



Submission No 12

Review of Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa

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Sent via email: jscfadt@aph.gov.au

Attention: Senator Michael Forshaw

Dear Committee Chairman, Senator Michael Forshaw

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Australian's relationship with countries of Africa, as part of the 2009 Inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade.

Coffey International is a 'top 300 firm' listed on the Australian Stock Exchange. We have worked continuously in Africa— almost since the company's inception in the late 1950s, and we are proud of the fact that we have worked in 35 of the 53 African nations. Our work has been most extensive in the mining sector, where we provide services in mine studies (operational, lifecycle, modalities); innovative technical consulting; mining operations (solutions, optimisation, safety, exploration); corporate services (financial, JVs, management) and social mining (environmental and social impact statements, community consultation).

We are also involved in some very interesting international development work funded by USAID, UKAID and AusAID – in areas such as significant multi-year programs in post-conflict rehabilitation in the DRC, training and education in the construction industry in Nigeria, enterprise development in Kenya, and agribusiness in many North African nations.

Africa is a very diverse continent and, in response to the Joint Standing Committee's invitation, Coffey is confining its comments to a few general points under your six headings, as follows:

Bilateral relations at the parliamentary and government levels

- We see as very important, in order to assist African nations to improve their governance, to increase trade, cultural enrichment and regional security
- We believe that face-to-face engagement is important, and we observe a low number of delegations coming from Africa to Australia (compared to those from Asia, Europe and the Americas). Also, there seem to also be relatively fewer Australian parliamentarians that visit Africa.

Economic issues including trade and investment

- We are aware that Africa, as a continent is falling behind on the MDGs and we believe that the greatest hope for a reversal of this trend is to stimulate the private economy
- We believe that Australia's aid program has the potential to stimulate the private sector through programs such as: strengthening the environment for investment attraction; and, addressing good governance (e.g. improved trade laws and economic governance); building capabilities of local enterprises (please refer to the attached media article from Africa Down Under)

- We recommend DFAT's and Austrade's support of trade initiatives such as the annual mining conference in Perth: 'Africa Down Under' – which this year attracted nearly 1,000 delegates from around the world

Cultural, scientific and educational relations and exchanges

- African students make up a small percentage of overseas students studying in Australian universities – compared to students from Asia, for example. We support initiatives that can improve this balance
- Scientifically, Africa has an incredibly important gene pool for important species related to biodiversity, through to human health. We support activities that help to preserve and manage this resource, as well as support for scientific exchanges
- The same applies to cultural diversity

Development assistance cooperation and capacity building

- As mentioned above, some African nations are falling behind on all eight MDGs, and most are failing on many MDGs. Sub-Saharan Africa is the worst. As such, we support the current increase in foreign aid
- We support the current approach being used by AusAID, as has been publicly described, such as capacity building, scholarships, health, water supply and sanitation, and agriculture. We believe that AusAID leads the world in terms of the involvement of African partners, innovative and sustainable design of assistance, and the methods that it employs for implementation. This was recently confirmed by the OECD DAC Review. As the AusAID program expands, there needs to be a stronger public awareness amongst the Australian public of our work in Africa, which will further strengthen support

Defence cooperation, regional security, and strategic issues

- Conflicts in the DRC, Sudan, Somalia, Sierra Leone etc are of great concern to us. We find it very difficult to work in such countries, and this is to the detriment of the people of those countries. As such we support any efforts of defence cooperation, regional security, and strategic issues to prevent and solve conflict
- We are also concerned about extremist forces that are becoming influential in parts of eastern and northern Africa
- Research indicates that Africa is a low emitter of CO2 and other pollutants, although it is hardest hit by climate change – e.g. increases in temperature in places like Harare are meaning that malaria (once unheard of) is becoming a real health issue. As such, we support any strategic assistance in mitigation and adaptation caused by climate change
- Australian could consider diplomatic representation in Ethiopia – where the African Union is located
- Australia could also consider membership to the African Development Bank, to enable Australian firms to participate in AfDB activities

Migration and human rights issues

- We support Australia's migration laws
- We also support any assistance that Australia can provide in the area of human rights. For example, it is difficult to understand how around 400,000 Kenyans can live in internal refugee camps in Kenya. We can learn some lessons from AusAID's experience with assisting nations to strengthen their human rights, such as its Iraq program

In conclusion, we would support

- Australia focussing on a targeted number of areas where we can have the greatest impact, as opposed to a broad-scale, and therefore diluted effort. This could give the greatest identification with and attribution to Australia. We believe that the mining sector offers great potential because Australian firms already have good relationships and a sound understanding of communities, economies and practices in most African nations
- A significant increase in foreign aid, delivered in partnership with the African nations

We hope that these brief comments assist in your inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rod Reeve". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Yours sincerely" text.

Rod Reeve

Global Manager, Business Development

Coffey