



Submission No 23

Review of Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa

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**Submission by the High Commission of the Republic of South Africa
to the
Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee on
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JPCFADT)**

The High Commission of the Republic of South Africa focuses its work on four key areas

1. To promote bilateral political relations.

There is an apparent sense of satisfaction in South Africa at Australia's re-evaluation of its relations with Africa, resulting in what appears to be a positive re-engagement and a meaningful departure from years of inert cordiality.

To entrench this new direction, the High Commission seeks to encourage regular high-level interactions between our Principals in the Executive covering a broad scope of levels and Departments in order to secure an increasing convergence of views on key areas of bilateral and multilateral interest, in line with our broad engagements worldwide.

Some of South Africa's significant engagement fora include:

- IBSA (India/Brazil/South Africa) Consultative Forum;
- TDCA (Trade Development and Cooperation Agreement)
This Free Trade Agreement with the European Union had a Political Consultations Mechanism, that has since been upgraded into a Strategic Partnership;
- G8 +5 Outreach. South Africa, with Brazil, Mexico, India and China was invited annually to take part in the 'outreach' programme of the G8 with key developing states.
- G8 Africa Outreach – as above, but with 'key' African states;
- South Africa remains an active member of the G77 and China, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement, despite having been invited to join the OECD. While South Africa has not yet decided to join the OECD, it is a signatory to a number of its Conventions.

We celebrate the recent visit to various African countries by the Governor-General; attendance of the AU Summit by Minister Smith, and the subsequent visit by the Minister of Defence; as well as the recent meetings between Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and President Jacob G Zuma, as well as between Foreign Ministers Steven Smith and Maite Nkoana-Mashabane in Trinidad and Tobago.

We're currently expecting confirmation of a proposed visit by Minister Smith to Pretoria during January 2010. We intend to utilise this visit to

put into place a programme of interaction, as was intended with the agreement to hold an annual Senior Officials' Meeting – but which has not met in over a year.

We welcome the fact that Australia's re-engagement with Africa has found effect also in the elevation of the section responsible for relations with Africa in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to a Branch. As a result more staff has been allocated to this section, as well as to Australian Missions in Africa. This increased capacity in DFAT will no doubt facilitate interaction and cooperation between Australia and the countries of Africa.

While there is, inevitably, a lingering sense amongst some that the re-engagement with Africa is fuelled primarily by a desire to secure the African vote for its 2013/14 Candidature for the non-Permanent Seat on the Security Council; it is paramount that the growth in our relations, and in particular, the development of inter-personal relations between our Principals, is encouraged.

South Africa has yet to pronounce on which country it will support for the 2013/14 Security Council Seat, but it has taken positive note of Australia's public support for the Ezulwini Consensus on the Reform of the United Nations Security Council, which effectively argues for an expanded Security Council with Permanent Seats for two countries from the African continent.

Two areas of disagreement emerged recently between our countries:

- Australia recently voted against the South African Candidate for the post of Director General of the IAEA, in favour of the Japanese Candidate; and
- Australia was amongst a group of countries that boycotted the Review Conference of the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Geneva. The Review Conference was a follow-up on the conference held in Durban, which sought to encourage a broad and consistent debate against racism worldwide. While it appeared that a key issue of disagreement would arise on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, there was a lingering sense that Australia wanted to avoid addressing its own domestic issue - the situation of the ethnic Australian population.

In our interaction with the Legislature we have indicated the importance of extensive exchange programmes with Parliaments from across the continent, as many of them are emerging from years of conflict and require the expertise of more established democracies to assist them in understanding the very execution of their responsibilities.

There is therefore scope for the Australian Parliament to assist parliaments and parliamentarians in Africa to build their capacity to

effectively exercise their core duties, such as to hold the Executive accountable. In this way the Australian Parliament would be making a direct contribution to strengthening good governance and institutions of democracy in Africa. Australia could also consider ways in which it could assist the Pan African Parliament, which South Africa hosts, as this institution is still in its infancy and could play an important role in good governance, peace and stability on the African continent in the future.

2. To increase our bilateral trade and investment flows, including the exchange of relevant technologies;

There is a meaningful amount of both trade and investment between our countries. In our resolve to increase the levels – particularly of investment towards our sub-region, we have programmed ‘country presentations’ or trade and investment seminars in key Australian cities. The aim is to eliminate the ‘mutual ignorance’ of the business community; get to know the vast opportunities that exist, particularly in the broader Southern African region; promote the establishment of joint venture partnerships; and encourage constant exchanges between South African and Australian financial institutions, of their preferred area of investment interest, such that the proposed joint ventures can benefit from an element of financial security from both sides.

However, we’re challenged by our location in the same hemisphere – meaning that our soils hold many similar minerals, and bear similar vegetables and fruit at the same time of the year, which tends to push us to compete, rather than cooperate. Various opportunities and challenges exist:

- Our companies have much experiences to share in agriculture and animal husbandry, and are therefore well poised to make joint investments in agricultural projects in the sub-region;
- We need to increase the amount of Australian investment in South Africa and the sub-region given the immense new opportunities that are opening up with the elimination of conflict in many countries. There is currently more South African investment in Australia – in resources, retail, IT and other sectors, than Australian investment in South Africa;
- We need to deal urgently with concerns that protectionist measures, in the form of tariff and non-tariff barriers, may be penetrating our trading environment.
- Within the broad debate of climate change, it is important that South Africa and Australia – amongst others, cooperate in finding suitable technologies in carbon capture and storage, as well as those which optimise the amount of energy derived per tonne of coal.

The High Commission will be hosting an annual trade and investment seminar in Sydney during the month of September to follow after the Africa Down Under Mining Conference, which traditionally brings top mining companies and officials from Africa and Australia together in Perth in early September each year. The High Commission's seminars will aim to increase trade and investment flows in all sectors, and to encourage our business people to make the most of the possibilities that exist for Australian and South African companies to jointly explore the opportunities present in Southern Africa and the rest of the continent.

3. To identify educational and training opportunities for South African citizens, including the possibility of instituting long-term exchange programmes

The High Commission has engaged various tertiary institutions with the aim of increasing the number of South African students in Australia. Our discourse, however, also enjoins the institutions to look beyond their traditional partners when seeking to establish cooperation projects with their South African institutions. In particular, we request them to establish mentorship programmes with 'historically black' universities – or bush Colleges' - some of which educated the likes Nelson Mandela, and yet to this day, remain too under-resourced to establish or maintain international partnerships.

Key to this engagement is also a relationship with Further Education and Training Colleges, which we hope can assist us in the training of many of our citizens.

4. Cultivate relations with the South African Diaspora.

The High Commission engages with the sizeable South African Diaspora in Australia on an ongoing basis. It is our view that our Diaspora, with its knowledge of both the South African and Australian markets, could assist in building trade and investment bridges between our two countries. We also strive to keep the South African Diaspora informed of developments in South Africa and encourage them to remain engaged with the country and its people and to form a cohesive group, despite their different back grounds.

Other issues that the High Commission faces with regard to the South African Diaspora include:

- The perception that South Africans who are 'negative' about the new democratic state see Australia as the obvious alternative to relocate to. This is perceptible amongst the 'ex'-South Africans – as opposed to Australian-South Africans - present in the diaspora.
- The fact that it was strongly reported in the South African media earlier this year that the 'leaks' and the 'onslaught' on the South

African athlete Caster Semenya, following her gold medal win at the 2009 World Athletic Championships, were engineered in Australia.

- The finalisation of the Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement between South Africa and Australia to deal with fugitives from South African justice, who find accommodation in Australia.