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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# Inquiry into Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

June 2011  
Canberra

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## Foreword

Africa is a diverse continent of increasing importance to the world. In geopolitical terms, African countries have increasing influence on international organisations; in resources terms, Africa has vast reserves; in trading terms, the African population represents a huge potential market; and in agricultural terms, Africa's underutilised arable lands represent great opportunities to feed the world. Africa also continues to face significant challenges, particularly in health, governance and economic development.

This is the first comprehensive report of Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade or by any other Parliamentary committee. It is therefore timely as Australia increasingly looks towards Africa for trade and investment opportunities. Australians, however, have for a long time been interested in Africa – the Australian public donates far more to aid organisations than Australia's official development assistance. Academics too have been interested in Africa, although recently expertise has been fragmented across the universities in Australia.

The 53 countries of Africa have different histories, political traditions and allegiances and present significant challenges to African multinational organisations such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, and the Southern African Development Community. These organisations are achieving success in meeting these challenges and in promoting stability, economic progress, and democracy.

## Government to Government Links

In Chapter 2, the report considers government links with Africa, including Australia's diplomatic representation, Parliamentary links and government links at ministerial and officials level.

Australia's diplomatic representation on the African continent is significantly less than our major trading partners, United States, China, Japan, UK and the EU. Further, Canada, the Republic of Korea and Malaysia all have substantially more diplomatic posts, whilst Thailand and Vietnam have comparable representation.

Whilst the importance of Africa and African issues internationally have increased over the past 25 years, Australia's diplomatic presence has decreased from 12 posts to 8 in the same period. The Committee notes that our diplomatic presence is now concentrated in southern and eastern Africa and the former British colonies. There is a considerable gap elsewhere, particularly in Francophone Africa.

The Committee welcomes the recent opening of the Australian embassy in Addis Ababa. This city is the location of the headquarters of the African Union and diplomatic representation from many African countries. Opening new diplomatic posts in Africa demonstrates a commitment to the continent and provides a valuable assistance investing in and trading with those countries.

Currently each of our High Commissions/Embassies, except for the recently opened embassy in Addis Ababa, provide Australian representation to between 4 and 11 countries. This is substantially more than occurs in other regions of the world.

This report therefore recommends a comprehensive review of Australia's diplomatic representation in Africa with a view to opening an additional post in Francophone Africa; increasing the number of French speaking Australia-based diplomatic staff in the existing West African High Commissions; and, as a short term measure, increasing the number of Australian honorary consuls in Africa.

The Committee has also reviewed the number of delegations coming from African countries to Australia and outgoing Australian Parliamentary delegations travelling to African countries. As a consequence, the Committee has recommended there should be an increase of Australian Parliamentary delegations to specific African countries, particularly to those with increasing significance to Australia.

### **Australia's Aid Program**

In Chapter 3, the report considers Australia's aid program, including Australia's official development assistance (ODA), assistance provided by NGOs, and individual and private sector initiatives. The chapter also describes several aid projects which the Committee visited when it travelled to Africa.

Australia's ODA to Africa is modest when compared to major donor nations and Australia's Pacific ODA program. Australia has chosen to concentrate its aid program on agriculture and food security; water and sanitation; and maternal and child health. These are areas where Australia has expertise and can therefore generate greatest impact.

The Committee welcomes the increasing level of Australian development aid to Africa in recent years and the areas where Australia is focusing its assistance.

During the inquiry, a Committee Delegation visited Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. The visit included inspections of various AusAID supported projects. It became clear that there is some way to go in achieving recognition of Australia's contribution of aid via multilateral partners.

The Committee has not commented on Australia's aid effectiveness because it is currently being reviewed by an independent panel. Nevertheless, the Committee Delegation was impressed by the potential benefit of supporting private sector initiatives, for example by providing funds through the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund Zimbabwe Window. Provided such projects are carefully selected, there is the advantage of leveraging additional funds from the private sector; affecting large numbers of people through an expanded local economy; and supporting a sustainable enterprise with the potential for growth.

The Committee has received evidence from the private sector and individuals about initiatives which develop capacity in African countries. The Committee believes these programs should be encouraged and has recommended that AusAID should assist such programs and enable the expansion of the Australian Business Volunteers program to cover African countries.

Whilst in Africa, Committee Delegation members were regularly approached by African government ministers, officials, and businessmen advocating Australian involvement in creating regulation frameworks for the mining sector in African countries. As a major minerals exporter, Australia has experience and expertise in this area and could readily assist African countries. Robust regulatory frameworks offer certainty for business and would benefit resource rich African countries.

In addition, members of the Delegation were made aware of the high regard in which State Departments of Mining and Energy were held by large numbers of officials in a range of African countries. Often these departments hold expertise built up over a 100 years. Officials in African countries repeatedly requested access to this knowledge and expertise.

There is thus a major opportunity for the Australian Government, State Governments, and the wider mining industry to use their expertise to assist the development, implementation, and administration of sound mining codes in a range of African countries.

The Committee has recommended that there be established a special unit in the Australian Government tasked with establishing a regulatory framework model for the mining and resources sector which African countries could consider adopting according to their requirements.

Collaboration and cooperation between the private sector, government agencies, and NGOs in delivering aid to Africa can result in synergies. Such synergies could capitalise on NGOs' expertise in development issues in local communities, private sector business acumen, and public funding sources. However, this must not detract from the delivery of aid where it is most needed.

The Committee therefore sees value in DFAT facilitating meetings between NGOs, resource companies and AusAID with a view to cooperating in development initiatives and maximising synergies. Furthermore, the Committee considers that there is strong potential for DFAT to facilitate more connections between NGOs and resource companies active in the same area and it is aware of examples of this type of positive collaboration.

### **Education Links**

In Chapter 4, the report considers Australia's education links with Africa and the suggestion that there be a centre for studying African issues.

The higher education sector is now a significant contributor to Australia's export earnings. The sector has a growing reputation for building links with academic institutions in developing countries particularly in Asia and the Gulf. Therefore it is in Australia's interest to further develop valuable ties and similar relationships in research and higher education in Africa.

The evidence provided to the Committee reveals a picture of Australia as a small partner in specialised cooperative research, and a small but important provider of scholarships and student exchanges with African universities.

In the Committee's view, it is clear that Australia cannot compete in absolute terms with other countries. It makes good sense, however, for the message that Australia, armed with a realistic appraisal of its capabilities and strengths in research and higher education, can create valuable ties in Africa – and, indeed, already has an established record of doing so.

The Committee recognises that there needs to be a balance with respect to the provision of scholarships to Africans. On the one hand Africa will benefit through the transfer of skills if African students return to their country of origin after completion of their studies. Australia also benefits because the African alumni will act as 'ambassadors from Australia'.

On the other hand, the immediate benefit to Australia occurs when African students remain in Australia because their skills alleviate Australia's skills shortage. Such a brain drain is of concern not only to African countries but also to other countries providing talented students to study in Australia.

The Committee has recommended that AusAID's scholarships program should include providing scholarships to African students to undertake tertiary education in Africa. This could involve study at African universities and at Australian universities with links with Africa.

The Committee has reviewed the reasons why Australia should increase its research capacity in relation to Africa and the current levels of research in Australia. Also, responding to a call from many witnesses, the Committee discusses the various proposals for a centre to foster an increased effort in African studies.

There is, within Australia, a substantial body of expertise on African issues. The Committee believes that it is important to promote its coordination and further development. Therefore the Committee has recommended that a Centre for African Studies should be established, preferably, within a university in Australia. A Centre will facilitate a coordinated approach to education and training both at undergraduate and graduate level. Further, it will establish a focal point for coordinating expertise on African issues.

The Committee has not come to a view as to where such a centre should be located. Rather it recommends inviting competitive tenders from Australian universities. Such a process will reveal the level of commitment of universities wishing to become the location of a Centre for African Studies.

## **Research Links**

In Chapter 5, the report considers Australia's research links with Africa, including a discussion of development related research provided by Australia and other organisations.

Australia is a leader in agricultural production and its expertise provides opportunities for expansion of research and the creation of agribusiness joint ventures. The Committee has received evidence of the work of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and CSIRO in Africa. Such research is mutually beneficial for both African countries and Australia, in that it both assists in progress towards Millennium Development Goal 1 and increases the agricultural expertise of Australia. The Committee supports these activities and encourages continuing Australian agricultural research in Africa.

### **Trade and Investment**

In Chapter 6, the report considers trade and investment, including discussion of the potential for growth in trade and impediments to this growth. The substantial and increasing role of Australia's mining sector in Africa is discussed, including corporate social responsibility obligations. The Chapter concludes with consideration of the need for an Australia Africa Council.

The 53 countries of Africa have a total population in excess of one billion; in Sub-Saharan Africa the population is in excess of 870 million. This represents a potential huge market. Australia's trade links with Africa are currently modest, but there are opportunities for joint ventures with businesses in South Africa and in the horticultural and tourism sectors generally.

Australia is increasing its trade and investment links with the continent, yet has only a handful of Austrade personnel in Africa. The Committee believes that the increased importance of trade and investment in Africa combined with a large geographical area and increasing workload warrants an increase in the number of Austrade offices and/or staff. The Committee has therefore recommended that the number of Austrade offices and personnel that are based in Sub-Saharan Africa be increased.

The corporate social responsibility obligations of Australian resource sector companies operating in Africa were raised by a number of witnesses. The Chapter discusses in some detail the activities of several Australian mining companies in Africa including the links with NGOs with an interest in this area.

Also discussed is the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) whereby host governments publish what they receive from mining companies which in turn publish what they pay. This promotes transparency and is aimed to reduce the risk of corruption.

The Committee notes that Norway is the only First World country that is EITI compliant and that no other countries, including Australia, are either EITI candidates or have signalled intent to adopt EITI principles. It would considerably enhance Australia's advocacy of EITI adoption if it was itself engaged in the process of becoming EITI compliant.

The Committee has also recommended that the Government should promote corporate social responsibility and continue to promote the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative principles and other corporate social responsibility instruments to the Australian mining sector, in particular at the Australia Down Under Conference, and especially to new entrants and small operators.

Further, the Government should facilitate contacts between mining sector companies, NGOs, and the broader private sector who are able to assist them in creating and executing corporate social responsibility policies.

The Committee believes the increasing opportunities for links with Africa, including the potential for increased trade with Africa and the increasing levels of investment already occurring, warrant the establishment of an Australia-Africa Council similar to those currently existing for other countries and regions. An example of such a council is the Council on Australian Latin America Relations – an organisation which had its genesis in a recommendation from this Committee in 2000.

## **Defence and Security**

In Chapter 7 the report considers defence and security. The Committee examines Australia's policy framework, peacekeeping activities, and discusses crime and security. The Committee's observations from its visit to Zimbabwe and Ethiopia are included.



Australia's approach to its Defence and Security engagement with African nations is consistent with its status as an interested middle-power. This approach is characterised by cooperative relationships between Australian government agencies – in particular Defence, AFP, DFAT, and Attorney-General's Department – and with other countries. This gives Australia the best possible chance of delivering value for the resources invested in these activities.

The Committee welcomes the forward-thinking and risk-management-based approaches on terror, crime and defence that are evident in Australia's current approach. This appears to be a prudent line of activity which, again, seeks to prevent rather than respond to crises after they occur.

It would seem, however, that Australia's wish to present a credible face in Africa would be well-served by including a specific reference to the doctrine of responsible sovereignty within Defence policy. Relying solely on 'Australia's interests' arguments could run the risk of being perceived as neo-colonial in intent. A rules-based approach, combined with the very considerable natural resources investments and expertise underlined by principles of corporate social responsibility brought to bear in Africa by Australian companies, would be a good way to present Australia within the continent of Africa, and would distinguish it both from past actions by Western countries and, in some cases, contemporary involvements in the African resource sector.

### **Africans in Australia**

In Chapter 8 the report considers issues facing African migrants and refugees living in Australia and how the African community in Australia can contribute to Australia-Africa relations.

Australia has a growing African community. Over the last two decades, Africans have come to Australia via two routes; both as migrants through Australia's skilled and family reunion programs, and as refugees through Australia's humanitarian program. Census data shows that in 2006 there were 248 699 African-born people living in Australia.

The Committee strongly supports both the official and non-official efforts made towards settling African migrants and humanitarian entrants in Australia. It further notes the contribution the African-born community makes to both Australia and their respective home countries, through their skills, expertise, culture, and remittances.

However, the Committee notes that more should be done to utilise the cultural, linguistic, and practical expertise of Africans already in Australia in terms of making the settlement process even smoother. This would assist in better tailoring the settlement programs to the needs of Africans, and particularly vulnerable communities such as humanitarian entrants from prolonged conflicts such as those in Southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Committee notes the potential for the many African-born Australian residents to make a real contribution to relations between Australia and the countries of Africa. Furthermore, the diverse range of countries and cultures from which they come widens the scope for the development of relations.

Efforts to build on and expand cultural relations and interchange are a real boost for Australia's relationship with Africa, particularly at the grassroots level. Activities that achieve this, as well as providing mutual benefits to both African countries and Australia, should be officially encouraged and expanded.

The Committee has recommended that the proposed Australia-Africa Council should include within its goals, support for activities that encourage and facilitate cultural interchange and exchange, particularly including the Australian African community.

## **Conclusion**

Following a visit to Africa in 2009, the President of the World Bank, Mr Robert Zoellick, called for the 21st century to be 'the century of Africa'. Many other advanced countries are turning their attention towards Africa. It is imperative, therefore, that Australia understands these developments and responds accordingly.

I hope this report will provide a contribution to Australia's increased engagement with Africa.

Senator Michael Forshaw  
Chair



# Membership of the Committee—42nd Parliament

Chair Senator M Forshaw

Deputy Chair Hon. Mr D Hawker MP

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Senator M Arbib (from 01/07/08 to 10/03/09)

Senator A Bartlett (to 30/06/08)

Senator M Bishop

Senator M Cormann (to 23/09/08)

Senator A Eggleston (to 19/03/08)

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15/06/09)

Hon. Mr W Truss MP (from 03/02/10 to  
22/02/10)

Ms M Vamvakinou MP

# Membership of the Committee—43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

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Deputy Chair   Mrs J Gash MP

## Members

Senator M Bishop

Senator the Hon. J Faulkner (from  
30/09/10 to 14/02/11)

Senator the Hon. A Ferguson

Senator M Furner

Senator S Hanson-Young

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Mr S Robert MP

Hon. Mr P Ruddock MP

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# Membership of the Africa Sub-Committee

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# Additional Parliamentary Delegation to Africa —5 to 16 April 2011

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Deputy Chair            Hon. Mr P Ruddock MP

Members                Senator M Bishop

                              Senator C Moore

                              Senator R Trood

                              Hon. Mr A Griffin MP

                              Hon. Dr S Stone MP

Delegation Secretary   Dr J Carter

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Acting Secretary	Dr J Carter (from 10/06/11)
Inquiry Secretary	Dr J Carter
Research Officer	Mr J Bunce
	Ms P Davies
	Dr B Lloyd
Office Manager	Ms J Butler
	Mrs D Quintus-Bosz
Administrative Officers	Ms G Drew
	Mrs S Gasper



## Terms of reference

The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade 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.



## List of abbreviations

AABC VC	Australian African Business Council Victoria Chapter
AACES	Australian African Community Engagement Scheme
AAMIG	Australia Africa Mining Industry Group
ACF	Australian Conservation Fund
ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research
ADB	African Development Bank
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AECF ZW	Zimbabwe Window of the African Enterprise Challenge Fund
AEI	Australian Education International
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AFSAAP	African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific
ALPA	Australian Leadership Program for Africa
ANBC	Australia Nigeria Business Council
APAC	Australian Partnerships with African Communities
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AQIS	Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service
ARC	Australian Research Council

ARI	African Research Institute
ASNO	Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office
ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
AU	African Union
AUA	Australian Uranium Association
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AUSTRAC	Australian Transaction Analysis Centre
AWSA	Australian Western Saharan Association
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program
CARTA	Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CMAG	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CRC	Cooperative research Centre
CRT	Commonwealth Round Table
CSA	comprehensive safeguard agreements
DCP	Defence Cooperation Program
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DIISR	Development of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
DRET	Department of Resources Energy and Tourism

EAC	East African Community
EBID	ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Union of West African States
EDF	Ethiopian Democratic Forum
EFIC	Export Finance and Insurance Corporation
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EMAO	Ethiopian Mine Action Office
FLS	Frontline States
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IARC	International Agriculture Research Centres
ICF	Investment Climate Facility for Africa
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development
IHL	international humanitarian law
IPU	International Parliamentary Union
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
JTF-HOA	US Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa
KSA	knowledge, skills and abilities
LIW	Leading Initiatives Worldwide
LSE	London School of Economics
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSA	Monash South Africa

MUFESA	Monash University Fund for Education in South Africa
NECSA	Nuclear Energy Cooperation of South Africa
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ODA	official development assistance
OET	Occupational English Test
Oxfam	Oxfam Australia
SADC	South African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordinating Conference
SAR	search and rescue
SIMLESA	Pathways to sustainable intensification of maize-legume based farming systems for food security in eastern and southern Africa
SKA	Square Kilometre Array
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
VET	Vocational and Education Training
WUE	water use efficiency







# List of recommendations

## Government to Government Links

### Recommendation 1

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should undertake a comprehensive review of Australia's diplomatic representation in Africa with a view to opening an additional post in Francophone Africa.

### Recommendation 2

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should, pending the implementation of Recommendation 1, increase the number of Australia-based French speaking diplomatic staff in its West African High Commissions. They should have specific responsibility for covering Australia's interests in Francophone West African countries.

### Recommendation 3

As a short to medium term measure, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should increase the number of honorary consuls appointed to represent Australia in African countries.

### Recommendation 4

The Government should increase the number of Australian parliamentary delegations to specific African countries particularly to those with increasing significance to Australia.

## Australia's Aid Program

### Recommendation 5

AusAID should provide funding assistance to capacity building programs such as that conducted by the Australian Leadership Program for Africa and similar organisations.

### Recommendation 6

AusAID should increase funding for the Australian Business Volunteers program so that it can expand coverage to African countries.

### Recommendation 7

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism should establish and fund a special unit tasked with establishing a regulatory framework model for the mining and resources sector which African countries could consider adopting according to their requirements.

### Recommendation 8

DFAT should coordinate regular meetings between AusAID, NGOs, and Australian resource companies engaged in Africa, with a view to facilitating aid and development delivery cooperation to take advantage of their differing and complementary strengths.

## Education Links

### Recommendation 9

AusAID's scholarships program should include providing scholarships to African students to undertake tertiary education in Africa. This could involve study at African universities and at Australian universities with links with Africa such as Monash South Africa

### Recommendation 10

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations should:

- establish a Centre for African Studies;
- invite competitive tenders from Australian universities for the establishment of the Centre;
- engage stake-holders and potential partners for the Centre;
- provide sufficient funding so that the Centre can:
  - ⇒ undertake research, education and training functions;
  - ⇒ engage with industry;
  - ⇒ raise the profile of African Studies in Australia; and
  - ⇒ provide value to both government and non-government end-users.

## Trade and Investment

### Recommendation 11

The Government should increase the number of Austrade offices and personnel that are based in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### Recommendation 12

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship should expand the issuing of e-visas across Africa, with priority to establishing the service in countries where there is the potential to expand trade, academic, research and other links.

### Recommendation 13

The Government should undertake steps for Australia to become an EITI compliant country.

### Recommendation 14

The Government should promote corporate social responsibility and continue to promote the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative principles and other corporate social responsibility instruments to the Australian mining sector, in particular at the Australia Down Under Conference, and especially to new entrants and small operators.

### Recommendation 15

The Government should facilitate contacts between mining sector companies, NGOs, and the broader private sector who are able to assist them in creating and executing corporate social responsibility policies.

### Recommendation 16

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should establish, and provide adequate funding for an Australia-Africa Council.

## Africans in Australia

### Recommendation 17

The proposed Australia-Africa Council should include within its goals, support for activities that encourage and facilitate cultural interchange and exchange, particularly including the Australian African community.

