



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 4 May 2010

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

Rio Tinto and Qantas to discuss doing business in Africa

The social responsibility of Australia's business activity in African countries will be a major focus when Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee holds two days of public hearings in Melbourne on Wednesday 5 May and Thursday 6 May.

The Committee resumes its inquiry into Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa at a public hearing with Australian mining and aviation giants Rio Tinto and Qantas. The Joint Committee will also speak with business groups such as the Australia-Africa Business Council Victoria Chapter, and Responsible Investment Consulting.

Committee Chairman Senator Michael Forshaw said, "several countries in Africa are experiencing a mining boom. Australian mining companies and mining service companies along with companies of other nations are investing heavily in Africa. The Committee will discuss the activities of Australian miners in Africa, the opportunities for increased investment and trade, and the challenges they face."

"The Committee will also discuss corporate social responsibility. This issue has been raised by several NGOs including the Australian Conservation Foundation and Oxfam Australia, two organisations which will be providing evidence to the Committee", Senator Forshaw said.

"The Government is encouraging mining and mining services companies operating in Africa to adopt a corporate social responsibility approach and the Committee is keen to ascertain how Australian companies in Africa are performing, and how the fulfilment of their corporate social responsibility commitments can be assisted."

Also appearing are several academics with research interests in Africa and witnesses from Monash University.

"Monash University has a significant commitment in Africa with a campus in South Africa. How this can be leveraged to enhance Australia's relationship with the continent will interest the Committee."

"The Committee has received evidence concerning the value in creating linkages between academics with an interest in Africa, and also about the possible creation of a Centre of Excellence for African Studies or an Australia-Africa Research Institute. The Committee will continue to explore proposals to enhance linkages between African studies experts and the possible creation of an Africa-focused institution."

"The provision of aid to Africa will continue to be a concern of witnesses appearing and the Committee will also receive evidence from World Vision and the Darfur Australia Network", Senator Forshaw said.

A second round of public hearings will be held later in the year when the Committee will follow up evidence gathered in this initial series of hearings.

The public hearings on 5 May and 6 May will be in:

Conference Room 5, Hotel Grand Chancellor, 131 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

Program

Wednesday, 5 May 2010

10.00 am	Dr David Dorward
10.40 am	Dr Elizabeth Dimock
11.35 am	Monash University
12.20 pm	CSIRO
2.00 pm	Mr Haileluel Gebre-selassie
2.45 pm	Darfur Australia Network
3.40 pm	World Vision Australia
4.20 pm	Oxfam Australia
5.00 pm	Australia Conservation Foundation

Thursday, 6 May 2010

9.30 am	Australian-Africa Business Council Victoria Chapter
10.35 am	Rio Tinto
11.25 am	Asumadu & Associates
1.30 pm	Responsible Investment Consulting
2.10 pm	Qantas

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

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/jfact/africa%2009/index.htm>