Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE - INQUIRY INTO STRENGTHENING AUSTRALIA'S TRADE AND INVESTMENT RELATIONS WITH AFRICA

SUBMISSION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

19 December 2025

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has prepared this submission for the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into strengthening Australia's trade and investment relations with Africa. This submission draws on input provided by Australia's diplomatic missions in Africa, relevant areas of DFAT including Africa Branch and the Trade and Investment Group, and other government agencies including Austrade.

The countries of Africa are all at different stages of economic development, with diverse political and cultural systems and varied challenges and opportunities. This submission reports on Australia's trade and investment relations with all 54 African countries that Australia diplomatically recognises (see Figure 1). It also includes overviews of four key African trade partners (Annex A).

Australia has room to strengthen trade and investment relations across Africa, as the continent becomes more integrated under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its population grows. This would help Australia diversify our export markets and supply chains, as well as broaden our bilateral relationships with key African countries. Assessments of the opportunities for Australian companies need to balance the potential for growth against the reality for many African countries of conflict, weak governance, a lack of institutional capacity, commercial risk and exposure to an uncertain geopolitical context.

Africa has not been spared from recent major upheaval to international trade. Supply chain disruption, tariffs and the stalling and erosion of multilateral trade and trade institutions is affecting most countries, including in Africa. Australia continues to work to mitigate and adapt to the impact of these shocks to international trade.

In order to significantly and sustainably strengthen trade and investment relations, a number of key indicators must improve in parts of the continent, including regulatory clarity and predictability; political and economic stability; and more sustained, high-level engagement to advocate for Australian businesses in an increasingly contested geopolitical environment. This submission will also show how certain countries offer a positive picture of future opportunity for Australia.

The key findings of the 2017 Joint Standing Committee on the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into Australia's trade and investment relationship with the countries of Africa remain relevant today:

1. **Australia's trade and investment relationship with Africa remains primarily concentrated in investment in one sector: mining and extractives** – at the time of the 2017 report, more than 170 ASX-listed resource companies operated in 35 African countries, with investments exceeding A$40 billion. Mining and mining equipment, technology and services (METS) dominate trade, while Australian trade and investment in non-extractive sectors remains modest.
2. **There are significant untapped opportunities beyond extractives** – rapid population growth, urbanisation, and the emerging AfCFTA presented opportunities for enhanced trade and investment, especially in the education, agribusiness, renewable energy, infrastructure, and technology sectors — where Australian expertise gives us a competitive advantage.
3. **Complex barriers to sustainable expansion of trade and investment ties persist –** challenges include governance and regulatory uncertainty, security risks, poor infrastructure, low Africa literacy in Australia, and visa processing delays.

This 2025 submission outlines the current state of trade and investment relations, identifies key barriers to trade, details future opportunities, and makes recommendations to further strengthen trade and investment ties with Africa.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Economic growth in many African countries slowed in recent years due to the impact of COVID-19. But the African Development Bank (AfDB) recently signalled a cautiously optimistic shift in Africa's short-term economic trajectory.[1] The AfDB projects that average real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) across Africa will grow by 4.2 per cent for 2025 and 4.3 per cent in 2026. For 2025, the World Bank predicts GDP growth rates of around 3.4 per cent for sub-Saharan Africa.[2]

Looking to the future, Africa's economic, historical and geographic diversity makes it difficult to generalise about its economic prospects. However, common factors shaping its overall outlook are its burgeoning young population, urbanisation, a growing middle class, and regional economic integration. These drivers are operating at different speeds across the continent. Many economies, such as Angola and Nigeria, remain primarily single-commodity exporters (petroleum products), with growth largely driven by global demand and price fluctuations. Other countries, such as Kenya, Morocco and South Africa have diversified and sophisticated economies. South Africa is already a regional economic leader.

Africa is at a pivotal moment in shaping the global critical minerals landscape and is at the centre of US-China geopolitical tensions as both countries compete for Africa's resources. As new projects accelerate across the continent and with significant global reserves of minerals essential for the energy transition, Africa will play a major role in diversifying global supply chains. These supply chains are also the backbone of advanced technologies, energy transition and global economic growth, and Africa's role will be central to building resilience and reducing vulnerabilities worldwide.

Unfortunately, conflict, political instability, unfavourable and unpredictable changes in business environments, uncertainty in global commodity prices and weak economic governance continue to limit current growth and future outlooks for many African economies. For Australia, understanding the opportunities in the context of these complex risks remains key to our engagement.

Global players and preferential arrangements

African countries which had until recently received preferential bilateral trade access, including under arrangements such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in the US and the European Union's (EU) 'Everything But Arms' arrangement, have seen significant change in recent years. The AGOA trade partnership with the US, which gave preferential trade access to the US market for 35 African countries, expired on 30 September 2025. The US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is continuing to support some investments in Africa.

Various other countries are stepping up their economic engagement and investment in Africa, including Russia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates. At this stage it is unclear if this engagement will translate into preferential trade arrangements. In June 2025, China pledged to eliminate all remaining tariffs on goods from the 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic ties. While China has announced the cutting of tariffs, Chinese investment in infrastructure projects in Africa has declined in recent years. In August 2025, Japan announced it would refocus its contributions to Africa's economy through investments such as the Enhanced Private Sector Assistance for Africa initiative with the AfDB.

African countries are adjusting to compounding multidimensional shocks to stability and growth, including those stemming from climate change, proliferation of conflict and the broader disintegration of international rules and norms on trade.

Due to the relatively modest trading relationships we have with most African countries, and current other negotiating priorities, Australia does not have Free Trade Agreements with any African country. In the longer term, Australia could consider negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the AfCFTA, once it forms a viable customs union. In the interim, the Australian System of Tariff Preferences (ASTP) offers duty-free and quota-free market access to all goods originating from Least Developed Countries (LDC) in Africa (32 African countries are LDCs) and preferential treatment for most goods originating from developing countries in Africa. This reduces tariffs on exports from African countries to Australia.

[1] Africa Development Bank Group: Africa's Macroeconomic Performance and Outlook - November 2025 update.
[2] Africa Pulse, World Bank, October 2025.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Australia's trade with African countries has grown steadily over time. In 2024, two-way goods and services trade was valued at approximately A$12.7 billion (with exports totalling A$6.6 billion and imports A$6.1 billion). This is an increase of 19.8 per cent from the A$10.6 billion in 2014 (see Chart 1).

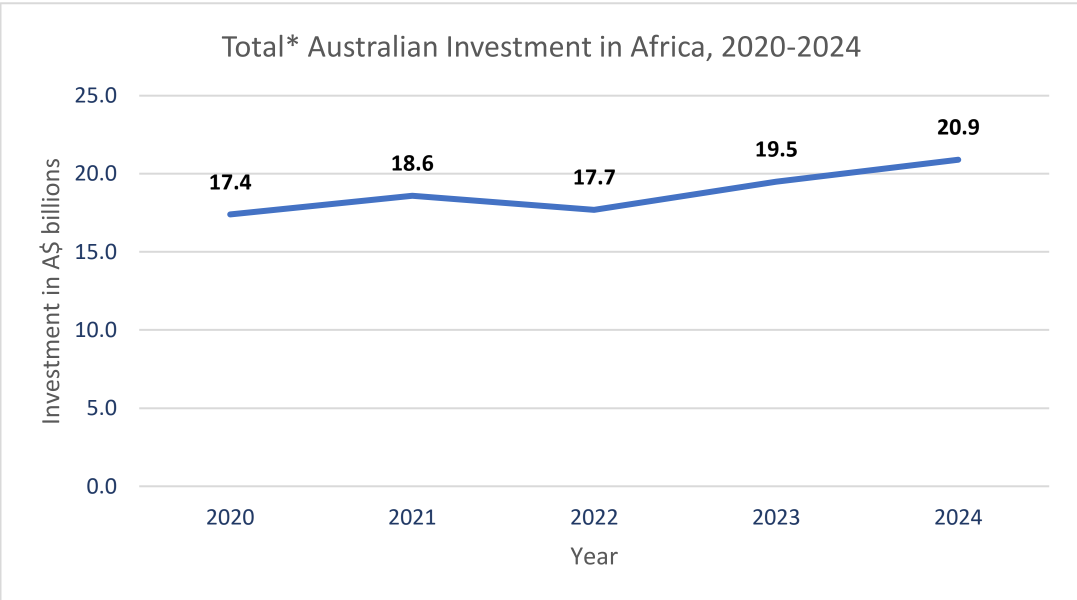
Key goods exports include aluminium ores and concentrates, wheat, and agricultural products, while imports are dominated by gold, crude petroleum, and fertilisers. Key services exports include education and METS. Key services imports vary considerably by country, with travel services dominating in popular tourist and business destinations such as Kenya, Morocco and South Africa.

Trade with Africa represented less than 1 per cent of Australia's overall trade flows in 2024. South Africa has remained Australia's largest trading partner in Africa for some time, accounting for almost A$5 billion in two-way trade in 2024.

Chart 1: Total two-way goods and services trade with Africa, 2014-2024

Source: DFAT: Australia's direction of goods and services trade – calendar years from 2007 to present, based on ABS data.

Chart 2: Australian investment in Africa, 2020-2024



Source: ABS International Investment Position, Australia: Supplementary Statistics (reference period 2024).

**Total includes Australian investment in 34 African countries only. This chart is replicated in the investment section, with further detail.*

Australian investment in Africa is concentrated in the resources sector and is estimated at the end of 2024 to be valued at A$20.9 billion (further background on this estimate is in the investment section further below). With the exception of South Africa, inbound investment into Australia is modest. Investment from African countries remains largely intra-African and to a lesser extent towards Europe. The level of South Africa's investment in Australia (A$10.1 billion in 2024) is the highest of all African countries.[3] It is almost twice what Australia invests in South Africa (approximately A$5.5 billion in 2024) and makes it Australia's 28th largest source of foreign investment. Several other African countries, such as Mauritius, also invest a significant amount into Australia relative to their GDP.

[3] ABS International Investment Position, Australia: Supplementary Statistics (reference period 2024).

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES: AFRICAN DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics

Africa's demographics underlie the significant opportunity for expanding trade and investment with the continent. Africa's population of approximately 1.5 billion is forecast to reach 2.4 billion by 2050,[4] accounting for more than half of global population growth during that period. Around 60 per cent of Africa's population is under 25. This will create both opportunities and challenges for local employment markets, skills development and economic growth. Africa's young population will fuel economic growth if matched with sufficient investment in education, vocational training and job creation. Improved governance and increased political and economic stability will also be important.

The impact of Africa's youth demographics will be complemented by the expansion of its middle class (predicted to reach 500 million by 2030),[5] which will increase demand for quality goods and services, including in sectors where Australian exporters may have comparative advantages. Key countries to watch in this regard which show a strong overlap of young, middle-class, quickly developing economies include Botswana, Ghana, Kenya and Morocco.

Africa is also predicted to rapidly urbanise in the coming decade. By 2035, over 50 per cent of Africans will live in cities, driving demand for infrastructure, housing and consumer goods. Megacities such as Kinshasa, Cairo and Lagos will become regional hubs for trade and innovation.

At the regional level, economic integration is both the key challenge and an untapped opportunity. While there are regional customs unions, such as the Southern Africa Customs Union, there remain significant barriers to intra-African trade. The AfCFTA, ratified by 49 countries, could boost intra-African trade by 52 per cent by 2030, creating larger, more predictable markets for foreign investors. While a daunting task, the long-term goal of the AfCFTA is to eventually form a customs union for the entire continent, reducing trade barriers and supporting economic growth.[6]

Digital transformation, including through greater digital connectivity, access to artificial intelligence and investment in digital infrastructure will be critical to integrating Africa's population into the global economy and the sustainable development of the countries its population lives in. Growing internet penetration combined with the demographic dynamics described above could present significant opportunities in e-commerce, internet advertising and data commercialisation.

Population growth and associated demographic changes alone, however, will not be sufficient to significantly increase Australian trade and investment flows with African countries. In many countries, the growth of a young, middle-class population will drive demand which many African markets may not be able to meet, potentially increasing mobility within and outside the continent as people seek better opportunities elsewhere. The most immediate and realistic commercial opportunities for Australian companies in Africa are in mining and related equipment, technology and services, education, agribusiness and food and infrastructure. A key factor in generating increased Australian business interest and engagement in the continent will be the degree to which African governments are prepared for and respond to demographic opportunities and challenges. African governments making significant investment in improving overall business environments and preparing economies for expansion will be crucial to sustainably realising the benefits of demographic shifts.

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[4] African development bank, Human Development publication.

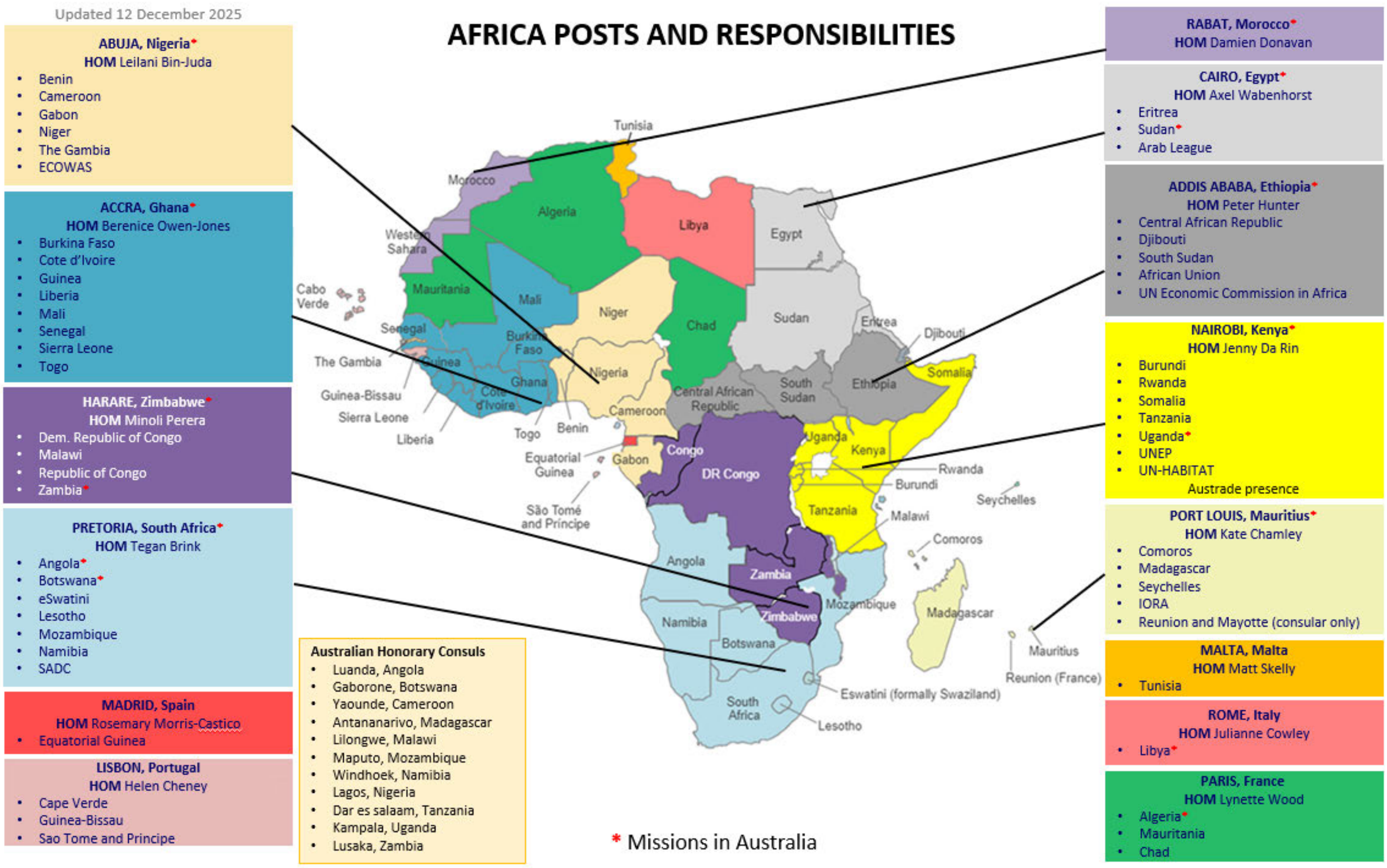
[5] African development bank, Africa's Macroeconomic Performance and Outlook - November 2025 update.

[6] African Union, The African Continental Free Trade Area, The African Continental Free Trade Area | African Union.

AUSTRALIAN ENGAGEMENT WITH AFRICA

DFAT's engagement is supported by our network of nine diplomatic missions in Africa, and honorary consuls in 11 countries. Some European missions are responsible for our relations with a small number of African countries.

Figure 1: Australian Diplomatic Missions in Africa



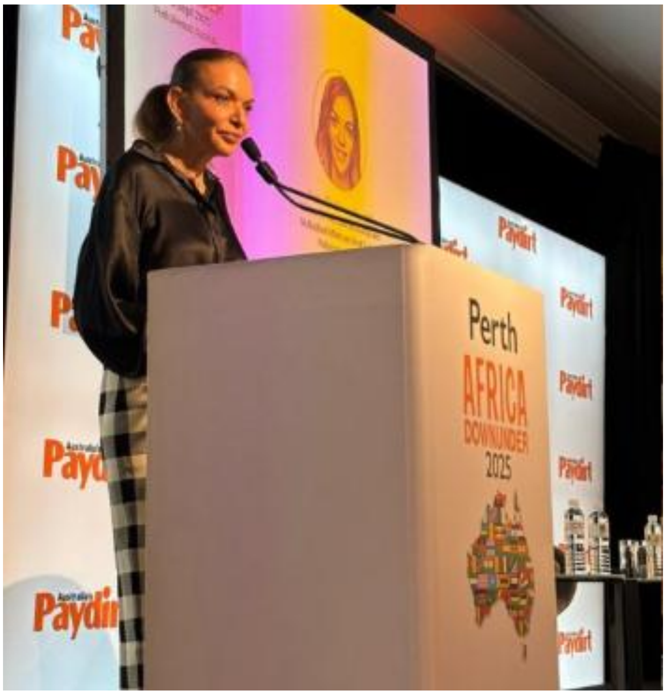
Existing economic diplomacy efforts have raised the profile of Australian companies in Africa. Australia's diplomatic missions work assiduously to identify and promote business opportunities in their respective countries of accreditation and to assist Australian businesses operating in Africa. High-level bilateral meetings between Australian and African ministers further strengthen our engagement and are seen as key to credibility in many African systems of government and diplomacy. South Africa's 2025 G20 Presidency led to a significant uptick in Australian ministerial visits to the continent (Table 1), including the Prime Minister's participation in the G20 Leaders' Summit in November 2025.

While we anticipate a relative decrease in high-level ministerial visits to Africa following South Africa's tenure as G20 President, sustained ministerial engagement will remain a critical component of Australia's broader diplomatic efforts.

Table 1: Australian Ministerial Engagement in Africa - 2025		
Event	**Date**	**Ministerial Engagement**
Bilateral Visit	December	• Minister for Trade and Tourism Farrell visited South Africa.
G20 Leaders' Summit	November	• Prime Minister Albanese attended the G20 Leaders' Summit in South Africa.
Bilateral Visit	October	• Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Thistlethwaite made a bilateral visit to Kenya.
G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting	October	• Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Thistlethwaite visited South Africa to attend the G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting and chair the annual Ministerial Meeting of the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity.
G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Ministerial Meeting	October	• Minister for Emergency Management McBain visited South Africa to attend the G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Ministerial Meeting.
G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting	July	• Treasurer Chalmers visited South Africa for the third G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors.
Bilateral visit	June	• Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Thistlethwaite made a bilateral visit to South Africa.
Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting	June	• Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Thistlethwaite attended the Commonwealth Trade and Investment Ministers' Meeting Namibia.
75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Egypt	April	• Governor-General Mostyn visited Egypt from 26-27 April 2025.
G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting	February	• Then Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services Jones visited South Africa for the first G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting.
G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting	February	• Minister for Foreign Affairs Wong visited South Africa for the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

Image 1: Prime Minister Albanese meets with President Cyril Ramaphosa at the G20 Summit, November 2025

Images 2 and 3: Minister for International Development Aly at Africa Down Under, September 2025



Australian ministers and senior officials have attended annual African Union summits as well as the annual Mining Indaba in South Africa and Africa Down Under (ADU) conference in Perth. Since its launch in 2016, the annual Africa Week in Perth (alongside ADU) has been a key, annual Australia-based event showcasing and promoting business, educational, academic and cultural links between Australia and Africa.

Bilateral engagement with individual countries is also a feature of our economic diplomacy efforts. DFAT holds Senior Officials Talks with several key African countries, most recently Ethiopia, Nigeria and Kenya in 2025. These talks include discussions on how to increase two-way trade and investment, and strengthen collaboration in multilateral trade forums such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). Senior Officials Talks and Trade and Investment Consultations with South Africa are scheduled for 2026.

Parliamentary exchanges are also a useful means of building awareness of opportunities to expand trade and investment linkages. In 2025, both the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Australia attended the G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit in South Africa in September 2025, and members of their respective delegations visited other African countries (Mauritius and Zambia) on the same trip.

Australia's development cooperation program, including the Australia Awards, plays a constructive role in helping to build public sector and regulatory capacity sectors of commercial relevance to Australia, such as mining governance and trade facilitation.

Private sector engagement

DFAT works closely with the private sector to advance Australia's commercial interests in Africa. Engagement with peak bodies, including AAMEG, helps Australian mining companies navigate complex regulatory environments and promote high environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards. Engagement with networks like the Australia Africa Universities Network strengthens education and research links, while collaboration with Paydirt Media through events such as ADU provides a platform to showcase Australian expertise and investment opportunities. These partnerships complement DFAT's diplomatic efforts, ensuring that Australian businesses are well supported to contribute to sustainable growth across the continent.

Our diplomats closely follow local economic trends and dynamics in Africa in order to inform a whole-of-government effort to promote Australia's economic interests overseas. Our missions in Africa regularly meet with Australian business representatives, particularly mining and METS companies. The annual West Africa Mining Security Conference in Ghana is a joint partnership between many Australian mining companies, the Australian High Commission in Accra, and international security experts who advise on the latest trends in managing security threats in West Africa. These engagements allow us to follow trade and investment sentiment and ease of doing business in Africa, supporting our advocacy for stable, predictable and clear regulatory requirements in the countries in which Australian companies operate.

DFAT – ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Economic diplomacy is a core element of the Australian Government's international engagement. DFAT leads the Government's economic diplomacy agenda, bringing together Australia's foreign affairs, trade, development and other international economic activities to protect and promote Australia's prosperity.

DFAT is represented in Africa by diplomatic missions in nine locations: Accra (covering Ghana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo); Abuja (covering Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, The Gambia and Niger); Addis Ababa (covering Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Djibouti, South Sudan, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the UN Economic Commission for Africa); Rabat (covering Morocco); Cairo (covering Egypt, Eritrea and Sudan); Nairobi (covering Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda); Harare (covering Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Malawi, Zambia and Republic of Congo); Port Louis (covering Mauritius, Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles, as well as consular responsibility for Réunion and Mayotte); and Pretoria (covering South Africa, Angola, Botswana, eSwatini, Lesotho, Mozambique and Namibia). In addition, reflecting historical ties and language requirements, several Australian missions in Europe cover African countries. The Australian Embassy in Paris is accredited to Algeria, Chad and Mauritania, as well as having non-consular responsibility for Réunion and Mayotte; Rome has responsibility for Libya; Malta for Tunisia; Lisbon for Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, and São Tomé and Principe; and Madrid for Equatorial Guinea.

Australia's missions in Africa are accredited to a number of regional African organisations including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.

Heads of Mission work closely with Austrade to coordinate whole-of-government strategies for economic engagement in Africa by promoting Australia's business and investment interests. Efforts to date have largely focused on the resources and energy, education, and agribusiness and food sectors, which dominate Australia's trade and investment. DFAT also actively monitors emerging commercial opportunities in a number of African countries and supports Australian businesses through diplomatic/ministerial visits and government advocacy on key issues, such as open and predictable trade and investment regulations and promoting ease of access to commercial opportunities in-country.

Australia is a small but long-standing development cooperation partner to Africa, providing both bilateral aid and humanitarian assistance, as well as support through non-government organisations and to multilateral bodies including the United Nations and the World Bank. Under the Australia-Africa (Regional) Development Partnership Plan 2025-2030, Australia seeks to promote a prosperous, resilient and stable Africa. A longstanding feature of our development cooperation with Africa is the Australia Awards Africa Program which supports professionals from Africa to undertake short courses and tertiary study in Australia. There are now over 1,000 Australia Awards alumni in Africa. In 2025, DFAT provided around 120 professional training opportunities (scholarships, short courses, and fellowships) in total under the program. Our Development Partnership also seeks to promote increased climate resilience and food security, improved access to essential health and support to women to play a leadership role in their communities. Our missions in Africa program deliver modest investments through the Direct Aid Program. These initiatives seek to build a stable and prosperous environment to support trade and economic development opportunities.

Through our diplomatic missions in Africa, DFAT supports connections between African governments, the private sector and Australian educational institutions to train and build the capacity of African officials responsible for mining governance. This supports improvements in the regulatory environment in African nations and helps build a successful and sustainable mining sector. Australian universities are actively expanding their student offerings across Africa through partnership arrangements.

The Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations (AGAAR) was formally disbanded in 2024 after an extended period of inactivity. All board positions were vacant at the time of disbanding except for the ex-officio role held by DFAT's First Assistant Secretary, Middle East and Africa Division. AGAAR was established in 2015 to strengthen links between Australia and sub-Saharan Africa. Its final meeting was in 2020, with activities that year curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has no plans to establish a body of this type to advise on Australia-Africa relations.

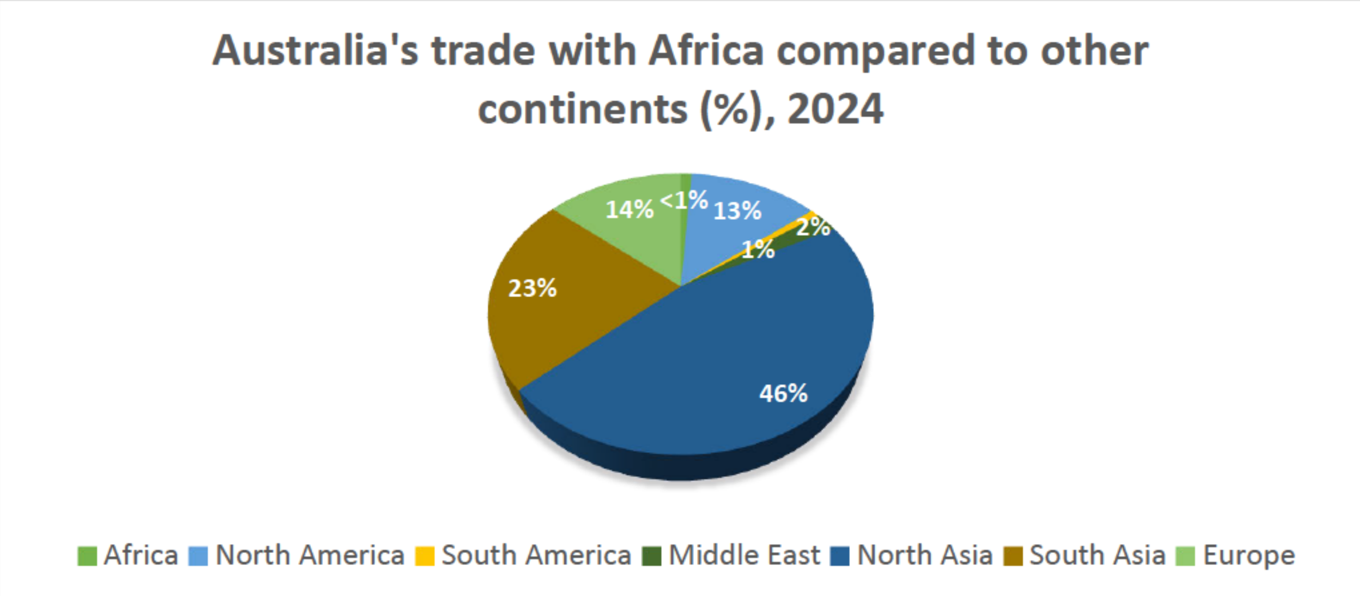
DFAT funds the Council for Australia-Arab Relations to deliver programs that broaden and strengthen the relationship between Australia and Arab countries, including in North Africa, such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. DFAT and Austrade are both represented as members of the Johannesburg-based Australian Business Chamber of Commerce (Southern Africa) (ABCSA) executive committee. ABCSA promotes improved business relations between Australia and the countries of Southern Africa.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT FLOWS

OVERVIEW

In 2024, two-way goods and services trade with African countries was valued at A$12.7 billion, representing just under 1 per cent of Australia's total trade (total exports and imports approximated A$1.3 trillion). While this is modest compared to some of our major trading partners (China A$312 billion; US A$133 billion), our trade with Africa has grown steadily, increasing by almost 60 per cent since 2015. As Table 2 details, most of this growth reflects increases in our aluminium ores and concentrates exports (up A$1.5 billion), gold imports (up A$1.1 billion), education-related travel services exports (up A$965 million), fertiliser imports (up A$562 million) and goods vehicle imports (up A$445 million).

Chart 3: Australia's trade with Africa as a proportion of all international trade, 2024



Source: DFAT: Australia's direction of goods and services trade – calendar years from 2007 to present, based on ABS data.

Table 2: Australia's top goods & services exports to Africa

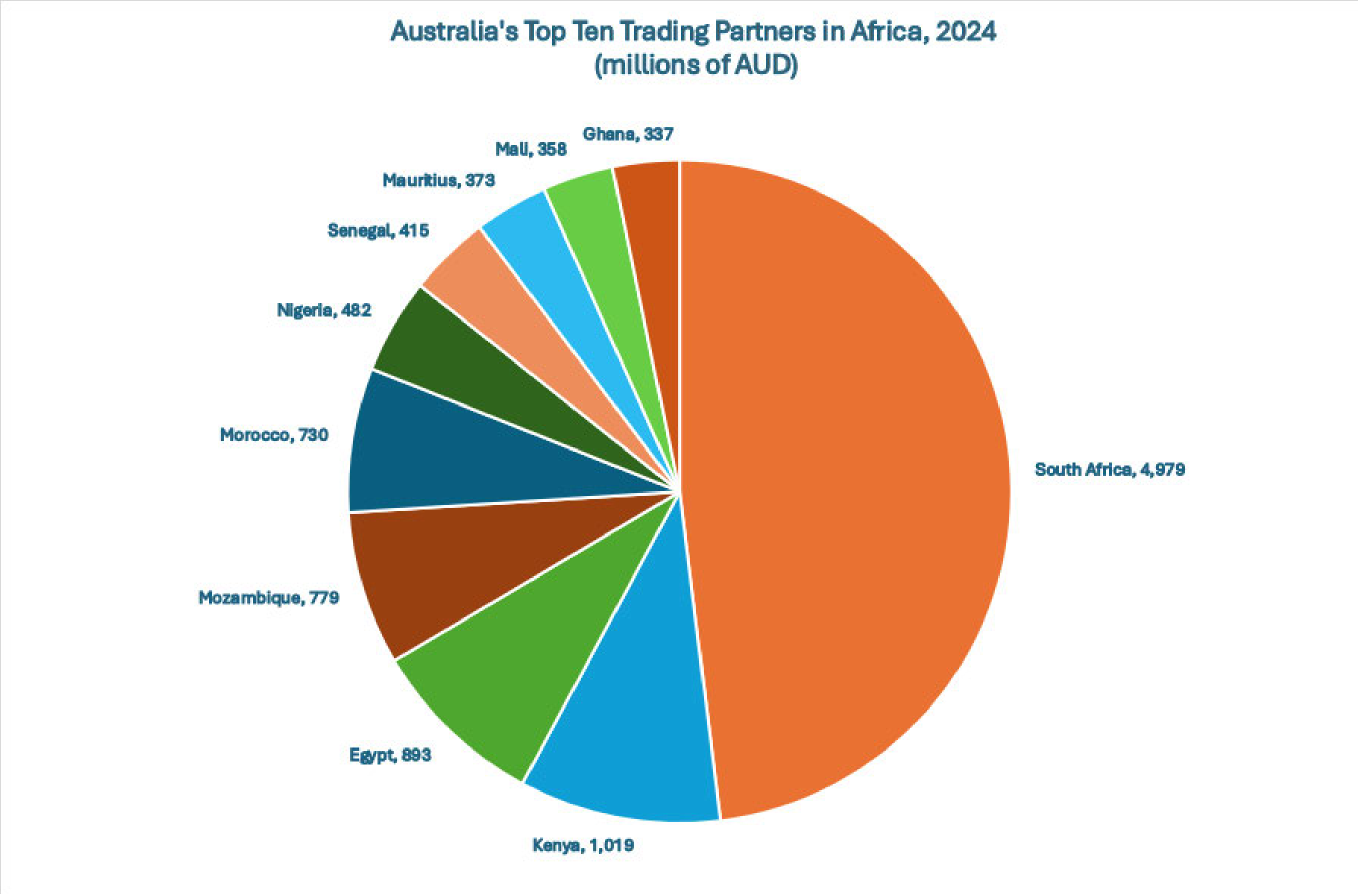
Rank in 2024	Commodity/service	2023 (A$ million)	2024 (A$ million)
1	Aluminium ores & concentrates (incl alumina)	1,474	1,699
2	Education-related travel	1,229	1,443
3	Vegetables, f.c.f.	291	408
4	Wheat	363	369
5	Other business services	386	339
6	Personal travel (excl education-related)	212	194
7	Coal	292	176
8	Meat (excl beef), f.c.f.	106	147
9	Specialised machinery & parts	116	136
10	Civil engineering equipment & parts	104	86
	Total	**6,336**	**6,602**

f.c.f = fresh, chilled or frozen.
Source: DFAT: Based on ABS data from Country and commodity pivot table 2006 to 2024; and ABS International Trade: Supplementary Information, Calendar Year (Reference period: 2024 calendar year).

KEY TRADE RELATIONSHIPS

South Africa is Australia's largest trading partner in Africa by a significant measure. Kenya and Egypt follow, driven by strong education and agricultural trade links. Mozambique ranks fourth. Morocco ranks fifth, largely due to Australia's imports of phosphate-based fertilisers, which have surged in recent years due to disruptions in global supply chains and reduced exports from other major suppliers. Other significant partners include Ghana, Nigeria, and Mauritius, reflecting demand for mining services, agricultural products, educational services and tourism. Although South Africa dominates both goods and services trade, the diversity of each of Africa's markets, particularly those in East Africa, highlights opportunities for Australian exporters and investors in sectors such as education, agribusiness and renewable energy.

Chart 4: Australia's Top 10 Trading Partners in Africa (Goods and Services), 2024



Source: DFAT: Australia's direction of goods and services trade – calendar years from 2007 to present, based on ABS data.

Trade in Goods

Australia's two-way merchandise trade with Africa reached A$9 billion in 2024. Much of Australia's goods trade activity is currently in the extractives sector, with ores, machinery and parts provided by Australian METS companies dominating Australia's exports in the sector. African countries import aluminium ores and concentrates primarily for downstream processing; South Africa, for example, uses alumina in its automotive and manufacturing industries. Wheat and vegetable exports to Africa fill seasonal and structural gaps in food supply for major markets such as Egypt, where domestic production is constrained by water scarcity. Export flows have generally tracked upward over the past decade, though agricultural exports remain subject to fluctuation due to climatic conditions and global commodity price shifts which have recently affected supply chains.

Table 3: Top Five Goods Export Destinations in Africa (millions of A$, in 2024)	
South Africa	1,823
Mozambique	767
Egypt	575
Ghana	166
Mauritius	132

Table 4: Top Five Goods Import Sources in Africa (millions of A$, in 2024)	
South Africa	2,135
Morocco	638
Mali	328
Senegal	306
Nigeria	229

Source: DFAT: Australia's direction of goods and services trade – calendar years from 2007 to present, based on ABS data.

Table 5: Top 10 Goods Exports to Africa (millions of A$, in 2024)	
Aluminium ores & conc (incl alumina)	1,699
Vegetables, f.c.f.	408
Wheat	369
Coal	176
Meat (excl beef), f.c.f.	147
Specialised machinery & parts	136
Civil engineering equipment & parts	86
Measuring & analysing instruments	62
Electrical circuits equipment	59
Iron ore & concentrates	45

Table 6: Top 10 Goods Imports from Africa (millions of A$, in 2024)	
Gold	1,136
Crude petroleum	618
Fertilisers (excl crude)	564
Goods vehicles	450
Passenger motor vehicles	264
Iron ore & concentrates	136
Coffee & substitutes	73
Other ores & concentrates	58
Cocoa	52
Arms & ammunition	48

Source: DFAT: Country and commodity pivot table 2006 to 2024, based on ABS data.

Trade in Services

The combined value of Australia's trade in services with Africa was worth A$3.8 billion in 2024. Much of Australia's activity in the export of services is currently in the extractives sector, including mining and engineering services. Other growth areas include education and financial services. Education-related travel services remain a key driver of services exports to the continent, reflecting Africa's growing demand for high-quality tertiary education. Africa-Australia services trade also includes personal travel services, with education-related travel making up a significant percentage of the value of services exports. Services exports to South Africa make up around a third of total Africa services exports, with South Africa also making up more than half of services imports.

Table 7: Top Five Services Exports to Africa (millions of A$, in 2024)	
Education-related travel	1,443
Professional, technical and other business services	339
Recreational travel	194
Transport services	76
Business-related travel	68

Table 8: Top Five Services Export Markets in Africa (millions of A$, in 2024)	
Kenya	744
South Africa	468
Nigeria	231
Mauritius	139
Zimbabwe	137

Table 9: Top Five Services Import Markets in Africa (millions of A$, in 2024)	
South Africa	552
Egypt	164
Kenya	99
Mauritius	91
Namibia	88

Source: DFAT: Australia's direction of goods and services trade – calendar years from 2007 to present, based on ABS data.

Table 10: Top 10 markets in Africa for Australia's education related travel services exports (millions of A$m)

Countries	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change 2015-24	Change 2019-24	Average annual % growth 2019-24
Kenya	108	127	168	203	218	192	145	214	541	705	597	487	26%
Nigeria	79	108	136	138	139	110	79	120	213	221	142	82	9.7%
Zimbabwe	46	56	66	67	67	59	46	61	102	117	71	50	12%
Mauritius	86	88	94	101	106	96	70	69	99	109	23	3	0.6%
S. Africa	31	31	35	39	46	46	36	44	68	70	39	24	8.8%
Egypt	17	18	20	23	25	25	19	27	46	48	31	23	14%
Ghana	18	23	31	36	37	30	22	27	39	40	22	3	1.6%
Ethiopia	9	10	12	14	15	14	9	15	28	35	26	20	18%
Uganda	10	9	10	10	10	9	7	11	22	26	16	16	21%
Zambia	24	20	19	19	18	15	11	11	15	15	-9	-3	-3.6%

Source: ABS International Trade: Supplementary Information, Calendar Year, Table 7.

Tourism

In the 12 months to September 2025, Australia welcomed approximately 83,400 short-term visitors from African countries, marking an 11 per cent year-on-year increase. The top 10 source countries/territories for arrivals were Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Réunion, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

During the same period, approximately 177,000 Australians returned from short-term trips to Africa, representing a 13 per cent increase compared to the previous year. This figure reflects travellers returning from African destinations (noting some may have transited through Africa en route to other destinations before returning to Australia). The top 10 countries Australians returned from were, in order: South Africa, Egypt, Mauritius, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Morocco, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Namibia and Nigeria.

INVESTMENT

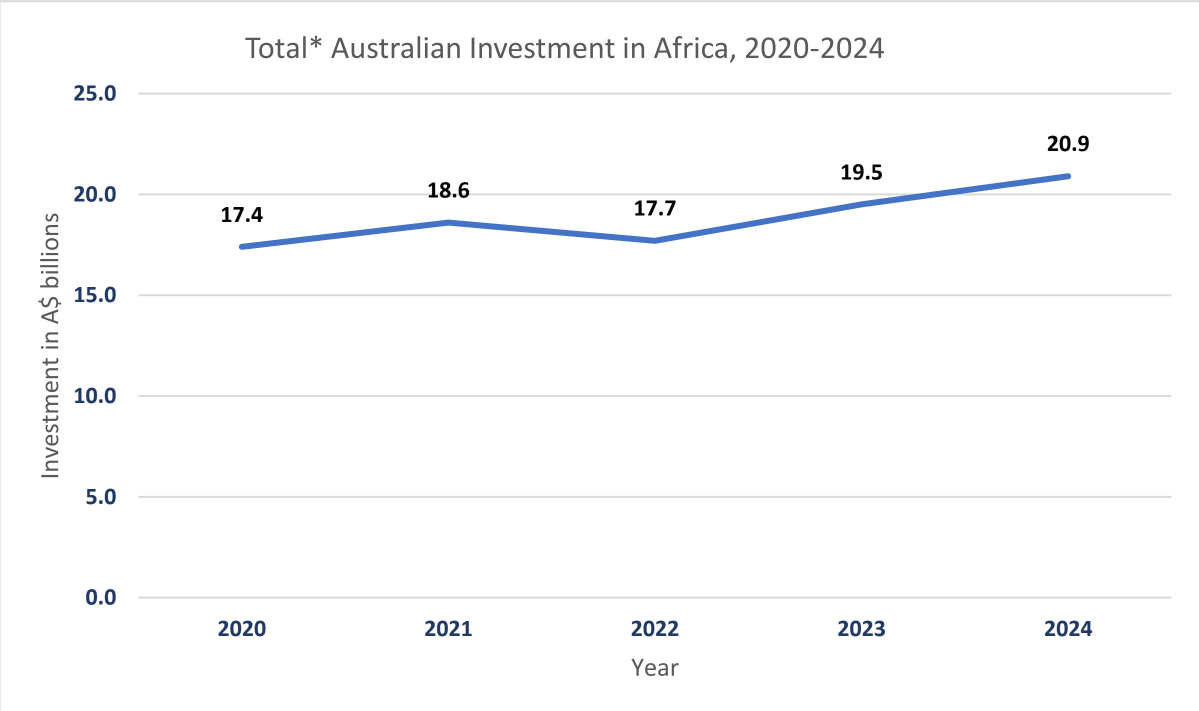
Africa attracts significant levels of global foreign investment. According to UNCTAD, Africa attracted 6 per cent of global foreign direct investment in 2024, compared to 4 per cent in the previous year.[7] North Africa is currently leading the way in attracting global investment on the continent, into countries such as Morocco and Tunisia.

Investment from Australia to Africa

It is difficult to quantify Australian investment in Africa because many investments are commercial-in-confidence and a number of countries have unreliable statistical reporting. According to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the level of Australia's total investment in 34 African countries was estimated at the end of 2024 to be A$20.9 billion.[8] Since 2020, Australian investment in Africa has trended upwards, which is reflected in Chart 5 below. Chart 6 further below shows Australian investment since 2001 into South Africa specifically. This also shows an upward trend.

Australian investment in Africa is highly concentrated in the mining sector. Non-Government sources such as S&P Global have also estimated (2023) that across all of Africa, Australian-headquartered or ASX-listed minerals companies have invested around A$60 billion, across 234 exploration, mining and processing projects. Australian METS companies are highly active, with around one-third of all Australian METS companies maintaining offices in Africa. AAMEG estimates that approximately 170 ASX-listed companies operate in 35 African countries, many of which supply METS to support Africa's extractive industries.[9]

Chart 5: Australian investment in Africa, 2020-2024



Source: ABS International Investment Position, Australia: Supplementary Statistics (reference period 2024).

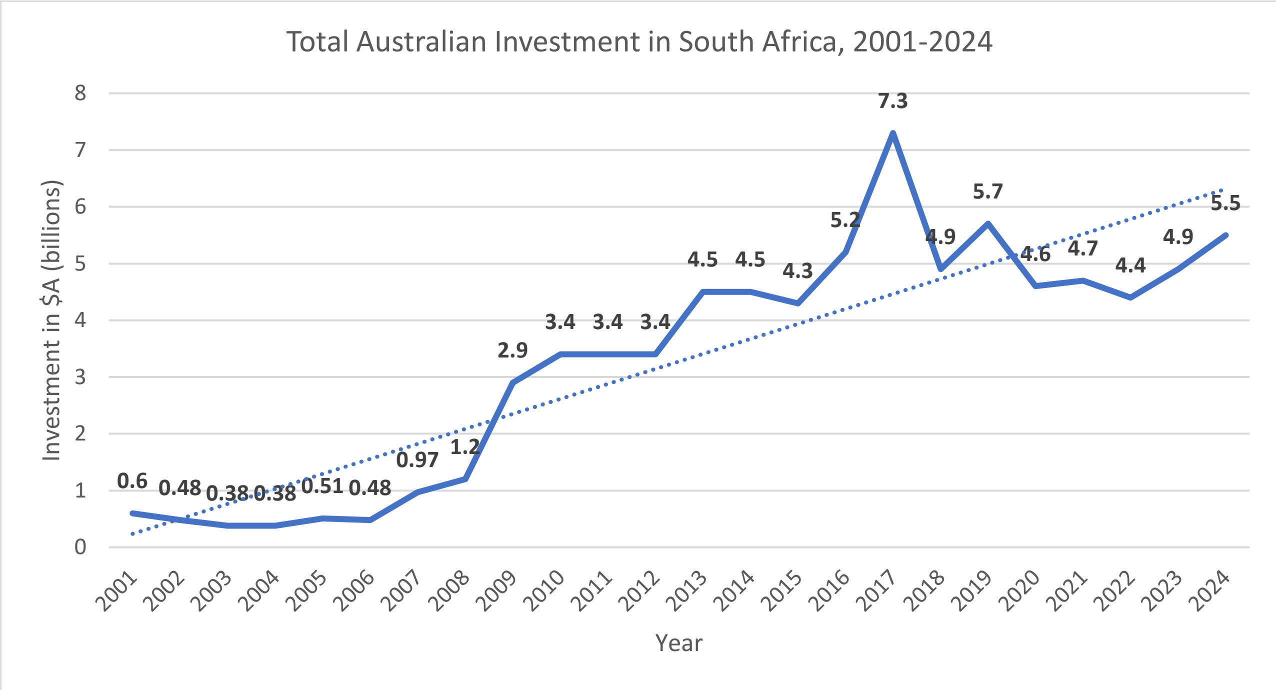
**Total figure includes Australian investment in 34 African countries only.*

[7] UNCTAD World Investment Report 2025.

[8] Note Australia's investment in Africa is estimated from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of International Investment which is sent to 1100+ companies each quarter. Any company not included in the survey is considered to not be statistically significant and any investment is assumed too small to impact the overall estimates. As a result, the reported figures are considered accurate, with any missing amounts likely minimal. These figures cover investments in 34 African economies where companies reported activity.

[9] AAMEG 2024 Submission to the Australian Federal Parliament on Strategic Partnerships for Critical Minerals: 'Advancing Australia's 2023-2030 Goals through African Investment': Enhancing investment in Africa via critical minerals | Australia's Paydirt.

Chart 6: Australian investment in South Africa, 2001-2024



Source: ABS International Investment Position, Australia: Supplementary Statistics (reference period 2024).

Australian investment in Africa's resources sector is concentrated in Southern and West Africa. The majority of Australian projects are in the exploration or pre-exploration stages, with only a small number currently in production or near production. This reflects both the high geological potential and the challenging operating environments in many African jurisdictions. Southern Africa—particularly Botswana, Namibia and South Africa — offers relative stability and established infrastructure. West African countries (including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana) attract significant exploration activity due to significant known gold reserves. High interest continues to translate into concrete investment despite elevated security risks in recent years (especially in Burkina Faso). This regional concentration demonstrates the potential for future growth as exploration projects transition to production, provided governance and security conditions improve.

The majority of extraction projects in Africa into which Australian mining companies invest are for gold (25 per cent), copper (11 per cent), coal (6 per cent), uranium (6 per cent), graphite (6 per cent) and lithium (6 per cent).[10] These resources together accounted for approximately 60 per cent of extraction projects into which Australian investment was directed and does not include investment by Australian METS companies. Recently, there has been diversification into other critical minerals such as nickel, rare earths and mineral sands, driven by global demand for battery technologies and renewable energy solutions. This shift positions Australian firms to play a key role in Africa's emerging green economy, while maintaining their strong presence in traditional commodities.

Australia was a founding member of the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) in 2022, which bolsters critical mineral supply chains essential to the energy transition by identifying strategic projects, attracting private sector finance, and upholding strong ESG credentials.[11] The MSP is intended to support investment in critical minerals supply chains, including in Africa. MSP principals are Australia, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Sweden, the UK, the US and the EU. The MSP Forum is a separate workstream seeking to deliver on the group's aims. The MSP Forum was created in March 2024 to involve a broader and more diverse group of participants, including developing countries. The MSP forum brings together minerals producing countries, committed to advancing high ESG standards, to promote diverse and resilient supply chains and local value-addition. Current African members of the MSP Forum are the DRC, Namibia and Zambia.

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[10] AAMEG Submission to Government 2024.
[11] Appendix A: International Partnerships | Critical Minerals Strategy 2023–2030 | Department of Industry Science and Resources

Investment from Africa to Australia

The overwhelming majority of investment from Africa into Australia comes from South Africa. Other (relatively modest) African sources of investment include Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius and Seychelles. Investment in Australia from Mauritius has experienced marked growth in the last five years.

South Africa's investment stocks into Australia have increased to A$10.1 billion in 2024, with foreign direct investment (FDI) stocks valued at A$3.2 billion. This includes recent acquisitions in the copper and gold sector by Harmony Gold and Goldfields. This amount is both larger than Australian total investment stock in South Africa (A$5.5 billion) and more diversified, with South African investments in mining, insurance, retail and property.

While these investments currently only represent a small component of inward investment to Australia (approximately 0.2 per cent of total foreign investment and 0.25 per cent of FDI), there is potential to attract more investment from South Africa. South Africa's capital exports reflect a desire to diversify and reduce exposure to the local market. Australia is a natural choice given strong familiarity between our corporate sectors and people-to-people links. Australia's transparent foreign investment regime, sound institutions, strong financial sector, economic growth and common interests across the resource, agriculture and retail and financial sectors, all make Australia an attractive option for outward South African investment.

Investment Agreements

Some Australian companies in the energy and resources industry, including through AAMEG, have called on the Australian Government to negotiate bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions with African countries, arguing that this would facilitate Australian investment in Africa by reducing legal risks.[12] AAMEG has also noted the tax implications of companies restructuring their investments in African countries through jurisdictions with which those countries have a BIT and argued that the costs and complexities of restructuring can disincentivise investment. However, investors are able to and frequently do, particularly in the energy and resources sector, negotiate a tailored international arbitration mechanism as part of their investment's contractual arrangements in the country in which they are investing. This enables them to specifically design legal protections to address the prevailing circumstances of that country.

Moreover, in the interests of safeguarding Australia's national interest and mitigating legal risk to the Commonwealth, the Australian Government's policy is to modernise existing BITs, including to remove ISDS provisions where possible and strengthen the right to regulate. Australia is engaged in various multilateral reform efforts relating to ISDS including the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law Working Group on ISDS Reform and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Future of Investment Treaties programme.

[12] See AAMEG submission, referenced above.

CHALLENGES FOR TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Many African countries have complex and high-risk operating environments. Uncertain and poorly regulated investment frameworks, coupled with political instability, the rise of authoritarian states and conflict – particularly in the Sahel, Sudan, and the Great Lakes region – undermine investor confidence and increase risks. As of October 2025, eight African countries remain on the Financial Action Task Force 'grey list' of jurisdictions under increased monitoring for strategic deficiencies in their regimes to counter money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing, while four African countries (Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa) were recently removed from the list. Infrastructure deficits, high rates of corruption, climate change impacts, and fragmented customs regimes further constrain trade and investment flows. Competition amongst major powers, including in the mining sector, adds to pressures for Australian firms.

Land and ownership

Local conditions, including traditional leadership structures, land ownership, expectations around remuneration and the broader social responsibility of companies can be difficult to navigate without a good local partner or consultant. Land ownership in particular can be difficult to consolidate due to competing levels of government (national, state and local) and traditional ownership claims – particularly where sites intersect lands of different groups, often with different ownership structures (patrilineal, matrilineal, collective and/or individual) – all of which add complexity to large-scale mining, infrastructure and agriculture projects. Both South Africa and Zimbabwe have also sought to use land ownership regulation as a means to address historical discrimination against local populations (e.g. historical apartheid-related structural barriers to participation). Local landowners sometimes expect mining companies to build roads and schools, in addition to royalties and other land fees being paid to government.

Weak governance and uncertain regulation

Uncertainty around regulatory regimes can have a chilling effect on Australian investment across all sectors. Opaque and unfamiliar tendering practices can also deter Australian companies from bidding for government contracts and advantage competitors. Many African governments consider local content regulation as a key instrument to support inclusive growth. Fluctuations in the value of Australian exports and imports to Africa often reflect the sensitivity of business to unpredictability in relation to government decision-making. Recent detentions of mining executives by the Government of Mali, allegedly on the basis of failure to pay retrospective changes to taxation arrangements, demonstrates the uncertainty of the operating environment in certain countries and the negative impact on investment flows.

Illegal mining also threatens Australian mining interests in many countries. Local governments often lack the resources to regulate the mining industry and enforce safe and sustainable practices, thereby threatening the viability of adjoining projects and damaging the environment. There are a range of actors involved in illegal mining, including artisanal miners, foreign speculators and foreign military personnel in some countries (who provide security services in return for unregulated access to certain resources). Illegal gold mining ('galamsey') in Ghana has brought widespread attention to illicit international trade routes involving Middle Eastern destinations, where the illegally mined gold is mixed with legitimate sources and sold internationally.

Australia's engagement with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and the Kimberly Process (detailed further below in the Development Cooperation section) seeks to support mining governance in Africa.

Corruption remains an economic challenge, including as a result of weak rule of law, slippage on reforms and political uncertainty ahead of elections. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2023 places the majority of African countries at the bottom half of the global scale. A culture of corruption, gift giving and facilitation payments in many countries deters Australian companies. The World Bank's Enterprise Surveys and the G20's Business 20 Survey in 2023 found corruption was the primary constraint to investment in Africa. Unlike some other companies, Australian companies are bound by extraterritorial anti-bribery laws in their home jurisdiction. Corruption is uneven across Africa: while corruption forms a major obstacle to commercial engagement in many countries, others (including some in Francophone Africa) have shown a moderate but marked improvement in this space in recent years (Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal).

Sovereign risk

Some African governments are liable to impose excessive tariffs, enact protectionist policies and discriminate in favour of state or politically connected companies. In some cases, Australian companies have suffered or been threatened with the theft of property and legal rights by host governments and leaders. For example, in February 2025 the Zimbabwen Government implemented a 30 per cent export surrender requirement in which exports must surrender 30 per cent of dollar receipts to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe in exchange for local currency (ZiG) at the official (overpriced) rate. Malawi also has an export surrender rate of 25 per cent, and its parallel exchange rate premium is significant. Zimbabwe also banned the export of raw lithium in 2022 and plans to expand this ban to lithium concentrate by 2027. In October 2025, the new Malawian government announced a ban on exports of all raw minerals. There is still some uncertainty as to what constitutes 'unprocessed' or 'raw', reducing investor certainty.

Labour standards

Large Australian businesses and other entities that meet reporting requirements of annual consolidated revenue of at least A$100 million are bound to comply with Australia's Modern Slavery Act, including to address the risks of modern slavery within their supply chains. The Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner plays a key role in supporting Australian entities to identify and mitigate these risks, promoting transparency and encouraging due diligence practices consistent with international norms.

DFAT advocates for fair and transparent regulatory environments and collaborates with partner governments to strengthen governance frameworks, safeguarding Australia's business reputation while contributing to sustainable development outcomes across the continent. Programs such as the Australia Awards Africa Masters scholarships and short courses further reinforce these efforts by building local institutional capacity to promote ethical labour standards. Australia has delivered three short courses on Mining Governance to 70 officials working in mining ministries across Africa since 2023; these initiatives promote safer operating environments for Australian businesses and support long-term development objectives through bespoke skills training for key decision-makers and subject matter experts working on the continent.

Geopolitical competition

Geopolitical competition will continue to shape the way in which African countries engage in the multilateral trade and political arena. Challenges to international trade norms and the rules-based order at large, including in the face of rising global protectionism and the proliferation of conflicts and the impacts of climate change, present significant hurdles for Africa's trade with the world. Against this backdrop, major powers and emerging actors are deepening their economic and political engagement with Africa in order to secure influence over critical sectors, particularly energy and minerals.

Immigration and border processing issues

Visa access for business purposes remains a concern for both African and Australian businesses. Australian firms continue to face obstacles in some African countries on the immigration front, with visa issuance for Australian passport holders often subject to unclear, changing or burdensome requirements and difficulty obtaining updates from authorities. Several countries, including Nigeria, have recently introduced e-visas including for business, which is intended to attract more foreign investment. South Africa's Home Affairs Minister visited Australia in 2025 to learn about Australia's digital visa processing.

African companies have reported that processing times for Australian visas and requirements for Australian business visas can limit competitiveness. Industry feedback notes delays have resulted in missed commercial opportunities, particularly for time-sensitive negotiations and project launches, restricting African investment in Australia. Ongoing communication challenges with Australia's immigration authority (for example, language difficulties, difficulty obtaining status updates or challenges clarifying requirements for submission) add to the burden for African businesses and can have a dampening effect on investor appetite.

Streamlining processes on both sides, particularly in countries in and from which there is high business interest and potential, would help strengthen trade and investment ties with the African continent.

Conflict, insecurity and instability

The 2025 Global Peace Index reported that Africa had become less peaceful overall, driven by election-related instability, ethnic tensions, increases in political terror and internal conflict. Terrorism in the Sahel region has increased significantly, accounting for 51 per cent of all terrorism deaths globally in 2024. Six of the ten least peaceful countries in the world are in Africa, and the World Bank considers that 21 sub-Saharan countries are fragile and conflict-affected states. Security is a clear concern for companies operating across Africa, with the cost on business varying depending on the operating environment. In more volatile locations, the threat of terrorism (and of direct attack on facilities or employees) is a deterrent, especially for smaller organisations. Terrorist groups such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State affiliated groups operating in Mozambique and the Sahel have increased kidnapping foreigners for ransom in 2025, which continue to significantly finance their operations and support expansion into new territory.

Inadequate infrastructure

Inadequate infrastructure adds to the cost of doing business in Africa and has led to the failure of major mining projects in the past. Poor road and transport networks, intermittent power and inefficient ports are common challenges across Africa. Technical barriers to trade and underdeveloped logistics networks, such as onerous customs procedures and inefficient ports act in much the same way as poor transport in adding to costs. While foreign donors (including China, the EU, UK and US) have heavily invested in infrastructure in Africa, Africa's trade profile remains extractive and minimally transformative, dominated by raw material exports rather than diversified, higher value-added goods and infrastructure that supports diverse products. African countries with substantial resource sectors are keen for public and private sector investment in infrastructure for processing those resources, as well as for manufacturing, to access the full economic benefits.

Education and training

A paucity of appropriately skilled staff often requires foreign companies to employ expatriates at higher costs and run training courses to develop the skills required. Recent reports by the African Development Bank[13] and World Bank[14] that African governments are increasingly implementing local content policies and requiring foreign firms to transfer skills and technology to domestic companies, particularly in mining and energy sectors where technical capacity remains limited. Senior geologists have complained that there are insufficient trained and experienced local geologists to meet local content requirements. Often staff trained to an appropriate level seek work outside of Africa where their families benefit from higher standards of living and education.

A mining services company in the Western Region of Ghana has been training plumbers and engineers to undertake maintenance at mine sites. Australian miners in Gabon have employed youth entrepreneurship programs and invested in training programs to upskill local communities in food services, hospitality, agriculture and trades to support their operations. DFAT has facilitated partnerships between Nigeria and Australian Universities for a series of blended capacity building and industry partnership programs for Nigerian and Gabonese mining professionals in Australia.

Beneficiation

Many African governments continue to prioritise beneficiation – the process of adding value to raw materials – as a strategy to create local jobs and stimulate industrial growth. In recent years, this has increasingly been linked to broader economic diversification agendas and critical minerals strategies under the African Union's Agenda 2063. For example, the African Minerals Strategy Group – which includes approximately 17 member countries from Africa and is chaired by the Nigerian Minister for Solid Minerals (mines) – advocates for local value benefit in critical minerals chains.

However, practical challenges persist: limited technical capacity, inadequate infrastructure, and high energy costs can render projects commercially unviable. Governments in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe have introduced policies to encourage local processing, but barriers exist and enforcement varies, creating uncertainty for investors. Australian companies considering beneficiation must factor in additional costs and regulatory complexity, which can significantly affect project viability. Strategic partnerships and technology transfer models may offer pathways to meet local content requirements while maintaining economic feasibility.

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[13] African Economic Outlook, October 2024, African Development Bank
[14] Africa Pulse, October 2024, World Bank,

CURRENT ENGAGEMENT AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

OVERVIEW

Mining and resources will remain a core commercial interest for Australia in Africa. It will continue to be the primary focus of Australian investment, reflecting our global leadership in extractive industries and associated services. Our reputation in Africa's resources industry is underpinned by the high ESG standards mandated for ASX-listed companies operating overseas. Our ESG standards distinguish Australian firms from competitors and reinforce our credibility in jurisdictions where governance and sustainability are increasingly scrutinised.

Many African governments actively express interest in attracting further Australian investment, and our diplomatic missions regularly engage with host authorities to advocate for open, predictable, and transparent trade and investment environments across the continent. Growing investment into Australia is one of the most valuable and achievable things the Australian Government could support. Investment roadshows in Africa could focus on complementary net-zero goals, leveraging Africa's resources for green tech, joint investment in infrastructure (ports, green energy), and Australia's expertise in mining and renewables to build trusted partnerships.

Education has also become a key pillar in our economic engagement and has long-term growth potential. Across the continent, Africa's youthful population – 60 per cent under 25 – will drive demand for education and skills development, positioning Australian providers to expand partnerships and offshore delivery, as well as campuses in Africa. Further diversification into sectors such as agribusiness, renewable energy and retail is possible in some markets.

In March 2026, the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) will be held in Yaoundé, Cameroon. This will be the first WTO Ministerial Conference hosted by an African country since 2015, and it occurs on the back of the African Union's admission to the G20 in 2023 and South Africa's role in 2025 as the first African country to host the G20. MC14 will take place at a significant juncture for the multilateral trading system and has the potential to set the course for a more effective, reformed WTO moving forward.

Tables 11-12 below outline some key trade-related engagements and events since 2023, and prospective opportunities to 2027.

Investment in mining and resources

Africa stands at a crossroad in the global critical minerals landscape. Africa is home to about a third of the world's known critical minerals reserves, including nearly 90 per cent of chromium and platinum deposits.[15] The value of these resources will increase as the world transitions to net zero and the race for faster microchips intensifies.[16] The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates African countries could reap 10 per cent of cumulative global revenues from copper, nickel, cobalt, and lithium over the next 25 years – with a cumulative estimated value of USD16 trillion dollars.[17]

As more critical minerals projects are developed, Africa will not just be a supplier of critical minerals but will also be a strategic player capable of influencing and building resilience in global supply chains that underpin global economic growth. Global powers are competing in a contested space for access to African critical minerals, reflecting their strategic importance in emerging sectors like clean energy, defence and advanced technology. How African governments balance external relationships with domestic priorities, including regulatory certainty and environmental stewardship, will significantly influence Australian investment. Commercial decisions that Australian mining companies operating in Africa make, including in relation to matters such as critical minerals off-take agreements and asset sales, will attract higher levels of scrutiny from foreign partners.

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[15] United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Our Work in Africa, 2024,
[16] International Energy Agency (IEA), Critical Minerals Market Review 2024
[17] International Monetary Fund (IMF), Africa's Resource Potential and Global Energy Transition, 2024,

Looking ahead, AAMEG has identified Botswana, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Madagascar, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia as countries which merit consideration for investment partnerships and opportunities, including due to their potential future roles in the energy transition.[18] Major existing infrastructure projects in Africa such as the Lobito Corridor – linking Angola, DRC, and Zambia to Atlantic ports – also offer opportunities for Australian companies to support critical mineral and green energy supply chains.

In considering Australian mining investment writ large, Australia's strongest mining presence in Africa is in Southern and West Africa and Tanzania. This is likely to remain the case in the short to medium-term. Southern Africa offers relative stability, with South Africa's economy anchored in gold, diamonds, coal and platinum group metals. Australian investment in South Africa is concentrated in mining and metals (aluminium smelter, minerals sands, Jupiter's Tshipi Borwa manganese mine). On 4 December 2025, ASX-listed West Wits Mining opened the first new gold mine in South Africa in 15 years. Botswana hosts nearly half its active mines under Australian ownership. Australian uranium miners in Namibia are driving economic growth, whereas Angola seeks diversification beyond oil and diamonds. In Mozambique, Syrah Resources is working with US DFC to develop a major graphite project.

In West Africa, vast reserves of gold, bauxite, and iron ore attract investment despite severe security challenges, including terrorism and political instability. Woodside's stake in the Sangomar oil development in Senegal, Rio Tinto's joint investment in the Simandou iron ore project in Guinea, and Fortescue's exploratory Belinga iron ore project in Gabon are expected to be deeply transformative for their host countries' economies. Australian companies also operate major gold mines in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.

In the longer term, East Africa offers the strongest potential for growth, including in critical minerals. East Africa presents opportunities in graphite, rare earths, and gold, though governance and infrastructure constraints persist. North Africa, with its proximity to Europe and Morocco's leadership in green hydrogen and fertilisers, presents opportunities for mining and energy partnerships. Morocco holds 70 per cent of global phosphate reserves.

According to AAMEG, in 2023 Australian firms budgeted A$539 million for mineral exploration – a 14 per cent increase on 2022 – representing 29 per cent of total exploration spending in Africa that year.[19] This strong presence reflects Africa's vast mineral reserves and growing importance in global supply chains for critical minerals. Australia's ESG standards remain a key differentiator from competitors, particularly with African governments under increasing pressure to deliver tangible benefits from extractive industries for their citizens, as well as increasing pressure from local communities against the poor practices of other players with lower ESG standards.

Australian companies, individuals and governments share a common branding and reputation in Africa as high-quality providers of services, particularly in the resources sector. Our high, mandated ESG standards for Australian companies operating overseas puts us a cut above the rest in terms of company obligations for transparency, conduct of operations and minimisation of impact on local populations and communities. Despite being a smaller player compared to some competitors on the continent, the quality we provide delivers a significant dividend reputationally to put us in a competitive position. Australia, including our business community, therefore has a strong interest in maintaining our position as an honest and reliable partner in Africa.

International education

Education represents a significant growth opportunity in Africa. With 60 per cent of the continent's population under the age of 25, demand for higher education and vocational training is strong and expected to increase. Australian educational providers are actively exploring ways to expand their engagement with African markets. There were 23,812 enrolments from African countries in 2024, with those from Kenya constituting the largest cohort (11,694) of any African country.

[18] AAMEG 2024 Submission to the Australian Federal Parliament on Strategic Partnerships for Critical Minerals: 'Advancing Australia's 2023-2030 Goals through African Investment':
[19] S&P Global Market Intelligence, World Exploration Trends 2024

International education remains a strong field of opportunity in Africa for Australia, including vocational education, as the demand for skill development and vocational training increases alongside demographic change and broader societal development. There is scope for Australian institutions to strengthen partnerships with African universities, for example though establishing campuses on the continent, expert secondments, direct knowledge transfer schemes and research collaborations. Curtin University's off-shore campus in Mauritius is a good example. In March 2025, Curtin University in Western Australia (WA) announced a partnership with Australian mining company, Fortescue and the Government of Gabon. The 'We Train For Gabon – Destination Australia' program, sponsored by Fortescue, supports up to 50 Gabonese participants in a training program for mining and mining related education. Murdoch University (also in WA) has also developed courses for Nigerian participants on key extraction, social and sustainable mining practises, with support from the WA Government, DFAT and industry stakeholders.[20] Other Australian institutions should look for further opportunities to develop offshore delivery models such as offering short courses tailored to local needs.

Programs such as Australia Awards Africa – which include Master's scholarships and short courses – play a critical role in strengthening local institutional capacity and are delivered as part of Australia's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). Since 2022, Australia has annually funded 45 scholarships for African professionals to undertake tertiary level study in Australia and delivers three short courses for 75 officials. These short courses enhance African officials' engagement with Australian academics and policy makers working and build platforms for network and collaboration amongst participants and with Australian officials. The course on Mining Governance seeks to enhance governance frameworks and improve transparency in the extractive sector, fostering conditions conducive to responsible investment and long-term economic growth. Through the Enhancing Continental Trade Facilitation short course, we seek to equip participants with the knowledge and skills to maximise their countries' trade potential through the AfCFTA.

Agriculture

While agricultural trade shows promising developments, African countries often compete with Australia in global markets, which limits potential growth in the trade of many commodities. Nevertheless, demand within Africa for premium Australian food and beverage products – such as seafood and wine – remains small but is steadily increasing.

Climatic conditions across central and southern Africa can disrupt domestic agricultural production. Australian producers can help fill supply gaps when they arise. In 2024, Australia's agriculture, fisheries, and forestry (AFF) exports to Africa totalled A$1,225.7 million, with Egypt and South Africa representing the largest markets. Exports to Egypt were valued at A$520 million, primarily comprising pulses (A$424.4 million), meat (A$53.8 million), and vegetables (A$396.4 million). South Africa accounted for A$301 million, dominated by grains (A$211.8 million) and meat (A$27 million).

Australia's AFF imports from Africa remain comparatively limited, amounting to A$432.8 million in 2024. South Africa (A$155.9 million), Kenya (A$41.2 million) and Ethiopia (A$40.7 million) were the leading sources of imports. Key imported commodities included coffee (A$72.9 million), cocoa products (A$51.1 million) and fish fillets (A$35.7 million). Kenya is a major supplier of cut roses to Australia, providing 42 per cent of total imports in 2024. Since 2017, Australia has collaborated closely with the Kenyan government to ensure that fresh cut flowers meet stringent phytosanitary standards.

Africa also plays a critical role in supplying agricultural inputs to Australia. In 2024, the continent accounted for 38 per cent of Australia's imports of phosphorus-based fertilizers, an essential component for sustaining domestic agricultural productivity.

Digital transformation

Africa's rapid urbanisation and growing middle class will also drive demand for digital services. Australian technology firms can capitalise on investment opportunities in e-commerce, fintech and educational technologies, potentially supported by programs like UNCTAD's Digital Economy initiative and the World Bank DATA Fund.

[20] HASS Nigerian partnership leads sustainable mining shift

In Anglophone Africa, there is great potential for business processing outsourcing services such as call centres, with a large, young, and often well-educated workforce with good English skills, especially in South Africa, East Africa and Nigeria. Africa is also well-suited for leapfrog technologies, and Australian technology firms with the right kinds of product and mindset have an opportunity to invest. For example, Canva is strengthening its engagement in the African continent, with the introduction of a new team in South Africa, and the expansion of the platform to into almost 20 African languages. There is also an opportunity for educational technologies, which UNICEF is capitalising on. In 2025, UNICEF selected Matific to implement projects in Egypt and Ghana, focusing on ensuring that all children have access to effective digital learning tools.

G20 Compact with Africa

The G20 Compact with Africa (CwA), launched in 2017, aims to attract more private investment in African partner countries by supporting policy and macroeconomic reforms that enhance their investment climate. The CwA helps create direct connections between investors and African businesses to mobilise private capital and create job opportunities. 15 African countries have joined the initiative, as well as three international organisations (IMF, World Bank and African Development Bank) and several G20 members. In 2025, under the South African G20 Presidency, the CwA launched its second phase (2025-33), supported by the establishment of a World Bank Group multi-donor fund.

The 2025 G20 Leaders' Summit Declaration recognised the importance of the CwA,[21] which is coordinated and monitored by the G20 finance track, through the Africa Advisory Group. A 2025 IMF study found that, while the short timeframe has limited the ability to establish firm causality, participation in the CwA has been associated with increased FDI inflows for member countries.[22] African CwA members already have strong institutions, infrastructure, and human development; factors that support FDI attraction and could align well with areas of Australian investment interest.

Although Australia is not currently an active partner beyond its G20 membership, Australia supports the CwA's ambition to create a better enabling environment for private sector investment across Africa. While we are not currently in a position to financially contribute to the CwA, Australia could leverage the CwA as a platform to strengthen investment relationships with African countries by raising awareness of the CwA with the private sector.

African Development Bank (AfDB)

The AfDB is an African-majority-owned institution with a mandate to drive economic growth and reduce poverty. It has 81 members: 54 African countries and 27 non-African partner countries. Member countries provide capital and expertise to encourage Africa's economic growth.

In 2012, the Australian Government considered but ultimately decided against pursuing membership of the AfDB in part due to the refocussing of the Australian aid program on the Indo-Pacific region. Although local participation is encouraged, firms from non-member countries can bid on AfDB-financed projects if they meet eligibility. With most of Australia's engagement in Africa in mining and agriculture sectors, Australian private sector expertise could still be leveraged through AfDB to make Australian investments more effective and secure. Australian companies could co-invest in AfDB-led projects, to facilitate deeper technical partnerships in these areas. The AfDB has a special competitive edge in the financing of mining projects through the building of local support infrastructure and large infrastructure, like railways, ports and power. There could also be increased business opportunities for companies and institutions in AfDB procurement opportunities.

Clean energy

Renewable energy and investment in green technologies also present medium-term potential. As African nations seek sustainable solutions to meet growing energy demands, opportunities for collaboration and investment in this sector are expected to expand. Morocco is investing heavily in renewable energy, building large solar and wind parks and plants; Chinese wind turbine blade manufacturing plant; green hydrogen and ammonia. In March 2025, Morocco approved the first phase (A$51.8 billion) of its 'Moroccan Offer' for six projects to produce green hydrogen (and downstream fuels such as ammonia).

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[21] G20 South Africa Summit: Leaders' Declaration, 22 and 23 November 2025 - DIRCO.
[22] International Monetary Fund, Economic Impact of G20 Compact with Africa Initiative on Member Countries, 2025.

Key precursors to expanded trade and investment with the countries of Africa

Expanding Australia's trade and investment footprint in Africa over the next decade partly depends on stabilisation and improvement in enabling market conditions that allow for investor confidence in the medium to long term.

Above all, political stability and security are key to mitigate sovereign risk in regions affected by conflict and terrorism. In countries such as those in West Africa which have recently undergone extra-constitutional changes of government, or remain subject to insurgencies by extremist groups and non-state armed actors, the investment environment is increasingly difficult despite the known significant investment potential in the resources sector.

At the regulatory level, securing predictable governance and regulatory certainty remains paramount, especially under the spectre of national governments seeking to nationalise resources, change rules and regulations at little notice and in turn add to existing complexity in local investment conditions. Our missions across the continent consistently advocate for predictable and workable trade and investment regulations, and in some countries, significant progress has been made, for example in Mauritius and to some degree in Seychelles. In response to the proliferation of global competition for critical minerals, resource nationalism and local content policies continue to complicate and threaten to complicate investor confidence and the ability of existing Australian investors to operate in unpredictable regulatory environments.

In the current geoeconomic context, Australian companies must navigate a landscape in which investment depends on strategic infrastructure, transparent procurement processes, anti-corruption measures and transparency. Reliable energy and transport infrastructure, coupled with digital connectivity, underpins trade facilitation and supports integration into global value chains. Australian companies, particularly in the METS sector, have a significant opportunity to play a role in Africa's development across each inter-connected sector and industry, but will continue to face significant challenges due to fierce competition, difficult and rapidly changing circumstances on the ground and the need to maintain high ESG standards as they conduct business.

Skills and development as well as institutional capacity building are pivotal to sustainable engagement into the future. Investing in these aspects will be key to the successful economic development of countries and the eventual development of a customs union under the AfCFTA. The Australia Awards Trade Facilitation Short Course is designed to address some of these gaps in trade and investment institutional capacity, but there is more that Australian institutions can do. In sum, the investment environment varies significantly across the continent and can at times present significant complexity and dampen investor confidence, but if the conditions above improve there is significant potential to be realised for the benefit of Australian companies and the African countries in which they seek to invest.

Table 11: Key trade-related visits and delegations (2023-2025) and annual trade-related events	
Date	**Engagement**
2024	• **Australian education mission to Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana,** involving 21 representatives from Australian universities visiting Abuja, Lagos, Accra, Eldoret, and Nairobi, organised by Austrade.
2024	• **Australian education mission to Nigeria,** involving 13 representatives from universities visiting Abuja and Lagos in Nigeria, organised by DFAT.
Annual (February)	• **African Mining Indaba,** Africa's premier mining conference held in Cape Town, South Africa, attracting over 10,000 delegates, including over 50 Ministers, and company executives and government officials from over 100 countries Australian ministers are invited each year. DFAT hosts an Australian Mining in Africa Reception which attracts around 200 government and business officials, including several African Ministers.
Annual (September/October)	• **West Africa Mining Security (WAMS) Conference,** Annual event hosted by Australia's High Commission in Accra, Ghana.
Annual	• **Internation Mining and Resources Conference (IMARC),** Nigerian Minister of Steel attended the 2024 in Melbourne.
Annual (September)	• **Africa Down Under (ADU),** an annual Australia-Africa mining and investment event: Hosted in Perth, with regular DFAT and WA Government engagement, previous three years with attendance by Minister Madeleine King, Minister Anne Aly and then Assistant Minister Tim Watts.
Annual (September)	• **Australia-Africa Week,** a key platform for business and education engagement, coinciding with ADU.
2023	• **Special Visit Program (SVP)** for the AfCFTA Secretary-General.
2025	• **SVP** for Chief Economist of the Agriculture Business Chamber of South Africa and member of Presidential Economic Advisory Council.
Biennial	• **WTO Ministerial Conference**, Cameroon will host MC14 in March 2026. WTO Ministerial Conferences are key events for engagement with global counterparts on trade including African countries.

Table 12: Prospective opportunities for high-level engagement (2025-2027)	
Date	**Engagement**
Annual (February)	• **African Mining Indaba** (Cape Town)
March 2026	• **14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14)** (Yaoundé, Cameroon)
Annual (September)	• **ADU and Australia-Africa Week** (Perth)
Annual	• **IMARC** (Sydney): Increasingly attended by senior African officials.
Ongoing	• Targeted trade missions to priority markets such as South Africa, Kenya, Morocco, and Egypt, leveraging recent agreements and sectoral opportunities (e.g., mining, renewable energy, education). • Follow-up engagement under the AfCFTA MOU, including trade promotion activities.

ROLE OF DFAT IN IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES

The Australian Government has an important role to play in identifying and promoting business opportunities, improving market access and advocating for a predictable market-oriented operating environment. Existing economic diplomacy efforts raise the profile of Australian companies in Africa. Missions engage with partner governments to address relevant non-tariff-barriers and regulatory challenges facing Australian companies, including on licensing arrangements, foreign exchange restrictions, taxes and royalties. They also conduct regular outreach and engagement with the business community.

Diplomatic missions work assiduously, including in collaboration with Austrade, to identify and promote business opportunities in their respective countries, and to assist Australian businesses operating in Africa.

Australia’s diplomatic footprint in Africa consists of nine missions. These missions are strategically placed in countries and regions where our national interests are most substantive. Although, comparatively, countries such as Canada, China, the US and many European countries often have significantly larger diplomatic footprints in Africa, we can leverage concentrated opportunities to advocate for our trade and investment interests, including major events like Mining Indaba and ADU.

Political engagement can give a significant boost to our trade advocacy. In late 2024, the Moroccan Government organised a visit by an Australian parliamentary delegation. The five-day visit comprised field visits and meetings with senior government officials focused on opportunities to strengthen the economic relationship. In September 2025, a bipartisan Parliamentary Delegation, led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, visited Zambia for three days en route to the G20 Speakers’ Summit in South Africa. The visit allowed for direct exchange with key members of Zambia’s parliament, a number of Parliamentary Committees and Chief Whips. The visit focussed on our shared democratic values and commitment to strengthening the multilateral system.

In 2025, there has been a strong uptick in ministerial engagement with African counterparts, primarily due to the South Africa’s G20 Presidency. Prime Minister Albanese travelled to Johannesburg in November 2025 for the G20 Leaders’ Summit and met with South African President Ramaphosa. Minister for Foreign Affairs Wong, Treasurer Chalmers, former Assistant Treasurer Jones, and Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Thistlethwaite all visited South Africa for various G20 meetings this year. Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Thistlethwaite also held bilateral meetings in Kenya in October, and led a delegation to the Commonwealth Trade Ministers’ Meeting, held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 18-19 June 2025.

Business delegations, in particular where they are led by a Minister or Assistant Minister, to priority countries boost the profile of Australian businesses. They also help to promote greater private sector linkages across sectors and to provide greater assistance to Australian business in order to help them advocate to African governments on regulatory issues. A good practice would be for a Minister or Assistant Minister to lead the Australian delegation to African Mining Indaba, the world’s largest mining investment conference attended by African Ministers which is held in Cape Town in February each year. We are conscious that forward travel programs for Ministers are heavily committed and would look to continue to leverage ministerial travel to the region for other international meetings.

DFAT supports the visits of African Ministers and officials to Australia. For example, DFAT operates a Special Visits Program (SVP) funding the visit of nominated special visitors to Australia. In 2023, the AfCFTA Secretary-General Wamkele Mene visited Australia under the auspices of an SVP, and undertook bilateral engagements across the country, including the Minister for Trade and Tourism Farrell. This resulted in an agreement to explore future engagement with the AfCFTA under an MOU, which was signed by Assistant Minister Thistlethwaite in June 2022 in Namibia.

From 6 to 13 September 2025, Mr Wandile Sihlobo, a leading South African agricultural economist and advisor to President Ramaphosa on agriculture and economic issues, as well as to Foreign Minister Lamola on economic diplomacy, visited Australia under the SVP. The visit provided an important platform for discussions on bilateral and multilateral agriculture and trade cooperation and contributed to strengthening relations with South Africa, one of Australia’s key trading partners in Africa.

DFAT works closely with Austrade to support activities in support of specific sectors. For example, in 2024, our missions in Africa supported an Australian education mission to Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria, taking 21 representatives from Australian universities to Abuja, Accra, Eldoret, Lagos and Nairobi. The mission played an important role in raising awareness across Africa of Australian education opportunities and how to approach our visa and education system.

DFAT has facilitated capacity building and industry partnership programs hosted by Australian universities for countries such as Gabon and Nigeria, paid for either by African governments or the private sector. These bespoke programs can both develop public sector capacity in Africa and promote the quality and impact of Australian educational institutions.

Australian businesses operating in Africa can also be partners or allies for new market entrants, particularly those operating in other sectors: industry groups and professionals with Africa experience are inclined to assist other Australians who are not direct competitors. These networks also form an important constituency in Australia. People with Australia-Africa literacy, such as Australia Awards alumni, and diasporas are also important in this regard. Government can play a useful role in facilitating contact between these groups, for example at the annual Australia Africa Week in Perth. Australia Awards alumni can play an important role in creating networking opportunities. For example, in Madagascar, the Australia Awards alumni community is predominantly focused on the mining sector – Australia's key investment area in the country – and has become an important platform for industry networking.

There is also potential to expand direct flight connections between Australia and Africa. Beyond the existing routes to South Africa and Mauritius – most recently, the reinstatement of direct Perth-Johannesburg flights by Qantas – adding one or two additional direct links to other regions of the continent could strengthen inbound tourism, foster education partnerships and improve private sector connectivity. While decisions to open new routes rest largely with airlines – and current prospects for short-term developments appear limited – this remains a strategic opportunity to advocate for future growth.

In key markets and focus sectors, DFAT can help Australian commercial interests by identifying the most important tariff and non-tariff barriers to market entry for Australian goods and services and developing advocacy strategies to address these issues.

The Australian Government through DFAT continues to promote international standards for business such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises to ensure foreign investment contributes to development.

Multilateral trade engagement

Australia relies on an open, rules-based multilateral trading system centred on the WTO. Most countries in Africa are members of the WTO. The African Group of 43 countries makes up more than a quarter of the total WTO membership of 166 countries, making Africa a significant grouping in the WTO for our advocacy in support of efforts to reform and modernise the WTO to ensure its continued relevance. The 14th WTO Ministerial Conference in Cameroon (March 2026) will be critical to build momentum for WTO reform.

Developing country members of the WTO receive special and differential treatment in the form of given greater market access opportunities, policy flexibility in implementing WTO rules, and targeted technical assistance to strengthen trade capacity. Additional flexibilities are offered to LDC members.

As powerful developing countries seek to re-shape norms and entrench a narrative that the multilateral trading system is unfair to developing countries and does not prioritise economic development, engagement with African countries on these issues is increasingly important. Divergences between developing country interests at the WTO are more prominent than ever before, with China, India, and Brazil all trying to position themselves as champions of the Global South. African voices are increasingly playing important roles in the global trade space, such as The Gambia's role as coordinator of the WTO's LDC group.

Australia, with Japan and Singapore, is leading a WTO plurilateral initiative on E-Commerce which will provide the first package of baseline digital trade commitments with global reach, aimed at improving transparency, lowering costs, helping to narrow the digital divide, and fostering trust in the digital economy. We are encouraging African WTO members to see this initiative as the next logical step in its digital revolution, complementing recent regional digital trade rulemaking efforts. Australia is also a strong supporter of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, with implementation of the Agreement expected to improve customs procedures and lower costs for traders operating in Africa, especially across the many land-locked borders in Africa.

In agriculture, the African Group and the Australian-led Cairns Group have worked closely to find common ground towards a joint position on reform to multilateral agricultural trade rules with the goal of making the agricultural trading system fairer and more predictable. While South Africa was a founding member of the 20 member Cairns Group of agricultural fair-trading countries that lobbies for global agricultural trade liberalisation, South Africa aligns itself more closely with the Global South's push for additional development-related concessions.

Australia works closely with Morocco as co-coordinators on the WTO Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade, a plurilateral initiative which explores how the WTO can contribute to efforts to reduce plastics pollution and promote the transition to more environmentally sustainable plastics trade.

While we work to fix the WTO's dispute settlement system, Australia and 57 other WTO members are participants in the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA) to improve enforceability of the rules. The MPIA is an interim mechanism that ensures WTO disputes can be fully resolved while the WTO's Appellate Body is dysfunctional. We are working with other MPIA parties to expand participation, especially in underrepresented regions (including Africa, where Benin is currently the only party).

The Australian Government also has a role to play in encouraging non-WTO African members such as Ethiopia to accede to the WTO and would need to agree to the terms of such accession.

The Australian Government meets with African countries in plurilateral groups such as with South Africa in the G20, and Indian Ocean countries in IORA. While there are no African members of the OECD, South Africa became one of five Key Partners to the OECD, along with Brazil, China, India and Indonesia, in 2007. The World Economic Forum holds an annual conference in Africa which provides a platform for regional and global government and business leaders to focus on the growth and development prospects for Africa. Such forums provide additional avenues to promote trade liberalisation in areas of interest to these more targeted groupings.

Australia has strongly supported South Africa's role as the first African Presidency for the G20. Australia welcomed the South African Presidency's spotlight on African trade and investment and endorsed the Presidency's broad priorities on strengthening disaster resilience and response, ensuring debt sustainability for low-income countries, mobilising finance for a just energy transition, and harnessing critical minerals for inclusive growth and sustainable development. The addition of the African Union, formally invited to join the G20 at the New Delhi Leaders' Summit in September 2023, represented the first expansion in G20 membership since the Forum's inception.

Australia also engages with African countries on trade and investment issues in the Commonwealth, which has 21 African members. Australia strongly supported Namibia's hosting of the Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting in Windhoek in 2025, including its successful efforts to reach a consensus statement on the importance of the rules-based multilateral trading system.

Australia partners at the institutional, multilateral and private sector level to advance its trade and development interests in a targeted manner. Australia's trade and development partnerships recognise the importance of global laws and norms in enabling all countries to cooperate, trade, and thrive. They support African and other developing countries to integrate into the global trading system and create a business-enabling environment for all players. Australia's multilateral trade and development partners active in Africa include:

- the World Bank Trade Facilitation Support Program, which supports African developing countries to align their trade practices with the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement
- the World Bank DATA Fund, which is running several pilots in Africa to strengthen digital skills, policy and legal frameworks, and address institutional gaps to expand access to digital markets
- UNCTAD's E-commerce and the Digital Economy program, which supports technical assistance and capacity building in e-commerce and digital trade, and recently completed an e-commerce needs assessment for The Gambia with the help of Australian funding
- the World Bank Investment Climate Program which supports African countries to build their capacity to attract and retain investment

- the WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism, which supports African and other developing country Parties to the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement to implement the disciplines of that Agreement, in alignment with SDG Target 14.6
- the WTO Standards and Trade Development Facility, which supports African and other developing countries, to improve biosecurity processes and improve market access.

Preferential tariff provisions

Australia operates a system of tariff preferences for imports from the world's least developed and developing countries. The intent of the ASTP is to support the integration of developing countries into the global trading system as a means to promote their economic growth. The ASTP offers complete duty-free quota-free market access to all goods originating from LDCs in Africa and preferential tariff treatment for most goods originating in developing countries in Africa. This reduces tariffs on exports from Africa.

THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AFCFTA)

The AfCFTA is the centrepiece of the African Union's development agenda (Agenda 2063), with the ultimate goal of forming a continent-wide customs union. The AfCFTA has a role in addressing key challenges such as energy access, food security, industrialisation and digital trade. By fostering intra-African trade, the AfCFTA could reduce commodity dependence, boost manufacturing and strengthen Africa's position in global value chains. To fully realise the AfCFTA's potential, African countries must undertake strategic investments, particularly in infrastructure; implement well-coordinated policies; and pursue structural reforms.

Though progress has been slow so far, the AfCFTA has been signed by 53 African countries and ratified by 49. The AfCFTA entered into force on 30 May 2019, and the start of trading under the agreement began on 1 January 2021. Member states have agreed to remove tariffs on 90 per cent of products over five years from 1 January 2021 (with extended timelines for sensitive LDCs).

Australia welcomes the entry into force of the AfCFTA and recognises its potential to drive economic growth and integration across Africa. The AfCFTA is a complex and incremental agreement which, if implemented effectively, will help lift millions of people out of poverty. It has the potential to improve the ease of doing business for Australian companies operating in Africa, and across African borders.

Memorandum of Understanding with the AfCFTA Secretariat

The Secretariat of the AfCFTA is based in Accra, Ghana. The Secretariat is responsible for monitoring and evaluating implementation of the AfCFTA and convening meetings related to the agreement. It reports to the African Union Council of Ministers, which is responsible for broader trade-related policy decisions.

Australia signed an MOU with the AfCFTA Secretariat on 19 June 2025. Assistant Minister Thistlethwaite and the AfCFTA Secretary-General, Wamkele Mene signed the MOU on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Trade Ministers' Meeting in Windhoek, Namibia.

The MOU demonstrates Australia's commitment to supporting the AfCFTA and provides a mechanism for dialogue on investment and trade opportunities as the AfCFTA implementation progresses. The MOU includes a Joint Workplan setting out areas of collaboration, including capacity building on trade facilitation, cooperation between Australian and African universities on research initiatives, joint trade promotion opportunities, and activities related to the Africa-Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture (AAPCRA). A copy of the MOU is available on the DFAT website. DFAT is currently consulting across Government to identify priority areas for engagement under this framework.

While an FTA with the AfCFTA is not feasible until the bloc forms a customs union, Australia's proactive engagement through the MOU ensures we remain well-positioned to influence standards and secure market access.

Image 4: Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Thistlethwaite with H.E. Wamkele Mene, Secretary General of the AfCFTA Secretariat at the signing ceremony of the Australia-AfCFTA Secretariat MOU.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Investments in sustainable development directly contribute to capacity building, enabling African countries to enhance trade and investment ties with partners such as Australia. Australia's International Development Policy outlines our long-term vision for how the development program will meet the needs of our partners, support sustainable development and help lift people out of poverty. Australia supports our partners to:

- build effective, accountable states that drive their own development
- enhance state and community resilience to external pressures and shocks
- connect with Australia and regional architecture
- generate collective action on global challenges that impact us and our region.

The Australia-Africa (Regional) Development Partnership Plan 2025-2030 translates these commitments into action, outlining our commitment to supporting a prosperous, resilient and stable Africa through increasing climate resilience and food security, supporting education and health outcomes, and supporting gender equality and inclusion. In the last financial year, Australia's ODA to Africa exceeded A$100 million. Without significant and targeted investment in social sectors such as education and health, the continent will be unable to develop the skilled workforce we expect will drive economic growth.

We support increased climate resilience and food security through the A$76 million AAPCRA, led by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research. AAPCRA aims to improve the climate resilience of smallholder farmers, boost agricultural productivity and drive agriculture-led development. In 2025, the Australia Awards Africa Program (valued at A$8 million in 2024–25) delivered 45 masters scholarships for African professionals and three short courses for officials in continental trade facilitation, financing climate action and mining governance. Programs like AAPCRA and Australia Awards Africa strengthen institutional and private-sector capability, complementing international efforts to unlock Africa's economic potential and promoting access to the global trading system.

Where major aid projects are funded by donors or development banks, DFAT can advocate for fair access to contracts for Australian companies. Development finance institutions such as the AfDB drive a substantial amount of investment and require more regular and systematic engagement from DFAT in order to maximise opportunities for Australian companies. There is a role for the Australian Government in building public sector capacity and improving the regulatory environment in Africa, with a focus on countries and sectors of commercial relevance to Australia, notably mining governance and infrastructure operation. Australia Awards scholarships are an effective tool in this regard. Australia is also supporting improved extractives governance in Africa. Australia is a partner to EITI both as a supporting country and as a new implementing country. Australia is a partner to EITI as a supporting country. Australia contributes to the Extractives Global Programmatic Support multi-donor trust fund managed by the World Bank which supports resource-rich developing nations to use their oil, gas and mineral resources sustainably and transparently for poverty alleviation, shared prosperity, economic diversification and sustainable economic growth.

Through the Kimberley Process, Australia is working closely with African governments, the diamond industry and civil society to further address conflict diamonds and ensure the integrity of the Process. Australia's focus is to strengthen the implementation of the Kimberley Process, including ways to enhance the security of rough diamond shipments and certificates. Strong African participation is critical to the effectiveness of the Kimberley Process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen government-to-government engagement

- Plan for regular Australian ministerial and parliamentary visits to Africa, including to major trade and investment events such as Mining Indaba and bilateral trade and investment meetings with key African partners such as Egypt, Kenya, Morocco and South Africa.
- Support African ministerial and parliamentary visits to Australia to enhance political, economic and diplomatic engagement and ties between the two continents.

2. Expand economic diplomacy

- More targeted engagement in support of Australian businesses, including at events such as the Mining Indaba. Ministerial attendance at these events would be valuable in advancing Australia's economic engagement with key partners in Africa.
- Continue high-level engagement by DFAT, key Australian Government departments and the WA Government in Australia Africa Week in Perth, including to explore opportunities in sectors beyond mining, like agribusiness and education. Australian missions in Africa should continue to advocate strongly for improved business environments in their countries of accreditation.
- Collaborate with like-minded partners in Africa (e.g. US, Japan, UK, ROK and the EU) on mining and resources initiatives, including critical minerals, to support diversification of supply chains.
- Implement the AfCFTA MOU to further demonstrate Australia's commitment to supporting the AfCFTA and provide a mechanism for dialogue on investment and trade opportunities.
- Promote South African investment into Australia, both in South Africa and, where there is interest, through an inbound business delegation.

3. Foster stronger private sector linkages

- Encourage Australia Awards alumni and diaspora communities in Australia to develop and strengthen private sector linkages, and better leverage alumni living in Africa to advance Australian interests.
- Rebalance existing capacity-building initiatives such as Australia Awards short courses and scholarships to build trade and investment capabilities, including through expert secondments, direct knowledge transfer, strengthened people-to-people links, collaborative university research, and deeper academic sector partnerships.
- Work with Austrade to raise Africa literacy in the Australian Government and public service and provide resources to Austrade to assist with navigating African regulatory challenges.

4. Support improved business environments in Africa

- Enhance use of Australia Awards to influence policy thinking in Africa, including through short courses in trade, governance and skills development in trade and investment related fields.
- Highlight and promote African countries where risk factors are lower (like Mauritius and Morocco), to allow lower-risk entry to Africa and to take advantage of diverse, dynamic economies.
- Work in partnership with African countries to realise their objectives for minerals beneficiation and industrialisation.
- Target aid programs to promote good governance, improve the regulatory environment and enhance trade facilitation across Africa, including through building linkages between key interlocutors in African countries and business and government counterparts in Australia.

ANNEX A: SNAPSHOTS – KEY RELATIONSHIPS

South Africa

Key Commercial Interests

South Africa is Australia's most sophisticated and economically significant relationship in Africa. In 2024, two-way trade was valued at close to A$5 billion; two-way investment was valued at approximately A$15 billion (A$10 billion from South Africa into Australia). Prominent recent South African investments include Gold Fields' acquisition of Gold Road Resources (A$3.7 billion) and Harmony Gold's takeover of MAC Copper (A$1.65 billion). Australian investment in South Africa is concentrated in mining and metals (e.g. South32's Hillside Aluminium smelter is the largest producer in the Southern Hemisphere; Rio Tinto's Richards Bay minerals sands operation is South Africa's largest mineral sands producer; Jupiter's Tshipi Borwa manganese mine is a top-five global exporter). While South African firms continue to invest in Australia, much Australian investment in South Africa is legacy investment, with chronic power and logistics failures, crime and corruption impeding growth. Nevertheless, on 4 December 2025, ASX-listed West Wits Mining opened the first new gold mine in South Africa in 15 years.

South Africa was Australia's largest African trade partner in 2024, with two-way goods and services trade valued at A$4.98 billion. In addition, with approximately A$15 billion in total investment in both directions, South Africa was Australia's 28th largest source country for foreign investment and our 33rd largest destination for outbound investment in 2024. Mining leads the investment relationship, with Rio Tinto, South32, Jupiter Mines, West Wits Mining, Theta Gold, and Renergen having active operations in South Africa, while Orion Minerals, and Southern Palladium are actively developing projects. Australia's Cotton On has over 130 stores in South Africa and Flight Centre is the largest travel agency in Africa.

South Africa's Harmony Gold Mining has acquired two copper mines in Australia since 2022: the Eva Copper Project in Queensland and CSA Copper Mine in New South Wales (the latter deal reportedly worth more than USD$1 billion). Other notable South African investors in Australia include Growthpoint (which operates a A$4.1 billion real estate investment trust) and Foschini Group (which owns Australia's Retail Apparel Group with more than 500 Australian stores, including Tarocash and Rockwear).

Tourism is another sector bringing commercial benefits to both countries. Johannesburg remains the only city on the African continent with direct air services to Australia, and is a hub for transit to other African cities. In 2016, 145,000 Australian residents listed Africa as their primary destination for outbound travel from Australia, with South Africa comprising 58 per cent or 84,000 residents. This was six per cent higher than the previous year. In 2016, 57,000 South Africans travelled to Australia.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Government of National Unity coalition is focused on growth. Substantial loans from the BRICS New Development Bank and China Development Bank have improved energy supply. But South Africa faces a range of domestic challenges including high unemployment (33 per cent), government debt (75 per cent of GDP), extreme inequality, weak growth, and a relatively new governing coalition.

Precious metals and minerals are key to South Africa's economic future. It is the world's largest producer of manganese and platinum, essential to making EVs. But the carbon-intensity of its economy means decarbonised trade poses risks, shaping its opposition to policies it views as 'green protectionism', such as the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. The Government recently introduced a new mining code which aims to modernise the country's approach to mineral resource management while balancing economic growth, environmental protection, and social development.

Two-way critical minerals investment and our shared interests in strengthening the WTO are potential areas for cooperation.

Kenya

Key Commercial Interests

Kenya was Australia's second-largest African trade partner in 2024, with two-way goods and services trade valued at A$1.02 billion. Investment in both directions was valued at A$49 million in 2024.

In contrast to our trade with many other African nations, our trade with Kenya is overwhelmingly service based. With 9,517 Kenyans studying in Australia in 2024, the country is Australia's largest African source of international students, and the trade relationship is thus dominated by Australian exports of education-related travel (valued at A$705 million in 2024). This figure has increased substantially in recent years, having grown three-fold from a pre-COVID peak of A$218 million in 2019. Australian tourism to Kenya is another significant aspect of the trade relationship: it was valued at A$65 million in 2024, with over 27,000 Australian tourists visiting Kenya.

Our investment relationship is predominantly composed of Australian investment in Kenya, valued at A$35 million in 2024; that year also saw A$14 million worth of Kenyan investment in Australia. The tourism sector has been one destination for Australian investment, with Melbourne-based Intrepid Travel expanding its operations into Kenya and the East African region. Australian investment in 2024 was also directed into Kenya's mining industry. WA-based Base Resources' Kwale mineral sands mine in Kenya accounted for a sizeable share of this, but the depletion of the ore reserve in December 2024 has since led to the decommissioning of the operation. Kenyan investment in Australia flows to a diverse range of sectors and, alongside the more than 20,000-strong Kenyan diaspora in Australia, is the reason Australia has become Kenya's fastest-growing and fourth-largest source of remittances, with flows reaching USD112.8 million in the first half of 2025.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges for Australia's trade and investment relationship with Kenya stem from regulatory uncertainty and non-tariff trade barriers. Though Kenya has a better business environment than many of its neighbours, some regulatory difficulties and inconsistencies persist. The Australian Government continues to work with Kenya to facilitate increased compliance with our countries' respective sanitary and phytosanitary requirements for imports.

After years of restricting investment in its mining sector, the Kenyan Government is looking to open up its mineral reserves for potential foreign investment. For example, Perth-based company RareX has made a bid to develop Kenya's significant Mrima Hill rare earths and niobium deposits. If approved, this project would have positive industrial outcomes on both sides of the Indian Ocean, with Illuka Resources' rare earth refinery in Eneabba, WA, earmarked as the processing facility for the Mrima Hill offtake.

Further opportunities for the trade and investment relationship stem from Kenya's position as East Africa's financial, logistics and tech hub, as well as its young population and growing middle class. Mombasa, in Kenya's south, is the busiest port in East Africa, and acts as a transit point for goods coming and going from Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and other regional countries. Kenya is also a leading proponent of regional economic integration, actively working through the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and as one of the founding members of the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative to expand intra-African trade. In addition, Kenya's 53.4 million people have an average estimated age of 21.2 years and are increasingly middle class, offering a significant market for premium food and wine exports as well as the further provision of high-quality education. Reducing Kenyan tariffs on some of these goods (e.g. wine) could significantly boost our exports.

The strong people-to-people links between Kenya and Australia present further opportunities. The Kenyan diaspora in Australia continues to drive business community literacy on Kenya, while many leaders within the Kenyan Government and private sector are Australian university alumni. Familiar with and well-disposed to Australia, they are often open to helping develop partnerships that can build and transfer skills, knowledge and capabilities. Kenya's burgeoning labour force is English-speaking and the government is keen to promote labour mobility.

Egypt

Key Commercial Interests

Egypt was Australia’s third-largest African trade partner in 2024, with two-way goods and services trade valued at A$893 million. In addition, total investment in both directions in 2024 reached A$178 million, making Egypt one of Australia’s largest sources of, and destinations for foreign investment, on the African continent. Our trade is dominated by Australian agricultural exports: vegetables, meat and animal feed accounted for over half (A$479.4 million) of the total value in 2024. Indeed, Australia is one of Egypt’s leading sources of fava beans, the primary ingredient for the Egyptian staple ful medames. Australian tourism to Egypt is another significant aspect of the trade relationship, valued at A$143 million in 2024.

The investment relationship is dominated by Australian investment in Egypt, valued at A$138 million in 2024. Australian METS companies make up a significant portion of this total, with WA-based Capital Drilling and QLD-based Geodrill (among many others) present in the country. Australian agricultural and sustainable technology companies have also invested in Egypt: as one example, Papyrus Australia, headquartered in South Australia, manages two factories in Egypt which convert banana plantation waste into fertiliser and biodegradable food packaging products. Australia has a BIT with Egypt, which entered into force in 2002, and which contains ISDS provisions.

Challenges and Opportunities

There exist three key challenges to manage in relation to Australia’s trade and investment relationship with Egypt. The first is Egypt’s ongoing economic reforms in the context of the IMF’s USD$8 billion loan agreement which are largely focused on floating Egypt’s currency, reducing government ownership of key economic assets, and reducing subsidies for fuel and food. Good progress has been made on some of these reforms, with further implementation of the Egyptian Government’s State Ownership Policy still to occur. A second challenge is ongoing reform to improve Egypt’s regulatory environment, which could lead to increased certainty for Australian investors. The Australian Government continues to encourage transparent regulation in line with world standards to attract new foreign investment to Egypt. A third challenge stems from non-tariff barriers to trade, particularly around food and produce. The Australian Government continues to work with Egypt to facilitate increased communication of and compliance with our countries’ respective requirements for imported goods.

Opportunities for strengthening Australia’s trade and investment with Egypt stem from the country’s stable security environment, geographic location and size. With a gross domestic product valued at more than USD349 billion and a population estimated to be over 109 million in 2025, Egypt is Africa’s second-largest economy and its third-most populous. As well as carrying significant political influence across both Africa and the Middle East, Egypt is a leading proponent of the AfCFTA, it was one of the founding members of the Guided Trade Initiative, which seeks to rapidly expand intra-African trade. Egypt thus has the potential to serve as a gateway to trade with the rest of Africa.

Following the visits to Perth in September and November 2025 by Egypt’s Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, H.E. Engineer Karim Badawi, there are increasing opportunities for cooperation between Australia and Egypt on mining. Egypt is pursuing its goal to raise the mining sector’s contribution to the country’s gross domestic product from one to 5 or 6 per cent through fostering an investor-friendly sector, supporting aerial surveys, and seeking out capacity building – all offering opportunities for Australia and Australian companies.

However, mining is not the only sector in which there are increasing opportunities for investment partnerships between Australia and Egypt, with green energy providing an alternative avenue. Egypt’s significant solar and wind resources, and Australian expertise in harnessing these resources, continue to create opportunities for investment partnerships focused on increasingly powering secondary industries through renewable energy.

Morocco

Key Commercial Interests

Morocco was Australia’s fifth-largest African trade partner in 2024, with two-way goods and services trade valued at A$730 million. Investment in both directions in 2024 was valued at A$2 million.

Our trade is dominated by imports of Moroccan fertiliser, which accounted for A$551 million in 2024. As well as making up well over half of the total, fertiliser was primarily responsible for the more than six-fold increase in two-way trade with Morocco since 2020. Australian tourism to Morocco is another significant aspect of the trade relationship, valued at A$53 million in 2024. In comparison, Australian exports to Morocco are relatively modest at A$35.9 million in 2024, with vegetables (A$6.1 million) the largest single component.

Our investment relationship should increase in the short-term. In April 2024, Australian company Fortescue announced plans to establish a green fertiliser and hydrogen production hub in Morocco with state-owned fertiliser company OCP Group. Additionally, though in early stages, Australian METS companies have increasingly looked to invest in Morocco, with WA-based Zeus Resources having acquired exploration rights in the centre of the country in early 2025.

Challenges and Opportunities

Key challenges for the trade and investment relationship with Morocco relate to distance and regulatory barriers. Having to cover more than 23,000 km, shipping between Australia and Morocco routinely takes more than a month, which limits the trade of perishable goods such as fresh food and produce. In addition, regulatory requirements in both Australia and Morocco can complicate market entry and operations for traders from either country. The Australian Government continues to work with Morocco to facilitate increased communication of and compliance with our countries’ respective requirements for imported goods.

Opportunities for the trade and investment relationship stem from Morocco’s strategic position, strong historical and extant European connections, political stability, growing middle class, young and increasingly skilled demographic, and accelerating industrial and infrastructure investment. At the crossroads of the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, Europe, Africa, and the Arab world, the country has maintained strong and broad diplomatic ties with few exceptions (notably it has long-standing, historical commercial and cultural ties with France and Spain, is the only African country to have concluded a comprehensive free trade agreement with the US, and has normalised relations with Israel). Despite youth-led protests in October 2025 against inequality, Morocco benefits from relative social and political stability – largely thanks to the highly respected monarchy – with the World Bank finding it to be the country in North Africa with the lowest level of political violence. Furthermore, Morocco’s growing middle class will precipitate increased demand for premium goods and services, from which Australian agricultural and education exporters stand to benefit.

Morocco is also pursuing ambitious renewable energy targets through harnessing its abundant solar and wind resources, providing further opportunities for the trade and investment relationship. By 2030, Morocco aims for renewable energy capacity to account for 52 per cent of the electricity mix, with 80 per cent the target by 2050. At the same time, Morocco is increasing its green energy cooperation with Europe, having signed since October 2024 agreements with Belgium, France, Spain and the UK to produce green fuels and electricity for export. Our expertise in this space means Australian companies can support this transition.

The Moroccan Government is seeking to diversify the minerals sector, which accounts for up to 10 per cent of Morocco’s GDP, away from a dependence on phosphate mining. It is also seeking to consolidate and improve regulation over the mining sector which, apart from phosphate, has a significant presence of small-scale, artisanal mining. Morocco aims to raise revenue from non-phosphate mining (including cobalt, tin and other minerals) by A$1.4 billion by 2030. To achieve this, Morocco is reforming its mining code to increase transparency, improve access to survey data, protect legal mining activities, and provide incentives for sustainable and responsible mining investment. As Australian mining and METS companies are world-renowned for their innovation and high ESG standards, they are well placed to support the Moroccan Government’s efforts.

AI USE STATEMENT

AI assisted with the drafting of this document; however, it was developed through original thought and has been reviewed and verified for accuracy.