



The new Canadian government faces important questions, one of which is about our relations with the rest of the world and the role Canada wants to play. If we want to win a Security Council seat, we need to send a strong signal about what we want to do with it. In particular, Canada needs to send a signal now to Africa, which we have neglected. With 54 countries and a population of 1.2 billion (to double by 2050), Africa matters. Many major countries have recognized this and organized regular (not just one-off) occasions to develop partnerships, both economic and political (from China's Belt and Road Initiative to October 23-24 2019 Summit and Economic Forum Russia-Africa in Sochi).

The signal Canada needs to send to Africa (and to the world) should show our determination to play a serious role. The Africa Study Group believes that to do that effectively Canada needs to make key short-term decisions and publicize them. It will be important to consult and communicate with Canadians to enhance their awareness of the growing importance of Africa and the role of the continent and its peoples in Canada's future. This paper sketches out what we believe are key elements that should be part of a Canadian strategy for engaging with Africa.

Why Africa Matters:

Africa's 54 countries carry a lot of weight in multilateral fora, notably the UN, the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, where Canada wants to move forward its values-based agenda. It is the second most populous continent after Asia, and its overall economy is also growing faster than anywhere but Asia. Economic powers and emerging ones, such as China, Russia, India, Germany, Brazil and Turkey, have recognized this and have boosted their relationship with Africa in many ways. Africa is also facing significant challenges, notably climate change and the need to create jobs for its growing population of young people - which could be a demographic dividend. Africans do not benefit sufficiently from their continent's wealth, and many governments have not had their citizens' best interests at heart. This is changing and there are opportunities for a renewed relationship between Canada and Africa, one for mutual benefit, based, for example, on the new continental free trade agreement.

Canada's Interests in Africa

Canada wants to expand exports of both traditional and new goods and services. We also want Canadian firms to be able to make viable and secure investments. Canada also needs those 54 countries' support for its UN Security Council candidacy (2021-22). And more generally, a

prosperous, peaceful Africa, with clearly improving social and economic conditions, is advantageous to Canada and the rest of the world.

What Africa Wants/Needs

African countries put more focus on trade and investment than on aid. They have an acute need for more and better infrastructure. They need markets for their goods and services, not just the ones they currently make, but for those that they could produce, and would produce if they were not in practice shut out of many markets. Many factors, from tariffs and regulations, to that lack of infrastructure, to the difficulty of obtaining trade finance because of rules put in place to prevent a recurrence of the 2008 financial crisis, work against African companies expanding into new markets. African countries want non-patronizing assistance to improve governance, and to help implement rules-based regulatory regimes, which they recognize as building blocks needed to expand and widen their productive capacity for goods and services. And they need effective help in adapting to the unavoidable part of climate change, where they are very much on the front line. They also need Canadian companies to behave responsibly.

What Canada Has to Offer

Canada no longer has the clout it had in the 70s and 80s, but we still have a lot to offer. Although we cannot realistically provide substantial help with Africa's infrastructure needs, our engineering services industry can play important niche roles. One or the other of our two official languages are in fact in daily use in a majority of African countries- most of those in the Commonwealth and La Francophonie.

We have world-class regulatory systems that can serve as models for aspiration and, ultimately, emulation: e.g. the Bank of Canada, Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, the Canada Revenue Agency, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Health Canada, natural resource royalty regimes. As a member of the G7, but a middle power with no colonial history, we can partner without arousing some of the suspicions evoked by other, larger countries. As a federal country with successful experience in devolving power from the centre to the regions, some with distinct cultural or social characteristics, we can provide a role model for avoiding the problems created by efforts at overly centralized, top-down governance.

Finally, the growing African diasporas in Canada can be a tool for constructive engagement with the countries of the continent.

The Nature of Canada's Relationship with Africa

Canada should set as a goal the development of a relationship with Africa that reflects the multi-dimensional nature of Canada's existing and future relations with the continent: in politics, in economics (both trade and investment), on human rights and on security. Our engagement mechanisms should be based on the principles of 1) true partnerships, between equals, 2) mutual benefits and 3) long-term commitment.

Such multi-dimensional mechanisms are more likely to achieve progress on Canada's "progressive and anti-corruption agendas" than any issue-specific, "top-down" discussions. By engaging with African partners on a broad range of issues, we can be more effective on more delicate questions, such as gender equality.

Moving Forward Canada Should:

- 1) Develop a thoughtful African engagement strategy, one that brings together all foreign policy mechanisms, and supports our overall foreign policy, by consulting with Canadians and Africans. We need to communicate it clearly, so that even countries not directly targeted by the effort to strengthen ties are aware of Canada's renewed interest in an growing engagement with the continent. The starting point should be a tour of significant African capitals and regional organizations, as well as consultation meetings across Canada.
- 2) Boost mutually beneficial trade and investment by: i) increasing the number of its trade commissioners; ii) ensuring that international trade relations are fair; iii) supporting the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area; and iv) ensuring that Canadian private companies behave responsibly – by having a strong Ombudsman.
- 3) Enhance diplomatic relations and knowledge by: i) increasing the number of diplomatic missions with a resident, Canada-based head; ii) engaging more significantly with African governments through ministerial, and even Prime Ministerial, visits - both ways; and iii) hold regular, at least annual meetings with the African diplomatic community accredited to Canada to discuss a mutually established agenda and iv) engaging with the diaspora communities.
- 4) Announce specific target increases for Official Development Assistance (ODA) (as included in the Liberal, NDP and Green platforms) from the current 0.28% to 0.35% of GNI by 2025 and to at least 0.40% by 2030 (the target date for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals). These increases should be primarily in bilateral assistance to African countries and to Africa multilateral institutions. They should include increased help with adaptation to rapid moving climate change - our current climate change assistance, going primarily to multilateral mitigation funding, is invisible in Africa.

Steering Committee Africa Study Group

This is based on the [Africa Study Group's March 2019 Vision Paper on Canada-Africa Relations](#)