



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 6 December 2010

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

Australia's relations with Africa—Inquiry resumes

Federal Parliament's Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade will resume its *Inquiry into Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa* with two days of public hearings in Sydney and Canberra on Tuesday, 7 December and Wednesday, 8 December.

Committee Chairman Senator Michael Forshaw said he was pleased that the Foreign Affairs Minister has re-referred this review of an important aspect of Australia's foreign relations.

"The Joint Committee is at the midpoint of the inquiry having conducted six days of hearings and received over 90 submissions in the previous parliament," Senator Forshaw said.

Representatives from BHP Billiton, Jubilee Australia, and the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation (EFIC) will be attending the Sydney hearing in the Sydney Masonic Centre on 7 December.

"Australian mining companies and mining service companies along with companies of other nations are investing heavily in Africa with BHP Billiton being particularly active," he said. "The Committee will discuss with BHP Billiton the opportunities for investment in the African mining sector and the challenges it faces."

Jubilee Australia has been critical of the activities of the EFIC including its transparency of decision making and its environment policy.

"This hearing will provide an opportunity for the Committee to test the criticisms of Jubilee Australia and also enable EFIC to respond," Senator Forshaw said.

The Committee will reconvene at Parliament House in Canberra on 8 December to hear evidence from former Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and the Kenyan High Commissioner and Zimbabwean Ambassador amongst others. The Committee is keen to hear Professor Evans' views given his expertise and long involvement in international affairs, including conflict resolution.

"Australia enjoys good relations with Kenya and the Committee will value the comments of the High Commissioner regarding how the relationship might be enhanced," he said. "Australia is a major contributor of aid to Zimbabwe whilst simultaneously imposing sanctions. The Committee will explore with the Ambassador the value of Australia's aid and the effect of the sanctions on the country."

The Committee is planning to hold a further public hearing in Perth in early 2011.

Submissions to the inquiry and transcripts of the public hearings are available on the Committee's website.

Program

Tuesday, 7 December 2010

**Sydney Masonic Centre
Corinthian Room, 66 Goulburn Street, Sydney**

9.30 am	Jubilee Australia
10.20 am	Refugee Council of Australia
11.15 am	BHP Billiton
11.55 am	Export Finance and Insurance Corporation
1.40 pm	TBA

Wednesday, 8 December 2010

**Committee Room 1R1
Parliament House, Canberra**

9.30 am	Mr David Wheen
10.10 am	Kenya High Commissioner
11.05 am	Zimbabwe Ambassador
11.55 am	Vision 2020 Australia
1.30 pm	Professor Hon. Gareth Evans
2.10 pm	Australian Uranium Association
3.05 pm	Professor Anne Fitzgerald
3.45 pm	Australia-Nigeria Business Council

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.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfad/africa%2009/index.htm>