



Submission No 25

Review of Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa

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Submission No:.....	25
Date Received:.....	21/12/09
Secretary:.....	

**SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
DEFENCE AND TRADE**

The Kenya High Commission greatly appreciates this opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade of the Parliament of Australia on its inquiry into Australia's relations with Africa. This inquiry is timely as Australia-Africa relations have in the past been sparse and mainly concentrated on cooperation at the multilateral levels, and are only now receiving significant attention by the government. The current government has re-positioned Africa back into the Australian agenda following its announcement of its strategy for positive re-engagement with Africa.

On its part, Africa has been initiating and seeking to sustain sweeping changes among its members in terms of the spread in democracy, good governance, improved security situation as well as the slow but sustained economic growth that has been realised by most of the African countries. Furthermore, the level of new conflicts has gone down as intolerance to violence and ascension to power by unlawful means within the continent has increased. The adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and its peer-review mechanism is a clear indication of the efforts being made towards improving governance in the continent. The dawn of a new Africa is emerging, in spite of all the challenges it is facing, and its risk assessment has gone down considerably.

This renewed engagement is a welcome development particularly at this time when Australia has established itself as one of the leading economies in the world and as a member of the G20. Kenya applauds this policy as Australia's influence and cooperation with the African continent could therefore play a crucial role and boost in its positive transformation.

In this re-engagement with Africa, it is notable that Australia has committed itself to, among other issues:

- Enhance political contacts with African leadership;
- Promote economic growth and prosperity through investment and trade
- Increase cooperation in peace and security issues;
- Enhance development aid and cooperation issues.

In contributing to this inquiry, this mission makes the following submission in relation to the terms of reference:

Bilateral relations at the parliamentary and government levels

There has been an increase in high-level political contacts between Australia and Africa in the last one year. The Governor-General and the Foreign and Defence Ministers have, on separate occasions, visited a number of African countries including Kenya in what has been

seen as pace-setting visits at both bilateral and multilateral levels. In addition, several African Ministers have made official visits to Australia, in an effort to improve bilateral relations with specific African countries. The establishment of these high level contacts no doubt engender goodwill that should be sustained for mutual benefit.

It is also notable that Australia had continued to expand its presence in Africa by establishing diplomatic relations with more African countries, including Burkina Faso, Liberia, Niger and the Republic of Congo.

At the Parliamentary level, cooperation with African countries has largely been at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Union and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. As Africa goes through the democratizing phase a lot of support will be needed from friends like Australia in order to strengthen the budding political institutions. To this end, the Australian Parliament needs to do more towards establishing direct links with African parliaments. The Kenyan Parliament, for instance, is undergoing reforms and the current focus is to strengthen the capacity of its personnel and modernise its resource base; library, and live coverage of proceedings. In addition, the new draft constitution of Kenya proposes the establishment of a two-tier parliament. This provides an avenue for further cooperation and sharing of experiences with the Australian parliament.

Economic issues, including trade and investment

Trade between Africa and Australia has been growing at an annual average of 8%. However it is heavily tilted in favour of Australia. The growth in Australian mining interests in Africa has remained the most dynamic aspect of these relations.

Trade and investment will transform Africa. The removal of trade barriers will allow for greater participation in the global market and hence could unlock Africa's growth. While aid plays a significant part in alleviating the burden from African governments, unfettered trade could relieve the continent of reliance on primary products and lead to diversification of its economy. Cooperation in ensuring that an amicable solution is reached in the Doha Round of the World Trade Organisations (WTO) negotiations particularly in eliminating protectionist measures could go a long way in improving African access to markets and hence African economies. In this regard, there is need for the Australian government to ensure that the functions of the Australian Quarantine & Inspection Service, though critical in protecting the boundaries of Australia, do not constitute barriers to trade. There is potential for AQIS to collaborate with approved organizations in Africa, such as the internationally accredited Kenya Plant Health Inspection Services (KEPHIS) to conduct pre-shipment inspection and other phyto-sanitary services for consignments destined for Australia so as to reduce the delays at Australian ports and thus causing loss of business.

There is however a lot of potential that can be harnessed by Australian and African government and businesses for their mutual benefit. Numerous opportunities for trade and investment exist in Africa in various sectors, including mining, agriculture, services, health

education, tourism and manufacturing. Though a significant number of Australian companies have invested in the resource sector, there is still a lot of untapped potential. Other opportunities exist in the energy sector, as the continent still falls short of its energy requirements. In recognition of the prospective role that investment could play in the transformation of the continent, African governments are putting in place incentives and measures to ensure the protection of investment, as well as improving physical infrastructure and stabilising financial markets.

Tourism remains one of the key economic drivers for most of the African countries. The governments therefore strive to ensure the security and safety of tourists visiting their countries, such as the establishment of a tourist police unit in Kenya to deal with tourism-related security issues in the country. Australia is a growing source of tourists for many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. However, despite the best efforts by African governments to promote tourism, travel advisories that are issued from time to time by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade go against this spirit. Despite these advisories being reportedly reviewed and reissued regularly, some of the facts included are either outdated or inaccurate. It is important that such advisories that have potentially negative effects on African economies be factual.

In agriculture, food insecurity has been one of the major setbacks that have prevented Africa from achieving her full potential, as it has compounded the inability to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. In order to boost agricultural production, support is needed in developing irrigation systems and water harvesting technology that would sustain food production. In addition, cooperation in agricultural research and sharing of technical know-how in arid and semi-arid farming would boost agricultural production considerably, and hence reduce the incidences of hunger.

Cultural, Scientific and educational relations and exchanges

Education and capacity building continue to play a key role in Africa's development. The number of African students seeking enrolment in Australian institutions has risen significantly as a higher value is placed on the quality of education provided. The Australian government has continued to support African students through the provision of scholarships for post-graduate studies in various fields, and the number of scholarships has increased over the years. There is need however to further diversify the areas of concentration and provide support for students at undergraduate level as well as targeted short term courses in some specific identified sectors in which capacity is deficient in Africa. These include mining and resource sector, fisheries, gender studies, leadership programs, post-harvest technologies, agricultural mechanization and livestock industry.

As Australia continues to become the favourite destination for African students seeking higher education, there is potential for increasing the numbers significantly. Reviewing some of the conditions for enrolment for African students, such as those from Commonwealth or other English-speaking countries who are required to pass the English test could not only

relieve a great burden from the students and their parents, but would boost the numbers of students seeking admission in Australian institutions. Other Commonwealth countries which receive Kenyan students do not have this requirement.

Australian and African Universities have in the past established linkages which have resulted in the signing of memorandum of understanding to cooperation in staff and student exchanges and collaborative research. Such collaboration is often extremely useful in providing exposure and building capacity in African institutions as well as in the various sectors from which the students are drawn. More Australian institutions should be encouraged to enter into similar partnerships.

Development assistance, Cooperation and capacity building

Over the years, Australia' budgetary allocation for development assistance to Africa has been increasing, and Australia has expressed its commitment to scale up the aid program to 0.5% of GNI by 2015-16. The aid, which was delivered through country and regional programs by AusAID, was focused on Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The focus for this development assistance has been in governance, health, food security, and water and sanitation. Sectors that have benefitted include education, agriculture, health, governance, water and sanitation, as well as humanitarian assistance in mitigation of natural disasters. Most of this aid is channelled through UN agencies and international and local NGOs, and has been targeting the implementation of the commitments towards attainment of the millennium development goals.

The ongoing consultations between the two countries, both at the high-level and at officials' level, should be sustained in order to ensure that the African countries themselves identify their priority areas for assistance, in order to ensure better targeting of aid. In addition, consideration should be made for direct budget support for programs being implemented centrally by the governments towards the achievement of millennium development goals.

Peace and Security: Terrorism has become a global problem, and Australians, like Africans have not been spared. The Horn of Africa region has particularly become more volatile with the continued instability in Somalia, which is slowly turning into a new breeding ground for potential terrorists. The new dimension of piracy that is being perpetrated in the Indian Ocean has made the insecurity problem in the Horn of Africa into an international problem, as disruption of sea routes and hijacking and kidnapping have intensified. In addition to supporting the African Union Mission to Somalia, there is need for Australia and Horn of Africa countries to fast-track cooperation in the sharing of intelligence, training of anti-terrorism experts in Australian institutions, establishing homeland security programs to monitor piracy activities in the Indian Ocean and enhance cooperation at the multi-lateral level, particularly within the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation in the search for a permanent solution to the piracy and other terrorist activities.

Opportunities for the Future

With the ongoing transformation that is going on in Africa, it is clear that the continent's future will only get better. With the emergence of stronger democracies, improved governance and establishment of enabling legal environment in which business is conducted, Africa is leveraging itself as a major global player for the future. Hence, the time is right for Australia and Africa to take their relations to the next level. There are therefore numerous opportunities for cooperation between Australia and Africa in the future, including:

- Enhanced bilateral cooperation particularly in areas where Africa has great potential and where Australia has expertise;
- Cooperation in enhancing peace and security in the Indian Ocean territorial waters;
- Promotion of democracy and improved governance in African countries which is a panacea for the transformation of Africa;
- Cooperation in improving the social sector in Africa particularly in health, education, water and sanitation;
- Opening up of investment opportunities in Africa for Australian companies.

In order to ensure that these opportunities are realised and sustained, the Australian government will need to do more to sell their African strategy to the Australian public, as a lot will depend on the success in changing some of the stereotypical perceptions of Africa that exist currently and that hinder further cooperation.



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