouraged from organisations and individuals.

The Terms of Reference are:

The Committee shall inquire into and report on Australia's relationship with Africa, with special emphasis on:

- *bilateral relations at the parliamentary and government levels;*
- *economic issues, including trade and investment;*
- *cultural, scientific and educational relations and exchanges;*
- *development assistance co-operation and capacity building;*
- *defence cooperation, regional security and strategic issues; and*
- *migration and human rights issues.*

The Committee will consider both the current situation and opportunities for the future.

For media inquiries contact the Committee Chairman, Senator Forshaw on (02) 9545 3112 or 0418 119 526.

For all other inquiries contact the Inquiry Secretary, John Carter, on 02 6277 4306 or visit the committee website at <http://www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/jfad/malaysia/index.htm>