



Submission No 9

Review of Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa

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Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

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Dr Margot Kerley
Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Defence and Trade
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Kerley

Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa

Thank you for your letter of 30 October 2009 inviting this Department to provide a submission to the Committee's inquiry on Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa. I note that the Chair of the Committee, Senator Michael Forshaw, wrote in similar terms to the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government on 3 November 2009. The Minister has also asked me to reply on his behalf.

This Department is engaged with the countries of Africa, mainly through the United Nations (UN) specialised agencies responsible for two primary forms of international transportation: civil aviation and maritime. Australia has growing aviation links with the countries of Africa and we are also involved in a specialised project with South Africa on the development of a vehicle certification system. These aspects of our engagement are described below.

International Civil Aviation Organization

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a UN specialised agency established through the 1944 Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention). It is responsible for the setting of standards and recommended practices for the safe and efficient conduct of international civil aviation, with an emphasis on technical, operational and safety aspects.

ICAO currently has 190 member states, of which 53 are African States. Seven African states also serve on the 36 member permanent Council of ICAO. The Council is the governing body of ICAO which is elected by a general assembly of member States held every three years. Australia is also an elected member of the Council. The next ICAO Assembly and elections for the Council will be held during September/October 2010.

International Maritime Organization

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is a UN specialized agency responsible for measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent marine pollution from ships.

IMO has a Technical Cooperation Programme which is designed to assist Governments which lack the technical knowledge and resources that are needed to operate a shipping industry successfully. The Technical Cooperation Programme has a number of regional offices including three in Africa – in Kenya, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. From time to time, Australia has undertaken technical cooperation with some African countries on port State control through the Indian Ocean Memorandum of Understanding but there are no such activities currently underway in this area.

Australia also has a Search and Rescue (SAR) Arrangement with South Africa covering maritime and aviation SAR as we share a common SAR coordination boundary.

South Africa is also part of the South West Pacific data distribution region for Cospas-Sarsat (International Satellite System for Search and Rescue) for which Australia is the Nodal Mission Control Centre. We therefore provide South Africa with a backup service for their Maritime Coordination Centre (MCC), technical advice, support for the system level test, quality management services and commissioning of MCCs as required.

Australia also liaises with South Africa on Antarctic SAR matters of interest and, more generally cooperates multilaterally with a range of African countries on maritime issues through IMO.

Air services arrangements

Australia has air services arrangements in place with five African countries: South Africa, Mauritius, Egypt, Kenya and Zimbabwe; with direct flights operating between Sydney and Johannesburg (Qantas), Perth and Johannesburg (South African Airways) and Mauritius and Perth and Melbourne (Air Mauritius). Johannesburg in particular operates as a hub distributing passengers and freight across Africa. Airlines of these countries may also code share with other carriers, an opportunity some have taken up. Services also operate between Sydney and Reunion Island under Australia-France air services arrangements.

In 2008-09, over 340,000 passengers travelled on over 1400 non-stop flights between Australia and Africa representing 1.4 per cent of seats operated into and out of Australia.

South African development of vehicle certification system

The Department has hosted several visits by officials of the South African Bureau of Standards to familiarise themselves with the Australian system of vehicle regulation and the operation of the Road Vehicle Certification System (a computer system facilitating certification of new vehicles with Australian vehicle standards). The Bureau of Standards has utilised the knowledge gained to develop its system of vehicle certification. At last report, it was considering tenders for development of its computer system.

The Bureau of Standards has also recently attended as observers Compliance of Production audits conducted by departmental staff on vehicle manufacturing facilities in South Africa.

I trust this information will help inform the Committee. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely



Mike Mrdak

10 December 2009