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**Summary: Consultation with Marc Garneau, member of the Liberal Party of Canada Advisory Committee on International Relations and Liberal Party Critic on Foreign Affairs.**

**CONTEXT**: The meeting took place in Ottawa on the afternoon of January 22, 2015. The Africa Study Group (ASG), of the Canadian International Council National Capital Branch (CIC-NCB), was, at the request of the Liberal Party of Canada, asked to advise on how Canada should engage with Africa in the future and what lessons can be learned from past engagements. The meeting had approximately 30 participants, the majority of whom were members of the ASG.

**SUMMARY**: After introductions, an overview presentation was given by Louise Ouimet, Chair of the ASG, as well as a brief word by David Dyment, President of CIC-NCB. The presentation emphasized Africa’s recent boom in economic, demographic, and political terms. Nevertheless, challenges remain such as income inequality, poverty, poor governance, terrorism, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure. The presentation also highlighted various ways in which Canada could improve its relations with Africa including initiating a paradigm shift from top-down relationships toward more equal partnerships. It emphasized that there is no “one size fits all” strategy and a coherent foreign policy with an Africa-specific strategy is needed. For more detail, please see the slideshow enclosed.

After the presentation by Ms. Ouimet, Mr. Marc Garneau, Foreign Affairs critic of the Liberal Party of Canada and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, gave a presentation on what the Liberal party has heard from other Canadian groups about Canada’s current foreign policy in general, especially with regard to Africa. Mr. Garneau clearly stated that the Liberal Party has not finalized a platform as yet and that the presentation is only meant to be a backgrounder and to encourage discussion/advising. The presentation stated that Canada’s foreign policy is, at present, too reactive and improvised, short-term, ideologically-driven, and based on domestic politics as dictated by the PMO. Concerns were raised about the morale of DFATD employees, the length of time it takes for development projects to be approved, the focus on short-term measurable outcomes, and the perception of commercial interests driving development. Equally, the frequent changing of the selection criteria for countries of focus and priority sectors/themes, has had many deleterious effects. Overall, the presentation made clear that Canada needs a long-term vision/strategy for relations with Africa. A number of discussion questions were then given for what that strategy should be.

**DISCUSSION**: Many topics and recommendations – some in agreement and some contrary – were expressed. Among these, the topics of corruption, business, emerging countries (BRICS, etc.), environment, security, governance, civil society, and gender were raised by several participants. A point-form summary of the discussion follows:

*Importance of Africa to Canada, and Canada’s Influence in the World*

* Canadians need to see Africa as a priority and not secondary, therefore we need to better explain why.
* Canada needs to have a more adult approach with Africa as we cannot dictate what they should do. There is a need to rebuild the consultations process.
* The image of Africans as victims is harmful and needs to end.
* Withdrawal from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertificationhas been seen by most African countries as a “slap in the face” and has caused a significant decline in Canada’s influence.
* The drop from the Kyoto’s Protocol, announced right after the South Africa’s conference on Climate Change was also insulting to many African countries.
* Need for increasing the space for civil society, both in Africa and in Canada.
* 54 countries means a significant portion of the world, including UN votes.
* Canada needs to regain its influence in multilateral organizations across the world and in Africa in particular.
* Canada’s achievement being elected to head the Francophonie should not be taken lightly as this was hard-won. We need to support Ms. Jean’s mandate with improved relations with African countries and leverage her influence.
* Individual parliamentarians from all Canadian parties have been helpful and have many connections on the ground. They should be more involved in our foreign policy.
* The African Diaspora in Canada should have a more prominent role in our foreign policy and should be consulted more regularly.

*Aid & Development*

* ODA not being fully spent after it has already been allocated is insulting and not democratic.
* The importance of moving from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness and develop a coherent approach across all sectors, including aid, trade, private investment, immigration, military and police support, etc.
* One participant mentioned that there should be independent evaluations of development projects.
* Suggestion to increase direct budgetary support.
* Canada had an excellent reputation for women’s rights and used to be at the forefront of this. Now we are not perceived to be so; government now portrays women as primarily victims or mothers.
* Education is poor overall in Africa and there is a need for better teachers. Canada has an excellent education system and could be a leader on this.
* We need to take into consideration new trends such as the importance of young people who need a good educated and jobs, the acceleration of urbanization, and to remember the importance of the informal sector.
* Agriculture is a way of life in Africa and should not only be considered as subsistence. Encouraging better agriculture will improve livelihoods.
* Water is and will be an important issue on the continent and this is something that Canada has in abundance. Canada is very familiar with water management and this could be an area of influence for us.

*Business*

* All other BRICS & G20 countries are actively investing on the continent, but Canadian businesses are “too timid” and lagging behind.
* Commercial interests are more than just mining; Canada has expertise in infrastructure, science & space, medicine, etc.
* There was disagreement on the topic of corruption. One person stated that Canada should be careful when telling African countries that they are corrupt when there have been a number of high-profile cases (notably in Montreal) of corruption in Canada. Also, Canadian companies invest in China and Russia, where corruption is even higher than in most African countries. In contrast, the majority of persons insisted that Canada should take a leading role in anti-corruption efforts and not turn a blind eye to the activities of our companies abroad if they are participating in corrupt activities.

*Peace & Security*

* Canada should sign the Arms Trade Treaty.
* Governance and security are needed in Africa and Canada can continue to play a prominent role in this.
* One participant mentioned that they are often being asked for peace education skills since Canada is a successful multicultural democracy
* There are many different versions of Islam in Africa and any solution to terrorism on the continent will need to be an African solution.

*Diplomacy*

* We need to reinvest in diplomacy to support the development of knowledge-based policies and programs, and to support the Canadian private sector’s interactions with African countries.
* The lack of Canadian Embassies and High Commissions means there are many additional costs when students want to study in Canada. Canada has many such students and these should be better facilitated.

For a summary from the Liberal Party, please see [Marc Garneau meets members Africa Study Group CIC-NCB to discuss Canada-Africa relations](http://marcgarneau.liberal.ca/en/blog/marc-garneau-meets-members-africa-study-group-canadian-international-council-discuss-canadaafrica-relations/) or [Marc Garneau rencontre des membres du Groupe de Réflexion sur l'Afrique du CIC-de la capitale nationale pour discuter des relations Canada avec l'Afrique](http://marcgarneau.liberal.ca/communiques-de-presse/marc-garneau-rencontre-des-membres-du-groupe-dtude-sur-lafrique-du-conseil-international-du-canada-pour-discuter-des-relations-canadoafricaines/)