



VISION PAPER OF THE AFRICA STUDY GROUP ON THE NEW STRATEGY FOR CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

The Africa Study Group (ASG) welcomes the Government's recent decision to develop a new strategy for how Canada can most effectively engage with the 54 countries in Africa. In this context, we are impressed by Minister Joly's announcement on June 22nd that Canada would be establishing a new high commission in Rwanda, as well as a dedicated mission with a permanent observer to the African Union (AU) in Ethiopia. We are seizing this opportunity to provide our suggestions as the Government undertakes this very important and long over-due initiative.

It is noteworthy that this re-set of Canadian-African relations takes place in 2022 and not in the 1970s or even the 1990s. In those days, Canada's relations with Africa had been on the periphery of Canadian foreign policy and based largely on our programme of Official Development Assistance (ODA). And that was enough. It no longer is enough.

For more than a decade, Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, has been consistently undergoing a major transformation and the continent has become increasingly important to the rest of the world. With the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement, Africa is now the largest free trade area in the world, second only to the World Trade Organization. Home to more than 1.4 billion people, 60% of whom are under the age of 25, the continent has 30% of the world's essential minerals. What happens in Africa now has global implications in terms of peace and security, food security, climate change, public health, human rights and the rule of law. The 54 African states have also become an undisputable voting force at the United Nations and in many international negotiation forums.

At the same time, Canada's geopolitical weight has been reduced with the emergence of new dominant players on the global and African scene. One need not be an expert to be aware of China's growing economic and financial influence as well as Russia's increased military presence and political alliances. India, Brazil, Japan, Turkey, Iran and many others have increased their engagement in the continent both diplomatically and commercially. Also, several African countries are themselves more influential and assertive in their diplomacy, such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Morocco.

A changing geopolitical world requires adapting and adjusting diplomatic engagement and the Government's decision to develop a new strategy to engage with Africa is therefore very timely. We believe that the guiding principles for this new strategy should be that:

- a) Canada needs Africa as much as Africa needs Canada, and that
- b) Canada moves away from a donor/recipient model to one based on relationships between/among equal partners.

FRAMEWORK FOR NEW STRATEGY FOR CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH AFRICA

The ASG recommends that Canada's engagement with Africa involve these main areas: Development, Humanitarian Assistance, Security and Stabilization, and Diplomatic Engagement. The strategy should see Canada as an active participant in both multilateral and bilateral fora and contain the following key elements:

I. A Continued and Energized Commitment to Multilateral Institutions

- Many of the challenges facing Africa, as well as several other truly global issues require joint action through multilateral bodies. Such latter issues would include peace and security, respect for human rights, rules-based trade, the increasing challenges of climate change and resulting migration flows and threats from, and responses to, food security and public health issues. Joint action is the best approach in such instances to agree on what the problem is; the best solution and formula for national contributions to the solution.
- For instance, one important forum for such collaboration is at the upcoming Climate Change COP 27 meeting in Egypt in November 2022. To date, Canada has doubled climate finance with a \$5.3 billion pledge for 2021/22 – 2025/26,¹ and is well-positioned to work with African partners on adaptation and mitigation strategies for mutual benefit.
- In the run-up to COP 27, there has been a growing support for a re-balancing of financial commitments from mitigation programming towards adaptation programming. Canada has already reoriented its *adaptation* commitments to 40 percent of its total. The ASG supports this recent move and calls upon Canada to continue to rebalance its Climate Change programming in this direction. Canada could use the COP27 to announce this realignment.

II. Rebalancing towards Bilateral Programme Design and Delivery

- It is appropriate for Canada to make its financial commitments to achieve internationally-agreed solutions to global problems at multilateral fora. However, delivering on these commitments can often be better done bilaterally. Speedy and efficient project and programme delivery is not one of the strengths of multilateral organisations. Canada can do a quicker and better job of delivering its agreed programming with bilateral partners.
- To this end, Canada should rebalance the proportion of its ODA that is disbursed through Multilateral / Regional bodies towards bilateral channels with a view to increasing the weighting of its programming whenever possible.² An additional benefit of this rebalancing is that Canada would get more bilateral and regional credit for its contributions rather than them getting lost in the budgets of various multilateral bodies.

III. Redefining Bilateral Relationships

- As Canada moves to increase the bilateral component of its engagement strategy with Africa, we need to move from a donor-recipient model, focussed on development

¹ Brian Tomlinson, "Note on Canadian International Climate Finance and Africa", Aug. 2022.

² Canadian ODA to Sub-Saharan Africa has increased more than 120% between 2015/16 and 2020/21. Canada has consistently channeled the majority of its aid to Sub-Saharan Africa through multilateral and Civil Society Organization channels. "A Profile of Canadian ODA to Africa", by Brian Tomlinson Aid/Watch Canada, July 2022.

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assistance or UN commitment delivery, to bilateral partnerships between equals, the purpose of which would be to define and advance joint economic and political interests.

- For these new partnerships to develop and flourish, Canada will need additional qualified people in the field, and also in headquarters to elaborate the bilateral side of the relationship. A recent book by Stefan Dercon³ makes a critical point that a good bilateral programme requires identifying and developing effective working relations with key 'local' decision-makers/champions.
- To do the above, GAC needs to have 1) a diplomatic Mission in the partner country, and 2) Canadian staff and advisers with local credibility and the knowledge and ability to identify, develop relations with and utilize the 'local champions'.
- But these officers on the ground need effective tools to deliver on their well-designed plans. To this end, Canada needs to continually act to ensure that there are no unacceptable delays between the Government taking the decision to act and delivering the agreed action on the ground.

IV. Organizing and Managing Bilateral Partnerships

- The Africa Bureau has a track record of successful bilateral agreements, e.g., with South Africa and Nigeria. The agendas of these Partnership Agreements would be defined and managed by senior representatives from participant countries, i.e., Joint Committees.
- Looking forward, some agenda items could include:
 - Joint Ventures that leverage Africa's increasingly profitable 'rare earth' minerals and Canada's mining expertise.
 - Advice from Canada's provinces regarding the establishment and operation of revenue-maximising resource tax and royalty systems.
 - Advice from Canada as a bilingual federal country, on how to organise political systems to minimise inter-ethnic conflicts.
 - Technical assistance from Canada, on commercial terms, to partner countries as to how best to take full advantage of AfCFTA.
 - Humanitarian assistance to certain partner countries to help manage refugee flows in their neighbourhoods.

V. Choosing Bilateral Partners

Here are some of ASG's suggested criteria or principles for use in choosing partners:

- A broad and deep set of common interests, encompassing trade, investment, poverty reduction and climate/public health-related impacts and responses.
- A collaborative, not 'preachy' approach on assisting any country that genuinely wants to meet its human rights obligations.
- A readiness to help the leaders of any country who seriously want to strengthen good governance and resolve a corruption or a 'democratic-deficit.' A partner country must, however, initiate the request and be prepared to be held responsible for its share of the results of any cooperation.

³ Stefan Dercon, *Gambling on Development*, Hurst Publishers, May 2022.

VI. Working with the African Union and Other Regional Organisations

- An important change in Africa's diplomacy architecture has been the creation of the African Union, its efforts to represent the 54 nations on the world scene, and its policies and actions on the continent.⁴
- Canada's recently announced plans to set up dedicated mission in Ethiopia to deal with the AU provides the opportunity for Canada to deepen its relationship with this key body.
- Entry into force of the AfCFTA in January 2021 has created a new framework for Africa to accelerate its growth through inter-Africa trade. Canada should continue its close cooperation with the governing institutions of AfCFTA.
- While Canada strongly supports the objectives and purpose of the AfCFTA, to date, member states have often resorted to pre-AfCFTA procedures and simply settled bilateral trade disputes through political channels, or not settled them at all. Canada could assist African countries to turn their 'political agreement' into an 'operational' one to expand intra-African trade and peacefully resolve bilateral trade disputes in a timely and transparent manner.
- Numerous other regional bodies (Economic Community of West African States – ECOWAS, Economic Community of Central African States – CEEAC, Southern African Development Community – SADC) exist on the continent and Canada will need to have a diplomatic proximity/engagement while being selective about which organization to work with on which issue.

VII. Reviewing Other Areas of Government Policy

- Quite apart from Canada's ODA and COP 26 commitments, there are a wide variety of Government policies which impact on African countries, whether intentionally or not. Take trade policy and cultural diplomacy, as examples.
- In November, 2013, the Government issued a new trade policy for selected African countries. An update of this policy is long overdue. Canada should review its tariff and non-tariff barriers to current and potential exports from African countries with a view to increasing bilateral trade as a key element of our future relations.
- In June, 2019, a Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade study⁵ concluded that cultural diplomacy should be a pillar of Canada's foreign policy. To follow-up on the study's recommendations, the Government should initiate an Africa focused cultural diplomacy programme with partner countries, with a view to opening new commercial opportunities for cultural entrepreneurs. The Canada-China joint committee on culture⁶ could serve as a blueprint or inspiration.

⁴ Agenda 2063: The Africa we want, by the African Union Commission, September 2015; https://au.int/Agenda2063/popular_version .

⁵ Cultural Diplomacy at the front stage of Canada's Foreign Policy, by The Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, June 2019; https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/AEFA/Reports/Report_CulturalDiplomacy_e.pdf .

⁶ Canada-China joint committee on culture; <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/canada-china-joint-committee-culture.html> .

VIII. Engaging with the African Diaspora in Canada and with the Canadian Diaspora in Africa

- In 2018, Canadians sent \$1.269 billion in remittances to their family and friends in Sub-Saharan Africa and an additional \$650 million to those in countries of North Africa. In the same year, Canada's ODA to that region was \$2.79 billion. So, remittances from members of Canada's diaspora are essentially equal to our ODA programme.⁷ Similar figures describe the remittances from Canadians to Asia and Latin America. These figures show the strong connections Canadians in the diaspora retain with their homelands.
- Canada cannot afford to ignore the strong connections and influence of its African diaspora, nor those of Canada's diaspora in Africa. The wealth of skills, knowledge and extended networks in their home countries possessed by members of both diasporas will be critical to the success of Canada's new African strategy. GAC needs to connect with these valuable allies.
- To this end, the Government should establish a senior-level GAC contact point to engage with the African Diaspora in Canada and the Canadian Diaspora in Africa to better define, manage, and advance the Government's relations with Africa.
- In parallel, GAC should call upon the various Diaspora communities in Canada to identify a small representative group to engage regularly with GAC. A system-wide coordination is urgently needed.

IX. Enhancing diplomatic relations and knowledge

- Canada needs to increase the number of diplomatic missions in Africa.
- Canada needs to engage more significantly with African governments through high-level and Prime Ministerial visits; a "Canada-Africa Heads of State Summit" is highly recommended.
- Canada should hold regular, at least annual meetings with the African diplomatic community accredited to Canada to discuss a mutually established agenda.

X. Ensuring progress under the New African Strategy

- Canada and its Partners need to set joint, tangible targets for each of their agreed agenda items, *e.g.*, percentage growth of imports and exports; growth in investment flows; increase in two-way visas; etc.
- Progress towards these 'measurable' targets should be reviewed and assessed every 5 years and recommended 'course corrections' provided.
- At a higher level, a senior official should be identified and assigned the responsibility of ensuring the success of Canada's Africa Strategy.

The ASG trusts that its suggestions to the government will lead to a new engagement strategy that will better position Canada to meet the challenges of a changing geopolitical world in Africa.⁸

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⁷ Canadian International Development Platform, Carleton University, 2022.

⁸ Canada-Africa Relations in Changing Core-Periphery Dynamics: A Chance to "Come Back" Differently, by Elizabeth Cobbett, 2017; <https://utpjournals.press/doi/10.3138/ijcs.55.04>.