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DECEMBER 2025

CANADA-AFRICA

Seizing a Strategic Opportunity

Report of the Standing Senate Committee
on Foreign Affairs and International Trade

The Honourable Peter M. Boehm, Chair
The Honourable Peter Harder, P.C., Deputy Chair



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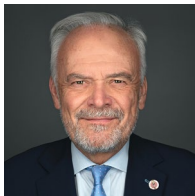
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The Committee Membership

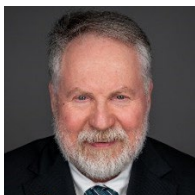


The Honourable
Peter M. Boehm
Chair

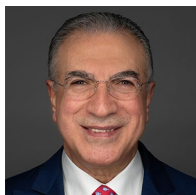


The Honourable
Peter Harder, P.C.
Deputy Chair

The Honourable Senators



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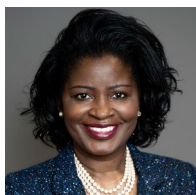
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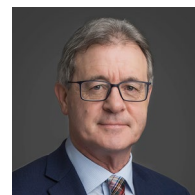
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The Honourable Leo Housakos or the Honourable Yonah Martin
The Honourable Raymonde Saint-Germain or the Honourable Bernadette Clement
The Honourable Scott Tannas or the Honourable Rebecca Patterson
The Honourable Brian Francis or the Honourable Judy A. White

Other senators who have participated in the study:

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The Honourable Senator Michèle Audette
The Honourable Senator Andrew Cardozo
The Honourable Senator Tony Dean
The Honourable Senator Daryl S. Fridhandler
The Honourable Senator Stephen Greene (former member-retired)
The Honourable Senator Margo Greenwood
The Honourable Senator Leo Housakos (former member)
The Honourable Senator Stan Kutcher
The Honourable Senator Marnie McBean
The Honourable Senator John M. McNair
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Order of Reference

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Tuesday, October 7, 2025:

The Honourable Senator Harder, P.C., moved, for the Honourable Senator Boehm, seconded by the Honourable Senator Klyne:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade be authorized to examine and report on Canada's interests and engagement in Africa, and other related matters;

That the papers and evidence received and taken and work accomplished by the committee on this subject during the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament be referred to the committee;

That the committee be authorized, notwithstanding usual practices, to deposit reports on this study with the Clerk of the Senate, if the Senate is not then sitting, and that the reports be deemed to have been tabled in the Senate; and

That the committee submit its final report no later than March 31, 2026, and that it retain all powers necessary to publicize its findings for 180 days after the tabling of the final report.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

Clerk of the Senate

Shaila Anwar

Executive Summary

Canada must fully engage in Africa or risk being left behind. This was the main conclusion of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade's (the committee) study on Canada's interests and engagement in Africa. The committee's study revealed a portrait of a dynamic and evolving African continent – marked not only by rapid youth growth and economic expansion, but also by increasing geostrategic influence. Despite Africa's expanding global role and impact, the committee heard that Canada has not adjusted its engagement with the continent accordingly, resulting in missed opportunities and the gradual erosion of its relevance in Africa.

This report examines Canada's engagement in Africa through the lens of fostering mutually beneficial partnerships with African stakeholders. It begins with an overview of current and emerging opportunities and challenges in Africa, followed by a summary of the guiding principles that should inform Canada's engagement on the continent. Specifically, the report looks at ways that Canada can strengthen its relations with African countries at the regional and multilateral levels, including through the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities of Africa and the Group of 20. It also outlines strategic priorities for Canada in Africa, including in the areas of peace and security, governance and development, and trade, investment and connectivity.

This report offers 21 recommendations to the Canadian government for strengthening Canada's engagement in Africa. The committee's recommendations touch on many areas, including enhancing political dialogue with the African Union Commission, assisting with the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and harnessing support for African-led peace operations and other African priorities, such as Agenda 2063. The report also recommends that the Government of Canada advance trade and investment relations between Canada and African countries by investing in Export Development Canada, the Trade Commissioner Service and other bodies and tools designed to “derisk” and deepen Canadian commercial engagement on the continent.

The committee finalized this study at a time of significant turbulence in the Canada-United States trade relationship. The current economic climate underscores the critical need for Canada to diversify its global trading relationships and develop stronger strategic partnerships with countries around the world. At a time of geopolitical uncertainty and threats to open trade, the committee believes that building stronger partnerships in Africa represents not only an economic opportunity but also a strategic necessity. Canada should act decisively to prioritize its engagement in Africa.

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Government of Canada should produce a detailed and concrete action plan with measurable objectives, timelines and dedicated resources to ensure the effective and coherent implementation of Canada's Africa Strategy. To ensure transparency and accountability, the Government of Canada should also produce a report on the status and outcomes associated with Canada's Africa Strategy on an annual basis.

Recommendation 2

The Government of Canada should hold regular High-Level Dialogues with the African Union Commission and should consider hosting a summit with African heads of government.

Recommendation 3

The Government of Canada should engage with its G7 and G20 partners to build support and harness resources for African priorities, including Agenda 2063.

Recommendation 4

The Government of Canada should continue to provide financial and technical assistance towards the implementation and operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Recommendation 5

The Government of Canada should strengthen Canada's presence at, support for, and engagement with, the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities of Africa.

Recommendation 6

Global Affairs Canada should ensure that all Canada-based staff have access to geographic and/or functional training courses related to Africa and should support employees who wish to seek successive overseas postings in African countries.

Recommendation 7

The Government of Canada should clearly define the roles and priorities of the Special Envoy for Africa and the Special Envoy for the Sahel and should provide both special envoys with the resources necessary to fulfil their mandates.

Recommendation 8

The Government of Canada should make the Sahel a focus of its security programming in Africa and should look for opportunities to play a convening role in bringing together international partners to support dialogue and peace in the region.

Recommendation 9

The Government of Canada should support the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2719 and should build international support for African-led peace operations.

Recommendation 10

The Government of Canada should prioritize pluralist and inclusive peacebuilding processes in Africa, including by supporting programs that promote the role of African women and youth at all stages of peace processes and conflict prevention initiatives.

Recommendation 11

The Government of Canada should clarify the status of the Office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise and should provide that office – or a new complaints and enforcement mechanism – with the authority and resources necessary to investigate complaints against Canadian companies operating in Africa in a timely and effective manner.

Recommendation 12

The Government of Canada should prioritize support for education at all levels in Africa and should support efforts to enhance knowledge of and expertise about Africa in Canadian public institutions.

Recommendation 13

The Government of Canada should foster and help facilitate partnerships and other links between Canadian and African universities and research centres.

Recommendation 14

The Government of Canada should identify funding gaps in the development landscape in Africa where Canada possesses a comparative advantage and should commit to deploying resources, over the long-term, to address those gaps.

Recommendation 15

Within the framework of its Africa Strategy, the Government of Canada should make additional capital available to FinDev Canada for its African operations. FinDev Canada should ensure that its activities in Africa are visible, targeted, and aligned with African continental priorities articulated in Agenda 2063.

Recommendation 16

The Government of Canada should designate Africa as a strategic priority within its trade diversification agenda and should explore opportunities to advance free trade agreement discussions with African countries.

Recommendation 17

The Government of Canada should strengthen the Trade Commissioner Service and other tools and mechanisms designed to support Canadian companies wishing to invest in or trade with African countries.

Recommendation 18

The Government of Canada should pursue new foreign investment promotion and protection agreements with African countries to enhance investor protection and encourage greater two-way investment.

Recommendation 19

The Government of Canada should strengthen support for Export Development Canada and other instruments designed to de-risk and deepen Canadian commercial engagement in Africa.

Recommendation 20

The Government of Canada should ensure that the diaspora engagement mechanism allows for regular and meaningful interaction with the African diaspora in Canada, as well as the Canadian diaspora in Africa. Among other objectives, the Government of Canada should leverage the diaspora engagement mechanism to develop new people-to-people initiatives, including academic exchanges, between Canada and African countries. Going forward, the Government of Canada should also consider establishing a more formal advisory body to consult with the African diaspora in Canada.

Recommendation 21

The Government of Canada should review its visa processing systems and structures with respect to the issuance of visas for individuals wishing to travel to Canada from African countries to ensure that the timelines and service standards are fair and reasonable.

Introduction

Canada must fully engage in Africa. This was the main conclusion of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade's (the committee) study on Canada's interests and engagement in Africa. Africa has a burgeoning youth population, is experiencing economic growth rates above the global average, boasts vast natural resource wealth, and is a place of mounting geostrategic significance. It is also a continent that faces some of the world's most significant and persistent challenges, including conflict, poverty, displacement, and climate change – all of which have international implications. Despite Africa's increasing global prominence, however, the committee was told that Canada's engagement in Africa has waned in recent years to the point that Canada is forgoing opportunities and losing influence and relevance on the continent. Simply put, Canada must engage now with a rising Africa or risk being left behind.

During its study, the committee heard from more than 65 witnesses over the course of 26 hours of testimony.¹ These witnesses included His Excellency Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, four African heads of mission posted to Canada, representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs), international organizations and business groups, as well as academics, policy practitioners and Canadian government officials. In addition, the committee received many written briefs, which helped inform this study.²

The committee had largely completed its study by the time Parliament was prorogued and subsequently dissolved in early 2025. As a result, much of the testimony referenced in this report is from 2024. To ensure the report reflects current information, the committee received an update in fall 2025 from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) officials, including Ambassador Ben Marc Diendéré, Canada's Permanent Observer to the African Union (AU) and Special Envoy for Africa, and Marcel Lebleu, Canada's Ambassador to Senegal and Special Envoy for the Sahel. Importantly, this additional meeting allowed the committee to learn about Canada's new Africa Strategy, which was launched by the government in March 2025.

While recognizing the immense diversity across Africa, including the distinct opportunities and challenges present in each African country, the committee's study examined Canada's engagement with the continent as a whole, rather than with specific countries or sub-regions. This approach allowed for a comprehensive assessment of Canada's overarching policies, priorities and presence in Africa. It also

¹ For the full witness list, see Appendix A.

² For the full list of briefs, see Appendix B, as well as Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (AEFA), [Examine and report on Canada's interests and engagement in Africa, Briefs and Other Documents](#).

enabled the committee to evaluate Canada's broader strategic approach to Africa rather than individual bilateral relationships.

This report begins with a discussion of the African context, including current and emerging opportunities and challenges on the continent. It then reflects on certain principles which the committee was told should inform Canadian engagement in Africa, before discussing how Canada can strengthen its multilateral engagement with African countries. The report then shifts to a discussion of selected strategic priorities for Canada in Africa, including in the areas of peace and security, governance and development, and trade, investment and connectivity. Recommendations to the Government of Canada are provided throughout the report.

The African Context: A Convergence of Opportunities and Challenges

For some time, I think we have had the feeling that Africa is being considered as a country, but Africa is a continent of 54 countries as complex and diversified as you can imagine, culturally speaking, politically speaking and economically speaking.³

- **His Excellency Ngole Philip Ngwese, High Commissioner of Cameroon to Canada,**
December 11, 2024

The world is changing, and much of this change is happening in Africa. The continent's population, which today stands at 1.4 billion, 60% of whom are under the age of 25, is projected to reach 2.5 billion by the year 2050. By 2050, one in four people on this earth will be African. One in three of the world's young people will live in Africa, and two out of five of the world's children will be African. This seismic shift in African demography is not only transforming African countries, but it can reshape the continent's relationship to the rest of the world.⁴

- **Shelly Whitman, Executive Director, Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security,**
May 23, 2024

Demography and Socio-Economic Outlook

Africa is not a monolith. A vast continent of 54 United Nations (UN) member states⁵ spread across five sub-regions, which together are home to more than 1.4 billion people, there is immense diversity across Africa and within African countries

³ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 11, 2024 (His Excellency Ngole Philip Ngwese).

⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 23, 2024 (Shelly Whitman).

⁵ For its part, the African Union (AU) recognizes 55 African countries. These include the same 54 African countries recognized by the United Nations (UN), as well as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). The SADR claims the non-self-governing territory of Western Sahara. Western Sahara is a disputed territory claimed by both Morocco and the indigenous Sahrawi people.

themselves. Some of the world's smallest countries by population, such as Sao Tome and Principe (est. 235,000), are found in Africa, as well as some of the world's most populous ones like Nigeria (est. 232 million).⁶ Politically, Africa includes full democracies and flawed ones, as well as hybrid and authoritarian regimes.⁷ While a majority of African countries are classified by the World Bank as either low-income (21) or lower-middle income (23), Africa also includes nine upper-middle income countries and one high-income country (Seychelles).⁸ Africa is also linguistically, culturally, religiously and ethnically diverse. It is estimated that upwards of 2,000 languages are spoken across Africa, representing approximately one-third of the total number of languages spoken globally.⁹

All told, witnesses stressed that Africa is heterogenous, complex and cannot be understood through a singular lens. Moreover, the committee heard that Africa is undergoing rapid demographic changes that will transform the continent in ways not yet fully appreciated. Africa has the world's youngest average population with a median age of 19 years old.¹⁰ For comparison, Canada's median age in 2025 is 40 years old.¹¹ Driven by declining mortality and high birth rates, Africa also has the world's fastest-growing population. Africa's population is expected to nearly double by 2050 – to 2.5 billion – meaning that approximately 25% of the total global population at that time will be African.¹²

Witnesses indicated that Africa's "youth quake" has the potential to become a significant driver of the continent's economic growth. Cheryl Urban, Assistant Deputy Minister, Sub-Saharan Africa Branch, GAC, told the committee that, over the next three decades, Africa will experience the world's fastest working-age

⁶ The World Bank, "[Population, total](#)," Database, accessed November 27, 2025.

⁷ The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index classifies countries as either a full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime, or authoritarian regime based on their performance on a range of indicators, including political participation and electoral process. See: The Economist Intelligence Unit, [Democracy Index 2024: What's wrong with representative democracy?](#) [registration required].

⁸ The nine upper-middle income countries are: Algeria, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Mauritius, Namibia, and South Africa. The World Bank classifies countries according to gross national income (GNI) per capita. For the 2026 fiscal year, high income countries are defined as those with a GNI per capita above US\$13,935; upper middle income have a GNI per capita between US\$4,496 and US\$13,935; lower middle income have a GNI per capita between US\$1,136 and US\$4,495; and low income have a GNI per capita below US\$1,135. The World Bank, [World Bank Country and Lending Groups](#).

⁹ Harvard University, The African Language Program, [Introduction to African Languages](#).

¹⁰ Statista, "[Median age of the population of Africa from 2000 to 2030](#)," Database, accessed December 11, 2024.

¹¹ Statistics Canada, [Canada's population estimates: Age and gender, July 1, 2025](#).

¹² See: AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 23, 2024 (Shelly Whitman); AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Ben Marc Diendéré); and AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (George Laryea-Adjei). George Laryea-Adjei, Director of UNICEF Programme Group, indicated that by the end of the century, nearly half of the world's children will live in Africa.

population growth, with a projected net increase of 740 million people.¹³ Witnesses stressed that the ability of African governments and societies to absorb the influx of young workers into the workforce will determine how this demographic shift will affect the continent's socioeconomic trajectory. If harnessed properly, Shelly Whitman, Executive Director, Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security, said that Africa's demographic changes "can create an unprecedented opportunity for growth and innovation."¹⁴

Africa's economic growth potential is also connected to its abundant natural resource wealth. Witnesses underlined that Africa is rich in critical minerals, metals and other resources needed by the high-technology industry and other economic sectors. Christopher MacLennan, Deputy Minister of International Development, GAC, for example, told the committee that Africa houses 30% of the world's critical minerals, 60% of its solar energy potential, 25% of global biodiversity and a larger carbon capture potential than the Amazon.¹⁵ Africa also possesses a significant share of the world's arable and uncultivated land, underscoring its agricultural potential.¹⁶

While Africa's economic growth potential is evident, many countries across the continent continue to grapple with major socio-economic, political and security challenges. To take one example, Ambassador Diendéré noted that approximately two-thirds of the world's population living in extreme poverty are in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁷ Reflecting on the interconnectedness of the challenges facing Africa, Christopher MacLennan said that "[a]ddressing poverty in many parts of Africa is hindered by inadequate infrastructure, conflict and insecurity and democratic backsliding."¹⁸

Furthermore, while strong as a whole, economic growth across Africa remains uneven. African countries have among the highest rates of income inequality in the world.¹⁹ Additionally, Wendy Harris, President and Chief Executive Officer, Catalyste+, argued that the dramatic increase in Africa's working age population will require substantial investments in education, skills development and job creation to harness this growing human capital effectively. She commented, "[i]f not managed

¹³ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 7, 2023 (Cheryl Urban).

¹⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 23, 2024 (Shelly Whitman).

¹⁵ AEFA, [Evidence](#), February 8, 2024 (Christopher MacLennan).

¹⁶ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Christopher Fomunyoh).

¹⁷ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Ben Marc Diendéré).

¹⁸ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 12, 2024 (Christopher MacLennan).

¹⁹ According to the World Inequality Database, the richest 10% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa holds approximately 55% of the region's national income. World Inequality Database, [Inequality in 2024: A closer look at six regions](#), November 19, 2024.

properly, the influx of young people could strain existing resources, worsen unemployment and contribute to social and political unrest.”²⁰

For his part, Ambassador Adeoye explained that Africa is a dynamic, youthful and resource rich region, but a continent that is “challenged like no other.”²¹ To overcome its challenges, Ambassador Adeoye explained that African countries are seeking partnerships across the international community and a stronger voice and presence on the global stage.

Geostrategic Positioning

The committee heard that economic, demographic and other changes in Africa have coalesced to transform the continent’s place in the geopolitical landscape. For example, in recognition of its growing importance to the global economy, the AU was admitted as a permanent member of the Group of 20 (G20) in 2023, joining the European Union as the only regional bloc with full membership in the G20. Notably, South Africa, which is the only African member of the G20, held the G20 presidency from December 1, 2024 to November 30, 2025.

It is clear to the committee that African leaders are not satisfied with membership in multilateral organizations alone. Ambassador Adeoye told the committee that, while G20 membership will facilitate investment and “help to shine a light on the African continent,” the AU’s international objectives extend further – to advancing reform of multilateral organizations and fostering more inclusive global growth and development.²² In particular, the committee heard that African countries are calling for reforms to the UN Security Council and the Bretton Woods Institutions.²³ The committee notes Canada’s advocacy for UN Security Council reform and welcomes the commitment outlined in Canada’s Africa Strategy to “advocate for reform of the UN Security Council to redress Africa’s historic exclusion from the council and secure due and substantial representation for African countries.”²⁴

Africa’s increasing geostrategic importance is occurring in the context of other shifting global power dynamics, including an evolving competition for influence and

²⁰ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 4, 2024 (Wendy Harris).

²¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 11, 2024 (His Excellency Bankole Adeoye).

²² Ibid.

²³ Among other areas, the committee was told that African countries are seeking permanent membership on the UN Security Council. Presently, China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States have permanent seats on the 15-member council, while African countries occupy three non-permanent seats. The Bretton Woods Institutions are composed of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 11, 2024 (His Excellency Bankole Adeoye); and AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 2, 2024 (Thomas Kwasi Tieku).

²⁴ Government of Canada, [Uniting for Consensus: Joint Statement](#), September 26, 2024; Government of Canada, [Canada’s Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security](#), March 2025, p. 19.

resources on the continent. For example, witnesses explained that Russia has increased its presence and security cooperation in Africa over the past decade. Specifically, the committee heard that the Russian government and Russian proxies have supplied weapons and provided technical support to African governments and non-state armed actors operating in Africa, especially in the Sahel. Christopher Fomunyoh, Senior Associate for Africa and Senior Advisor to the President, National Democratic Institute, indicated that Russia has both fomented and tried to take advantage of instability in parts of Africa in recent years, through its sponsorship of mercenaries and spread of disinformation.²⁵

China's increasing economic and political involvement in Africa has also drawn international attention. As a whole, China is Africa's largest two-way trading partner and its biggest source of foreign direct investment.²⁶ It has extended billions of dollars of loans to African countries, including as part of the Belt and Road Initiative.²⁷ While the committee heard about the positive impact that Chinese investment in Africa has had on economic growth and infrastructure development, some witnesses noted that China's activities in Africa have also drawn criticism. For example, speaking about Chinese investment and loans in Africa, Isaac Odoom, Assistant Professor, Carleton University, said that some Africans have expressed concern about "debt dependency, environmental impacts and transparency in these deals."²⁸

Broadly speaking, the committee heard that the AU, and many African governments, welcome China's economic investment in Africa and do not want the continent to be drawn into great power politics and rivalries. The committee also heard that the enduring legacy of western colonialism in Africa, coupled with concerns about the present-day motivations driving some western engagement in Africa, continues to affect African confidence in western actors. His Excellency Rieaz Moe Shaik, South Africa's High Commissioner to Canada, told the committee that "[t]he legacy of slavery and colonialism has shaped, still shapes and will continue to shape the lived reality of African life across all dimensions. Accordingly, in seeking to create a better future for both Canada and Africa, we must be mindful not to perpetuate the fault lines of the past."²⁹

²⁵ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Christopher Fomunyoh).

²⁶ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 17, 2024 (Marcel Lebleu).

²⁷ The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a global development strategy established by the Chinese government in 2013. Sometimes referred to as "One Belt, One Road," or "the new Silk Road," the BRI is primarily an infrastructure investment program that is being implemented through various projects around the world. For more information, see: Noah Berman, Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, [China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative](#), Council on Foreign Relations, February 2, 2023.

²⁸ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (Isaac Odoom).

²⁹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 11, 2024 (His Excellency Rieaz Moe Shaik).

The committee was told that African leaders have largely sought to remain non-aligned and cultivate good relations with both China and western countries. Ambassador Adeoye underscored that “Africa needs all its friends, provided they come with clean hands and absorb our key priorities.”³⁰ He added that “[w]hat we see in Canada is a potential smart partner – a partner with no strings attached, and a partner that will help promote and consolidate democracy.” The following section will look at key guiding principles for Canadian engagement in Africa.

Guiding Principles for Canada’s Approach in Africa

The interest in Africa must be a partnership grounded in modernity, one that is forward-thinking and, above all, of mutual benefit. We, as Africans, seek not just charity. We seek genuine, equitable partnerships.³¹

- Stanley Achonu, Nigeria Director, ONE,
February 7, 2024

In recent decades, Canada’s engagement with Africa has been characterized by a narrow framework of development aid and periodic diplomatic outreach. This approach often reflects paradigms that fail to account for the continent’s diversity, complexity and evolving geopolitical significance. Such limitations not only hinder the potential or meaningful partnerships but also constrain Canada’s broader diplomatic and economic opportunities in a rapidly changing global landscape.³²

- Templar Kalundu Iga, Executive Director,
Canadian Centre for African Affairs and Policy Research,
December 5, 2024

Over the course of the committee’s study, one word came up time and again: partnership. Multiple witnesses said that African countries want to move beyond the traditional aid recipient–donor relationship. In contrast, the committee heard that African countries are seeking equitable, peer-to-peer partnerships built on mutual respect and shared interests and priorities.

The committee was told that past approaches of cooperation between Canada and African countries have been overly donor driven. For example, Meredith Preston McGhie, Secretary General, Global Centre for Pluralism, told the committee that “[t]oo often, we think of what we may bring to the continent when we need to recognize Africa as a pillar of global leadership.”³³ Similarly, David J. Hornsby, Professor, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, said

³⁰ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 11, 2024 (His Excellency Bankole Adeoye).

³¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), February 7, 2024 (Stanley Achonu).

³² AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 5, 2024 (Templar Kalundu Iga).

³³ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (Meredith Preston McGhie).

that Canada's policy thinking in Africa has historically been dominated by a development mindset. According to Professor Hornsby, "what is needed now more than ever is a more nuanced policy framework that acknowledges the sophisticated and diverse nature of African capacities, capabilities and rapidly changing demographics."³⁴

Suggesting that past approaches to cooperation with African countries have been "skewed in favour of the donors," Barbra Chimhandamba, Public Policy Advisor, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, told the committee that the AU now emphasizes the need "to tailor partnerships to the needs of Africa, as well as the partners' comparative advantage." She added that "Canada's relationship with Africa must be built on trust and mutual respect, even when there is a difference of opinion and interests."³⁵ Critically, Ms. Chimhandamba argued that Canada must not "preach" to Africa but instead listen to the needs of African stakeholders.

Professor Hornsby argued that Canada should look to African priorities that are already embedded in AU strategic plans when deciding how to engage on the continent.³⁶ In this regard, the committee was told that Agenda 2063 – the AU's 50-year blueprint for economic growth and development – should serve as the entry point and guidepost for Canada's engagement in Africa. Announced by African leaders in 2013, Agenda 2063 is structured around seven aspirations for Africa's future and includes dozens of projects aimed at driving Africa's transformation, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Crucially, Ambassador Ben Marc Diendéré told the committee that Canada is committed to supporting Agenda 2063 and the "African Union's vision of African-led solutions to development and political challenges."³⁷

Witnesses also indicated that African countries want their agency and leadership to be valued and recognized by the international community. Professor Odoom, for example, argued that "Canada needs to stop framing Africa mainly as a continent of problems and instead recognize it as a region full of potential and agency."³⁸ For his part, Edward Akuffo, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, University of the Fraser Valley, stated that the overarching principles of a Canadian strategy toward Africa "should be mutual respect, reciprocity and non-indifference to Africa's agency at the state, subregional and regional levels, while reflecting on the growing geopolitical and geoeconomic significance of the region."³⁹ To be sustainable, Professor Akuffo added that "a Canada-Africa strategy must be resilient

³⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (David J. Hornsby).

³⁵ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Barbra Chimhandamba).

³⁶ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (David J. Hornsby).

³⁷ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Ben Marc Diendéré).

³⁸ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (Isaac Odoom).

³⁹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (Edward Akuffo).

and adaptable, a truly multi-partisan product that will outlive specific governments and have demonstrable public support."

Trust building was another guiding principle emphasized by witnesses. The committee was told that Canada should work to build trust with African leaders and stakeholders by demonstrating a commitment to investing in long-term partnerships. To this point, Meredith Preston McGhie argued that "effective engagement in Africa requires relationships, presence, real investments in time, listening and building trust, and a deep-rooted understanding of political and conflict dynamics that impact current events."⁴⁰

The testimony of Ambassador Adeoye was particularly instructive regarding how Canada should engage in Africa. Ambassador Adeoye said African countries are seeking "win-win partnerships" based on mutual respect and goodwill. In particular, he noted that African countries want genuine partnerships with "no hidden agenda."⁴¹ He further urged Canada to "showcase the best of good governance and democracy without conditions to partners."

Finally, the committee heard that Canada should look to its strengths and comparative advantages as a guide to engaging in Africa. Garreth Bloor, President of the Canada-Africa Chamber of Business, highlighted some of these in his testimony, noting that Canada is bilingual, a member of both the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, and home to a large and active African diaspora community.⁴² The committee also heard that Canada's educational system and expertise related to agriculture, infrastructure and natural resource development were assets that it could leverage in Africa. In addition, Stanley Achonu, Nigeria Director, ONE, said that Canada's lack of colonial baggage in Africa offered a unique platform for collaboration on the continent. Mr. Achonu added that "Canadians' intrinsic values of fairness and equity would serve us all as guiding principles in shaping this partnership. The reputation of Canada, both domestically and internationally, serves as a beacon of trust and integrity, a foundation upon which meaningful partnerships can be built."⁴³

⁴⁰ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (Meredith Preston McGhie).

⁴¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 11, 2024 (His Excellency Bankole Adeoye).

⁴² AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (Garreth Bloor).

⁴³ AEFA, [Evidence](#), February 7, 2024 (Stanley Achonu).

Regional and Multilateral Engagement

Canada must establish and actively reinforce its presence in Africa and take a regional approach to its strategic relationship with the continent. This will allow for the focus of policies and spending and the tailoring of Canada's mutual interest to regional priorities, investing in few areas for wider impact, and developing good practices that can translate into building relationships with each African country.⁴⁴

- **Edward Akuffo, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Political Science,
University of the Fraser Valley,
October 2, 2024**

As noted above, in March 2025, the Government of Canada launched its Africa Strategy. That strategy details five priorities for deepening Canada's relations with African partners: 1) strengthening diplomatic engagement and people-to-people ties; 2) enhancing economic cooperation; 3) supporting socioeconomic development, assisting in humanitarian crises and climate adaptation; 4) bolstering peace and security partnerships; and 5) advancing shared priorities on the global stage.⁴⁵

Canada's Africa Strategy was long overdue. David Black, Professor, Department of Political Science, Dalhousie University, told the committee that Canada's level of interest and engagement in Africa has "waned" since the mid-2000s.⁴⁶ Among other examples, he noted that Canada's peacekeeping presence on the continent has diminished as has its domestic research and policy development capacity related to Africa. Professor Akuffo described the situation more bluntly, arguing that "Canada is at least two decades behind when it comes to broadening and deepening its relationship with the African continent..." He added that without significant effort and a serious commitment to Africa, Canada risks becoming a "peripheral" player on the continent.⁴⁷

The committee welcomes the release of Canada's Africa Strategy. Many aspects of the strategy align with the priorities identified by the committee's witnesses regarding Canada's engagement in Africa. Nonetheless, the committee is concerned about the lack of new funding associated with the strategy. Unlike Canada's 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy, which came with an investment of \$2.3 billion over five years, no additional funding was earmarked for Canada's Africa Strategy.⁴⁸ Cheryl Urban

⁴⁴ Edward Akuffo, [Brief](#) submitted to the committee, October 2, 2024.

⁴⁵ Government of Canada, [Canada's Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security](#), March 2025.

⁴⁶ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (David Black).

⁴⁷ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (Edward Akuffo).

⁴⁸ For more information on initiatives and investments associated with Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, see: Global Affairs Canada (GAC), [Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy: New initiatives and resources](#), Backgrounder, November 2022.

said that the strategy “was drafted in a way in which it can be implemented using the existing resources that we have.” She added that, to achieve the objectives of the strategy, “it requires changing focus, increasing the extent to which we undertake prioritization...doing things in a different, more innovative way and being effective with the way we do things.”⁴⁹

While the committee is conscious of the fiscal constraints imposed by the current economic climate, it questions whether the government can actualize the strategy without new funding. It bears underlining that Canada’s Africa Strategy was not mentioned once in the federal government’s 2025 budget. In fact, there were no references to Africa at all in the budget.⁵⁰

The committee also has concerns about the lack of implementation plan associated with the Africa Strategy. As acknowledged by Ms. Urban, the Africa Strategy “is high level.” She told the committee that to implement the strategy, the department will need “to develop plans at a much more concrete level that are focused on specific countries and specific sectors to achieve very concrete objectives.”⁵¹ While the department indicated that it was developing plans in support of the strategy, it did not say when such plans would be prepared and if they would be made public. The committee believes that GAC should produce a concrete and detailed plan for the implementation of Canada’s Africa Strategy. This plan should contain measurable targets and timeframes for the realization of the strategy, as well as information on the resources that will be dedicated to its implementation.

Recommendation 1

The Government of Canada should produce a detailed and concrete action plan with measurable objectives, timelines and dedicated resources to ensure the effective and coherent implementation of Canada’s Africa Strategy. To ensure transparency and accountability, the Government of Canada should also produce a report on the status and outcomes associated with Canada’s Africa Strategy on an annual basis.

⁴⁹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 30, 2025 (Cheryl Urban).

⁵⁰ See: Government of Canada, [Canada Strong: Budget 2025](#), November 2025.

⁵¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 30, 2025 (Cheryl Urban).

Fostering Partnerships with the African Union and Beyond

In November 2024, Canada hosted the second Canada–African Union Commission (AUC) High-Level Dialogue in Toronto.⁵² At the dialogue, Canada and the AUC agreed to advance shared priorities in the areas of peace and security, economic prosperity and development.⁵³ On the sidelines of the dialogue, Canada also formalized its relationship with the AUC by signing a memorandum of understanding aimed at regularizing consultation and coordination in areas of mutual interest. According to GAC, the third high-level dialogue is expected to take place in fall 2026.⁵⁴

The Canada–AUC High-Level Dialogue is an important avenue for Canada to build relationships and partnerships in Africa. Edward Akuffo argued that Canada should make the High-Level Dialogue a permanent feature of its diplomatic relations in Africa. According to Professor Akuffo, this would “help to create a central platform to engage continental and subregional leaders and allow for the synergy of policy goals with individual states.”⁵⁵ The high-level dialogues that Canada and the European Union conduct across multiple thematic areas demonstrate the benefits of structured collaboration – an approach Canada could emulate in its engagement with the AUC.⁵⁶

As a middle power, multiple witnesses argued that Canada should also look to other regional and multilateral fora to leverage its engagement in Africa. For example, the committee was told that the Commonwealth and La Francophonie – both of which have more than 20 African members – are important spaces for Canada to work with African countries on shared priorities.⁵⁷ In particular, the committee heard that Canada’s membership in La Francophonie provides an opportunity to strengthen people-to-people ties between Canadians and Africans and to foster support for security in West Africa and the Sahel.

The G20 is another multilateral forum where Canada can work with African leaders. As noted above, the AU was admitted as a member of the G20 in 2023. High Commissioner Shaik said that Canada should look to capitalize on the policy and membership “crosswalks” that exist between the G7 and the G20.⁵⁸ More specifically, witnesses urged Canada to work bilaterally with South Africa, which recently held the presidency of the G20, to build support for African priorities. Some

⁵² The first Canada–AUC High-Level Dialogue took place in Ottawa in October 2022. See: GAC, [*Canada and African Union Commission conclude first high-level dialogue*](#), News release, October 28, 2022.

⁵³ Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, [*Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets with African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat*](#), Readout, November 8, 2024.

⁵⁴ AEFA, [*Evidence*](#), October 30, 2025 (Cheryl Urban).

⁵⁵ Edward Akuffo, [*Brief*](#) submitted to the committee, October 2, 2024.

⁵⁶ For more information, see: GAC, [*Canada and the European Union*](#).

⁵⁷ AEFA, [*Evidence*](#), December 7, 2023 (Cheryl Urban).

⁵⁸ AEFA, [*Evidence*](#), December 11, 2024 (His Excellency Rieaz Moe Shaik).

of this work is already occurring. Importantly, Canada invited South Africa to attend the G7 Leaders' Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta, in June 2025, and GAC told the committee that the two countries are working together on various shared priorities, including critical minerals, disaster risk reduction and artificial intelligence.⁵⁹

The committee shares the view that the African Union should be at the centre of Canada's engagement in Africa. It also believes that Canada should look for opportunities to engage through the G7 and G20 to build support for African priorities, including Agenda 2063.

Recommendation 2

The Government of Canada should hold regular High-Level Dialogues with the African Union Commission and should consider hosting a summit with African heads of government.

Recommendation 3

The Government of Canada should engage with its G7 and G20 partners to build support and harness resources for African priorities, including Agenda 2063.

The African Continental Free Trade Area

Africa's economic growth potential is projected to expand with the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The AfCFTA is a pan-African agreement that aims to increase intra-African trade and create a single market across Africa for goods and services. The committee was told that, once fully implemented, the AfCFTA will constitute the world's largest free trade area by number of member countries, with a combined gross domestic product exceeding US\$3.4 trillion.⁶⁰ Launched in 2018, the agreement establishing the AfCFTA has been signed by 54 of the 55 African states recognized by the AU; to date, 49 countries have ratified the agreement that established the AfCFTA.⁶¹

⁵⁹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 30, 2025 (Cheryl Urban).

⁶⁰ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 17, 2024 (Marcel Lebleu).

⁶¹ Eritrea is the only African state not to have signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement. Benin, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan have yet to ratify. Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, Republic of South Africa, [Ratification of AfCFTA Protocols](#), September 3, 2025.

Canada has supported the negotiation, establishment and implementation of the AfCFTA through funding of \$15.2 million between 2021 and 2026 to the African Trade Policy Centre, an organization housed within the UN Economic Commission for Africa that supports trade policy and negotiations. Marcel Lebleu, Canada's Ambassador to Senegal and Special Envoy for the Sahel, told the committee that the AfCFTA will "not only help reduce intra-continental trade barriers but also increase the ability and confidence of Canadian companies to pursue new opportunities with their African partners. Areas of interest include clean technology, green energy and cooperation on critical minerals."⁶² The committee urges the Government of Canada to continue working with African stakeholders to support the implementation of the AfCFTA.

Recommendation 4

The Government of Canada should continue to provide financial and technical assistance towards the implementation and operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Diplomatic Presence and Capacity

In November 2024, the Government of Canada announced that it would convert its diplomatic offices in Benin and Zambia to a full embassy and high commission, respectively.⁶³ In total, Canada has 27 diplomatic offices in Africa, which include 22 embassies and high commissions.⁶⁴ This network of diplomatic offices includes Canada's permanent observer mission to the AU, which is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Canada opened that dedicated mission in June 2023 and appointed Ambassador Ben Marc Diendéré as Canada's Permanent Observer to the AU.

The opening of Canada's permanent observer mission to the AU and the conversion of Canada's offices in Benin and Zambia to full diplomatic missions are positive. However, the committee was told that Canada's diplomatic presence in Africa is limited by a lack of personnel. For example, Professor Hornsby indicated that only

⁶² Marcel Lebleu made these comments while occupying the post of Director General, West and Central Africa Bureau, GAC. Mr. Lebleu was appointed as Canadian Ambassador to Senegal in July 2024 and as Special Envoy for the Sahel in March 2025. AEFA, *Evidence*, April 17, 2024 (Marcel Lebleu).

⁶³ GAC, *Canada reinforces partnerships with African countries and institutions to strengthen diplomatic relations, collaboration, economic development and stronger ties, in Canada and on the global stage*, News release, November 7, 2024.

⁶⁴ GAC, *Canada launches its first global Africa Strategy: A partnership for shared prosperity and security*, News release, March 6, 2025.

three Canada-based staff are assigned to Canada's permanent observer mission to the AU – fewer, he said, than are posted to Canada's Embassy in Burkina Faso.⁶⁵ For her part, Marie-Joëlle Zahar, Professor and Director of the Research Network on Peace Operations, University of Montréal, referred to Canada's diplomatic presence in Africa as “extremely limited.”⁶⁶ Some witnesses contrasted Canada's presence in Africa to that of other industrialized countries such as Türkiye, which is making a concerted effort to expand its diplomatic engagement on the continent.⁶⁷

The committee also heard that Canada's diplomatic presence vis-à-vis Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs) may require readjustment. The AU recognizes eight RECs, which are intergovernmental bodies made up of regional groupings of African countries that work to facilitate deeper economic integration.⁶⁸ Canada engages mainly with four of the RECs: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD); the East African Community (EAC); and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Professor Akuffo recommended that Canada establish permanent missions in each of the eight RECs “to give effectiveness and visibility to its engagement on the continent.”⁶⁹

In its 2023 report *More than a Vocation – Canada's Need for a 21st Century Foreign Service*, the committee encouraged the Government of Canada to regularly review Canada's overseas presence to ensure that its diplomatic representation is fit for purpose and aligned with Canadian foreign policy priorities.⁷⁰ The committee reiterates this recommendation in relation to Canada's diplomatic presence and capacity in Africa. While the committee understands that the eight RECs are not equally advanced in terms of their organization and activities, it believes that the Government of Canada should look for opportunities to increase its engagement

⁶⁵ AEFA, *Evidence*, November 27, 2024 (David J. Hornsby).

⁶⁶ AEFA, *Evidence*, May 23, 2024 (Marie-Joëlle Zahar).

⁶⁷ E.g., AEFA, *Evidence*, December 5, 2024 (Templar Kalundu Iga). The May 13, 2025 briefing book prepared for Prime Minister Mark Carney indicates that Türkiye has expanded its diplomatic presence in Africa to 44 embassies and that Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan has visited Africa more than 50 times since 2005. See: Government of Canada, *Briefing book for the Prime Minister of Canada – State of the World*, May 13, 2025.

⁶⁸ The AU recognizes the following eight RECs: the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in the north; the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the west; the East African Community (EAC) in the east and Great Lakes region; the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the east and Horn of Africa; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the south; the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) over large portions of southern, eastern, central and northern Africa; the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in the centre; and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD) in the north and west.

⁶⁹ AEFA, *Evidence*, October 2, 2024 (Edward Akuffo).

⁷⁰ AEFA, *More than a Vocation – Canada's need for a 21st Century Foreign Service*, 44th Parliament, 1st Session, December 2023, p. 64.

with African institutions and stakeholders at the subregional as well as the continent level.

Recommendation 5

The Government of Canada should strengthen Canada’s presence at, support for, and engagement with, the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities of Africa.

The committee also believes that the Government of Canada should enhance Canadian capacity and expertise related to Africa. The committee heard that Canada lacks a depth of knowledge within GAC and across government with regard to Africa. Professor Hornsby, for example, told the committee that Canada needs “more people who understand the continent in sophisticated and nuanced ways whilst offering policy advice.”⁷¹

The committee’s 2023 report on the Canadian foreign service highlighted the troubling erosion of expertise at the level of GAC’s geographic branches. It also recommended that GAC develop a training roadmap to ensure that all foreign service officers and Canada-based staff have access to a range of geographic and functional training courses as part of their career management framework. Meredith Preston McGhie told the committee that “[t]oo often, we have a generalist diplomatic corps.”⁷² She encouraged the government to support the cross-posting of foreign service personnel within Africa and to invest in specialists focused on Africa. The committee agrees.

Recommendation 6

Global Affairs Canada should ensure that all Canada-based staff have access to geographic and/or functional training courses related to Africa and should support employees who wish to seek successive overseas postings in African countries.

Special Envoys for Africa and the Sahel

As part of the launch of its Africa Strategy, in March 2025, the Government of Canada announced the appointment of Ben Marc Diendéré, Canada’s Permanent

⁷¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (David J. Hornsby).

⁷² AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (Meredith Preston McGhie).

Observer to the AU, as Canada's Special Envoy for Africa. In that role, Ambassador Diendéré is responsible for engaging with high-level African stakeholders and Canada's heads of mission in the region to advance Canadian interests. At the same time, to strengthen relationships in the Sahel region, the government announced the appointment of Marcel Lebleu, Canada's Ambassador to Senegal, as Canada's Special Envoy for the Sahel.

The committee welcomes the announcement of these two special envoys. However, to date, the government has provided little information about the mandates and objectives of the two envoys. The committee encourages the government to provide more information on the respective roles and priorities of the special envoys and ensure that they have the resources necessary to fulfil their objectives.

Recommendation 7

The Government of Canada should clearly define the roles and priorities of the Special Envoy for Africa and the Special Envoy for the Sahel and should provide both special envoys with the resources necessary to fulfil their mandates.

Strategic Pillars for Canadian Engagement in Africa

During its hearings, the committee received various recommendations on the thematic priorities that Canada should pursue in Africa. This section discusses selected strategic areas that the committee believes the Government of Canada should focus on in Africa: peace and security, governance and development, and trade, investment and connectivity.

Peace and Security

Africa is a changing continent. It's the youngest and some of the richest in terms of resources, with a huge population and changing demography, but also with turbulent political and security issues, dealing with terrorism, violent extremism, transnational organized crime, rebellion, insurrection and civil wars. But it's democratic in the very essence.⁷³

- His Excellency Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security,
African Union Commission,
April 11, 2024

⁷³ AEFA, [*Evidence*](#), April 11, 2024 (His Excellency Bankole Adeoye).

Beyond our obvious interest in international security and stability, which are key to Canada's prosperity, we have multiple interests in the security and stability of Africa. These relate to the continent's mineral reserves... to the management of the growing worldwide problem of refugees and migrants and... to social peace here at home in Canada.⁷⁴

- **Marie-Joëlle Zahar, Professor and Director of the Research Network on Peace Operations,
University of Montréal,
May 23, 2024**

The African security environment is complex and dynamic. The committee heard that Africa faces a variety of security challenges, including organized crime, terrorism and hybrid threats led by non-state actors and transnational groups. Testifying in December 2023, Cheryl Urban observed that there were 35 active conflicts in Africa at that time, alongside a series of recent military coups.⁷⁵

The causes of insecurity in Africa are multifaceted. Several witnesses, for example, highlighted the actions of external actors in perpetuating African insecurity. Christopher Fomunyoh referred to the role of “illiberal influences” on the continent, including Russia, China and certain Middle Eastern countries which, he said, propagate “the false narrative that democracy is a Western construct.”⁷⁶ Jacqueline O'Neill, Canada's then-Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security, noted that China had recently surpassed Russia as sub-Saharan Africa's largest arms supplier.⁷⁷

The committee heard that climate change is another driver of insecurity in Africa. Mr. Fomunyoh explained that desertification can cause food insecurity and can sometimes “fuel violent inter-communal conflicts.”⁷⁸ For his part, Robert Fowler, Canada's former Ambassador to the UN, warned that climate change and desertification can exacerbate migration challenges as millions may be forced to move in search of food and land.⁷⁹ Relatedly, Thomas Kwasi Tieku, Full Professor of Politics and International Relations, King's University College at the University of

⁷⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 23, 2024 (Marie-Joëlle Zahar).

⁷⁵ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 7, 2023 (Cheryl Urban). As of early November 2025, the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights puts the number of active conflicts at “more than 35”: see Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, [Today's Armed Conflicts](#), Database, accessed November 6, 2025.

⁷⁶ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Christopher Fomunyoh).

⁷⁷ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 3, 2024 (Jacqueline O'Neill). According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Russia accounted for 21 percent of African imports of major arms in the period 2020-2024. China accounted for 18 percent, while the United States accounted for 16 percent. Mathew George et al., Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, [Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2024](#), March 2025, p. 7.

⁷⁸ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Christopher Fomunyoh).

⁷⁹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 5, 2024 (Robert Fowler).

Western Ontario, told the committee that “[f]ood is at the root of most African political crises.”⁸⁰

Insecurity in Africa has consequences not only for its inhabitants, but internationally and in Canada as well. Sarah-Myriam Martin-Brûlé, Full Professor, Department of Politics and International Studies, Bishop’s University, told the committee that the “interconnection of our world has shown that threats and risks are not bound by geography.” According to Professor Martin-Brûlé, the global threats stemming from insecurity on the African continent include “radicalization and financing of terrorist activities; transnational threats; criminal threats, notably those related to money laundering, trafficking and cybercriminality; disinformation and misinformation; and spillover of humanitarian crises – with climate change effects in the background.”⁸¹

Notwithstanding the continent’s significant security challenges, the committee wishes to underscore that “over 80% of Africans live together peacefully most of the time,” as it heard from Professor Kwasi Tiekou.⁸² This reminder is important. As Mr. Iga argued, the perpetuation of a “crisis narrative” about Africa, in which the continent is portrayed “solely through the lens of conflict, poverty and instability... hinders Canadian public support for deeper engagement and overlooks Africa’s contribution to global challenges.”⁸³

The committee believes that Canada’s engagement with Africa must take seriously the continent’s security challenges without allowing them to define our understanding of Africa. In that spirit, the committee wishes to acknowledge recent successes in the domain of peacebuilding. For example, the committee heard from Ms. Whitman about successful post-conflict efforts to end the re-engagement of children in active conflicts in Sierra Leone and to disarm, de-mobilize and reintegrate children in Rwanda.⁸⁴ As Professor Hornsby underlined, there is a need “to tell a better story about Africa.”⁸⁵

Security Challenges in the Sahel

As part of its peace and security engagement in Africa, several witnesses argued that Canada should focus its attention on the Sahel – the semiarid zone running from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea and between the Sahara Desert in the north and the

⁸⁰ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 2, 2024 (Thomas Kwasi Tiekou).

⁸¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 9 2024 (Sarah-Myriam Martin-Brûlé).

⁸² AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 2, 2024 (Thomas Kwasi Tiekou).

⁸³ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 5, 2024 (Templar Kalundu Iga).

⁸⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 23, 2024 (Shelly Whitman).

⁸⁵ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (David J. Hornsby).

savannas to the south.⁸⁶ In recent years, the Sahel has been gravely affected by numerous interrelated security crises. Several Sahelian countries have suffered from violent extremist insurgencies, most notably Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.⁸⁷ The problem was aggravated by a flood of arms and combatants from Libya following the Libyan civil war in 2011. International counterterrorist efforts led by the United States (U.S.) and France failed to contain these insurgencies, contributing to popular resentment towards domestic governments and their international allies. According to Geoffroi Montpetit, Senior Advisor, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, “[d]espite 20 years of multinational security and counterterrorism operations, the Sahel is now the most terrorism-affected region in the world.”⁸⁸

The perceived failures of domestic governments and their allies paved the way for a series of military coups d’état across the Sahel, in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger and Gabon.⁸⁹ Not only have these coups undermined democratic gains in countries like Niger, but the newly established military juntas have taken strides to distance themselves from Western partners in favour of deepening ties with Russia, whose mercenaries were involved in supporting Sahelian coup leaders, the committee heard.⁹⁰ The committee was told that Russian private military organizations offer their support in exchange for access to critical minerals and other natural resources, and that Russia was taking advantage of insecurity in the Sahel to insert itself into the political situation there.⁹¹

In addition to the significant toll on the people of the Sahel, the deteriorating security landscape in the Sahel has consequences for Canadian mining companies operating in the region. Ambassador Lebleu informed the committee that, in Mali, for example, Canadian company Barrick Mining Corporation – the largest private investor in Mali – has seen its assets quasi-nationalized and several of its local employees detained for months. Ambassador Lebleu noted a similar – albeit less aggressive – trend of “creeping nationalization” affecting Canadian companies in Burkina Faso. In both countries, Canada is the largest foreign investor.⁹²

⁸⁶ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 9, 2024 (Geoffroi Montpetit); AEFA, *Written Remarks*, November 2024 (Christopher Fomunyoh).

⁸⁷ Council on Foreign Relations, Center for Preventive Action, [Violent Extremism in the Sahel](#), September 4, 2025.

⁸⁸ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 9, 2024 (Geoffroi Montpetit).

⁸⁹ Mali experienced coups in 2020 and 2021; Burkina Faso in January and September 2022; Guinea in 2021 and 2023; and Niger in 2023. See Sohaib Mahmoud and Mohamed Taifouri, [The Coups d’État of the Sahel Region: Domestic Causes and International Competition](#), Arab Center Washington DC, September 27, 2023.

⁹⁰ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 23, 2024 (Ann Fitz-Gerald).

⁹¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 7, 2023 (Cheryl Urban); AEFA, [Evidence](#), February 8, 2024 (Christopher MacLennan).

⁹² AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 30, 2025 (Marcel Lebleu).

The Sahel has been further destabilized by the civil war in Sudan, which, by 30 September 2025, had displaced over seven million people internally, while more than four million others had sought refuge in neighbouring countries.⁹³ The civil war began in mid-April 2023, when, among other matters, the regular Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces failed to reach an agreement as to how the latter would be integrated into the former. A report to the UN Human Rights Council by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan found evidence that both parties had violated international law, amounting to international crimes. The same report concludes that the conduct of the Rapid Support Forces constitutes crimes against humanity, possibly amounting to extermination.⁹⁴ The Rapid Support Forces, which has its roots in militias used by the former Sudanese government to put down insurgencies in the Darfur region, has a long history of committing abuses, including along ethnic lines.⁹⁵

The committee believes that Canada has a role to play in addressing security challenges in the Sahel. In this regard, the committee is pleased that the Government of Canada has created a Special Envoy for the Sahel as part of its Africa Strategy. As noted above, Marcel Lebleu has held that position since March 2025. In October 2025, Ambassador Lebleu told the committee that he had visited Mali in May 2025 and had plans to visit Burkina Faso in November 2025. These visits are in keeping with advice the committee received to the effect that Canada should maintain its involvement in the Sahel, including in those countries with military regimes.⁹⁶ Mr. Montpetit further recommended that Canada play a convening role in bringing together international partners with the goal of advancing political dialogue and peace in the region.⁹⁷ The committee endorses this view.

Recommendation 8

The Government of Canada should make the Sahel a focus of its security programming in Africa and should look for opportunities to play a convening role in bringing together international partners to support dialogue and peace in the region.

⁹³ United Nations International Office for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix, *DTM Sudan Mobility Update (22)*, October 16, 2025.

⁹⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council, *Sudan: A War of Atrocities – Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan*, September 5, 2025, p. 16.

⁹⁵ See Human Rights Watch, *“Men With No Mercy”: Rapid Support Forces Attacks against Civilians in Darfur, Sudan*, Report, September 9, 2015.

⁹⁶ AEFA, *Evidence*, May 9, 2024 (Sarah-Myriam Martin-Brûlé and Geoffroi Montpetit).

⁹⁷ AEFA, *Evidence*, May 9, 2024 (Geoffroi Montpetit)

Supporting African-led Peace Operations

In addition to focusing on the Sahel, the committee heard that Canada could do more to support AU-led peace and security initiatives in Africa. To this end, the committee was informed that the Government of Canada should be cognisant of the shifting landscape for peace operations in Africa, with several witnesses suggesting that the traditional peacekeeping model is no longer relevant in the African context.

According to Ambassador Adeoye, the AU considers that “the concept of peacekeeping is obsolete.” In its place, Ambassador Adeoye highlighted the shift toward “peace enforcement,” which he described as a more “kinetic” and “robust” way to manage security threats. Ambassador Adeoye indicated that peace enforcement may overlap with counterterrorism and counter-radicalization efforts, and he encouraged Canada and other partners to provide the AU with the resources to assist in these efforts.⁹⁸ For her part, Ann Fitz-Gerald, Director, Balsillie School of International Affairs and Professor of International Security, said that the “old-style peacekeeping” was “no longer apparent on the continent.”⁹⁹ Professor Fitz-Gerald emphasized the “need to reimagine peacekeeping in different forms, suggesting that peacekeeping might come in the form of capacity building or security sector and constitutional reform.”¹⁰⁰

Witnesses noted that several UN peacekeeping missions in Africa have drawn down in recent years in favour of a shift toward AU-led peace missions. Ambassador Adeoye highlighted UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023), which provides a framework, on a case-by-case basis, for using UN assessed contributions to fund up to 75% of the annual budget of AU-led peace operations authorized by the UN Security Council.¹⁰¹ However, nearly two years after its adoption, the UN Security Council has yet to authorize an AU-led peace support operation that could mobilize funding under Resolution 2719. Among other factors, the implementation of the resolution has been hindered by resource challenges and disagreement among some UN members states about burden sharing.¹⁰²

Canada’s Africa Strategy indicates that the Government of Canada will support African-led peace operations and conflict prevention initiatives.¹⁰³ However, the strategy does not mention UN Security Council Resolution 2719. The committee

⁹⁸ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 11, 2024 (His Excellency Bankole Adeoye).

⁹⁹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 23, 2024 (Ann Fitz-Gerald).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 11, 2024 (His Excellency Bankole Adeoye). See United Nations Security Council, [Resolution 2719 \(2023\)](#).

¹⁰² For more information, see: International Peace Institute, [Partnership in Peace Operations: Implementing Resolution 2719](#), October 2025.

¹⁰³ Government of Canada, [Canada’s Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security](#), 2025, p. 16.

urges the government to work with partners to resolve outstanding issues related to Resolution 2719 and support its implementation.

Recommendation 9

The Government of Canada should support the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2719 and should build international support for African-led peace operations.

Inclusive Peace and Conflict Prevention

The committee was told that Canada should support inclusive peace and conflict prevention processes in Africa. To this end, the committee heard that Canada could draw on its own pluralist experience. For instance, Professor Zahar told the committee that Canada's "bilingualism, pluralism, federal experience and experience managing a deep, divisive conflict in our own country..." position Canada to "play a much-needed role in restoring the logic of dialogue and in contributing to negotiated solutions that have a better chance of lasting."¹⁰⁴

Several other witnesses similarly suggested that Canada's experience managing diversity could be leveraged in the African context.¹⁰⁵ Speaking of Canada's experience promoting pluralism, Meredith Preston McGhie called attention to the "resources and expertise on mediation inside government and across Canada." According to Ms. Preston McGhie, taking advantage of these resources would mean treating mediation as a "core diplomatic skill," and putting "more senior, dedicated diplomatic resources" towards mediation.¹⁰⁶

Various witnesses also emphasized the need to continue to support African women and youth, and local civil society organizations, in peacebuilding processes. In this regard, the committee heard that Canada and African partners should build on their likeminded history in this area. Ambassador O'Neill told the committee that the women, peace and security agenda "has deep roots in Africa," and "owes much of its existence to the leadership of African women themselves." Among other considerations, Ambassador O'Neill cited the fact that UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the foundation of the women, peace and security agenda, was led by Namibia in 2000, and that the AU was the first multilateral organization to name

¹⁰⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 23, 2024 (Marie-Joëlle Zahar).

¹⁰⁵ E.g., AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 2, 2024 (Thomas Kwasi Tieku); AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 23, 2024 (Ann Fitz-Gerald).

¹⁰⁶ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (Meredith Preston McGhie).

a high-level envoy on women, peace and security.¹⁰⁷ For its part, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2000, Canada worked to enable the adoption of Resolution 1325 and has co-sponsored subsequent resolutions on the women, peace and security agenda in the time since.

The committee was told that African youth should also play a greater role in peacebuilding. Judith McCallum, Executive Director, Life and Peace Institute, said that her work with civil society had shown that “young people can play critical roles in promoting nonviolent action for peace.” Ms. McCallum pointed to the role of young people in Sudanese resistance committees – informal neighbourhood networks that played an important role in the protests that brought down dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019 – as well as in Sudan’s “emergency response rooms,” which are youth-led teams of volunteers that have sprung up to address civilian needs since the outbreak of Sudan’s civil war.¹⁰⁸ The committee welcomes the plans in Canada’s Africa Strategy to promote the role of women and youth in peace and security.¹⁰⁹

Lastly, several witnesses emphasized the importance of investing in conflict prevention. In this respect, Ambassador Adeoye highlighted several AU conflict prevention mechanisms which he said warranted further support from Canada, including the Continental Early Warning System, the Panel of the Wise, the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) and the Network of African Youth in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (WiseYouth Network).¹¹⁰ Ambassador Adeoye also identified mediation, preventive diplomacy and election observation as particular areas in which Canada could work fruitfully with the AU.¹¹¹ The committee welcomes the inclusion in Canada’s Africa Strategy of plans to provide technical assistance to the AUC’s Political Affairs, Peace and Security department and to provide support to early warning initiatives.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ AEFA, *Evidence*, October 3, 2024 (Jacqueline O’Neill).

¹⁰⁸ AEFA, *Evidence*, May 2, 2024 (Judith McCallum).

¹⁰⁹ Government of Canada, *Canada’s Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security*, 2025, p. 16.

¹¹⁰ The Panel of the Wise brings together five high-profile Africans who have made “outstanding contributions” to the cause of peace, security and development on the continent. FemWise-Africa is a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise which aims to strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation. WiseYouth Network is another subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise, one which aims to strengthen the role of youth in conflict prevention, mediation and dialogue efforts. The Continental Early Warning System is comprised of several observation and monitoring units which collect and analyze data for the sake of anticipating and preventing conflicts on the African continent.

¹¹¹ AEFA, *Evidence*, April 11, 2024 (His Excellency Bankole Adeoye).

¹¹² Government of Canada, *Canada’s Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security*, 2025, p. 16.

Recommendation 10

The Government of Canada should prioritize pluralist and inclusive peacebuilding processes in Africa, including by supporting programs that promote the role of African women and youth at all stages of peace processes and conflict prevention initiatives.

Governance and Development

There is a need for the Canadian brand on our continent in a more visible manner — a Canada that can showcase the best of good governance and democracy.¹¹³

- **His Excellency Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, African Union Commission, April 11, 2024**

Under current conditions, most, if not all, of the world's least developed countries will be in Africa as of 2030.¹¹⁴

- **Christopher MacLennan, Deputy Minister of International Development, Global Affairs Canada, February 8, 2024**

Where peace and security have been established, good governance and sustainable development are key to preventing the return of conflict. Governance and sustainable development are intimately linked – a theme that was reinforced for the committee on multiple occasions. For instance, Wendy Harris told the committee that her organization believes that “good governance and institutional strengthening is the foundation of sustainable development,”¹¹⁵ while Barbra Chimhandamba said “[g]ood governance creates an environment that invites trade and investment and builds stability and peace.”¹¹⁶ The World Bank Group’s 2025 report, *21st Century Africa: Governance and Growth*, concurs, identifying “governance with accountable leadership, widespread public engagement, and a competent and committed state” as a “crucial enabler” of development.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 11, 2024 (His Excellency Bankole Adeoye).

¹¹⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), February 8, 2024 (Christopher MacLennan).

¹¹⁵ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 4, 2024 (Wendy Harris).

¹¹⁶ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Barbra Chimhandamba).

¹¹⁷ World Bank Group, ed. Chorching Go, [21st Century Africa: Governance and Growth](#), 2025, p. xv.

Conversely, poor governance – understood as a state’s inability to provide the political, social, economic and environmental goods that citizens have a right to expect¹¹⁸ – creates distrust and disaffection between citizens and the state and jeopardizes progress on development. Poor governance can and does adversely affect popular support for democracy in Africa. Christopher Fomunyoh told the committee that, while “support for democracy remains strong in Africa,” there is “deepening citizen dissatisfaction with democratic performance by political elites,” noting that “the proportion of citizens who consider their country democratic has declined between 2011 and 2023.”¹¹⁹

In recent years, youth-led protests in countries such as Kenya, Togo, Madagascar and Morocco have reflected public frustration with aspects of governance and economic conditions. This dissatisfaction has also been visible in popular support for military juntas in the Sahel, where leaders took advantage of the perceived inability of previous regimes to effectively address the threat of terrorism as justification for their unconstitutional seizures of power. As Mr. Fomunyoh warned the committee, “Russia and other forces, non-democratic forces, are tapping into a wave of disaffection that the youth, for example, have with their governments.”¹²⁰

Supporting Good Governance in Africa

Governance levels vary significantly across Africa. While some African countries, such as the small island developing states of Seychelles, Mauritius and Cabo Verde, as well as the populous and influential country of South Africa, enjoy stronger levels of governance, others face severe challenges. According to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation’s *2024 Ibrahim Index of African Governance* report, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Somalia and South Sudan experienced among the lowest levels of governance in Africa in 2023.¹²¹ The same report found that governance had improved in 33 African countries – home to just over half of Africa’s population – over the past decade, while governance decreased in the other 21 countries.¹²² The report warned of a “deepening security crisis and shrinking participatory environment almost all over the continent.”¹²³

¹¹⁸ See Mo Ibrahim Foundation, *2024 Ibrahim Index of African Governance – Index Report*, October 2024

¹¹⁹ AEFA, *Evidence*, November 28, 2024 (Christopher Fomunyoh).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Mo Ibrahim Foundation, *2024 Ibrahim Index of African Governance – Index Report*, October 2024, p. 15.

¹²² Ibid, p. 12.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 7.

Good governance is one of the seven aspirations outlined in the AU's Agenda 2063.¹²⁴ The agenda declares that "Africa shall have a universal culture of good governance, democratic values, gender equality, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law."¹²⁵ The committee notes that Canada has long supported this aspiration, including through contributions to capacity building and training for the AUC. Canada's Africa Strategy commits to continuing such support.¹²⁶

At the same time, some Canadian companies operating in Africa have been accused of violating human rights in the countries where they operate. The committee heard from James Yap, Acting Director, International Human Rights Program, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto, that "Canada has a very direct and effective way to contribute to human rights and good governance on the continent": namely, "by doing more to ensure good human rights and good governance practices by Canadian companies operating in Africa and elsewhere around the world."¹²⁷

The committee heard that the reputation of Canadian companies operating in Africa can affect Canada's reputation.¹²⁸ Professor Yap recommended that Canada impose mandatory human rights due diligence standards on Canadian companies operating abroad and make failures to meet those standards legally actionable in Canadian courts. Professor Yap also suggested that granting the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) more powers and resources could "go a long way."¹²⁹ Mr. Iga concurred with Professor Yap's assessment, saying that CORE "needs more teeth, more funding, more talent, and it needs a mandate backed by Canadians and lawmakers alike."¹³⁰ In a similar vein, Nicholas Coghlan, former Head of Office of the Canadian Embassy in Sudan and former Canadian ambassador to South Sudan, told the committee that the CORE "has no teeth at all. It must be given at least the power to compel testimony from defendants when complaints are lodged."¹³¹

¹²⁴ African Union, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*, September 2015, p. 5.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 5.

¹²⁶ Government of Canada, *Canada's Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security*, p. 16.

¹²⁷ AEFA, *Evidence*, December 5, 2024 (James Yap).

¹²⁸ AEFA, *Evidence*, December 5, 2024 (James Yap); AEFA, *Evidence*, May 23, 2024 (Nicholas Coghlan).

¹²⁹ AEFA, *Evidence*, December 5, 2024 (James Yap).

¹³⁰ AEFA, *Evidence*, December 5, 2024 (Templar Kalundu Iga).

¹³¹ AEFA, *Evidence*, May 23, 2024 (Nicholas Coghlan).

Recommendation 11

The Government of Canada should clarify the status of the Office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise and should provide that office – or a new complaints and enforcement mechanism – with the authority and resources necessary to investigate complaints against Canadian companies operating in Africa in a timely and effective manner.

Beyond improving accountability for Canadian companies, several witnesses suggested that Canada could contribute further to the strengthening of democratic governance on the continent. For instance, Mr. Fomunyoh encouraged the leveraging of Canada’s foreign policy and economic and cultural assets to “support democratic governance as a cross-cutting ingredient for development in Africa.” He further called on Canada to develop “meaningful and long-lasting partnerships with Africans” across civil society, governments, and institutions to support democracy on the continent.¹³²

At the same time, Ms. Chimhandamba cautioned against “imposing ourselves or imposing our ideas” on African partners instead of listening and engaging in dialogue,¹³³ while Professor Odoom warned that many Africans “feel that Western nations, including Canada, often come across as paternalistic.”¹³⁴ Professor Hornsby underscored the need to develop strategies with African nations and regions “as opposed to developing them for them.”¹³⁵

Several witnesses identified educational support as a key avenue through which Canada can contribute to governance capacity in Africa. As Professor Fitz-Gerald emphasized, a professional civil service is trained in universities.¹³⁶ In this respect, Canada can draw on its legacy of educational engagement on the continent and with people from Africa. High Commissioner Higirot noted that the first university in Rwanda was established with Canadian support.¹³⁷ The committee also heard about recent educational engagement by the University of Saskatchewan in Mozambique, as well as between the University of British Columbia and educational institutions in

¹³² AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Christopher Fomunyoh).

¹³³ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Barbra Chimhandamba).

¹³⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (Isaac Odoom).

¹³⁵ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (David J. Hornsby).

¹³⁶ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 23, 2024 (Ann Fitz-Gerald).

¹³⁷ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 11, 2024 (His Excellency Prosper Higirot).

Kenya.¹³⁸ Several witnesses also noted that Canada is a popular study destination for African students. Witnesses emphasized the value of a Canadian education, noting that African graduates often excel upon returning home and contribute meaningfully to their communities and economies.¹³⁹ GAC indicates that close to 100,000 Africans held permits to study in Canada in 2022, which represented about 10% of all study permit holders in Canada in that year.¹⁴⁰

Support for educational systems in Africa is of mutual benefit. George Laryea-Adjei, Director of UNICEF Programme Group, told the committee that increasing educational access in Africa is crucial for ensuring that African youth can contribute to the development of Africa and – given its population growth – “the entire world.”¹⁴¹ This is in alignment with Canada’s Africa Strategy, which notes Canada’s long history of supporting education in Africa and commits Canada to investing in youth and skills training, including funding for basic education.¹⁴² As Ms. Urban told the committee, investing in African youth has the potential to provide labour solutions not only in Africa, but in Canada, too.¹⁴³

While university partnerships between Canada and African countries exist, the committee heard about opportunities to deepen and expand that collaboration.¹⁴⁴ The advantages to Canada of university-level partnerships include learning from African expertise in areas of common concern, like virology, immunology and climate change, as well as helping Canada to build much-needed expertise on Africa.¹⁴⁵ It is important to underline that these partnerships can run in both directions. As Professor Fitz-Gerald suggested, there is an opportunity for Canadian educational institutions to connect with like-minded universities in Africa “where we bring a value proposition and our African partner brings a value proposition, not just to African students but also to Canadian students. We can facilitate exchanges.”¹⁴⁶ It is notable that Canada’s Africa Strategy includes no discussion of university-to-university partnerships.

¹³⁸ AEFA, *Evidence*, December 7, 2023 (Caroline Delaney).

¹³⁹ E.g., AEFA, *Evidence*, May 2, 2024 (Thomas Kwasi Tieku).

¹⁴⁰ GAC, *Deputy Minister of International Development appearance before the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (AEFA) on the study on Canada’s engagements and interests in Africa*, Briefing document, December 12, 2024.

¹⁴¹ AEFA, *Evidence*, November 27, 2024 (George Laryea-Adjei).

¹⁴² Government of Canada, *Canada’s Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security*, 2025, pp. 7, 14.

¹⁴³ AEFA, *Evidence*, October 30, 2025 (Cheryl Urban).

¹⁴⁴ AEFA, *Evidence*, May 8, 2024 (Hippolyte Fofack); AEFA, *Evidence*, November 27, 2024 (David J. Hornsby).

¹⁴⁵ AEFA, *Evidence*, November 27, 2024 (Isaac Odoom and David J. Hornsby).

¹⁴⁶ AEFA, *Evidence*, May 23, 2024 (Ann Fitz-Gerald).

Lastly, High Commissioner Higirotold the committee that, while Canada has “a very important comparative advantage in the university sector,” its most notable comparative advantage is in vocational training.¹⁴⁷ This was one of many occasions on which the committee heard about the importance of technical and vocational training to the creation of a highly skilled labour force capable of realizing the continent’s full potential. In this light, the committee welcomes the commitment in Canada’s Africa Strategy to investing in youth and skills training. The committee encourages the Government of Canada to provide further information on funding and implementation plans for this commitment.

Recommendation 12

The Government of Canada should prioritize support for education at all levels in Africa and should support efforts to enhance knowledge of and expertise about Africa in Canadian public institutions.

Recommendation 13

The Government of Canada should foster and help facilitate partnerships and other links between Canadian and African universities and research centres.

The Shifting Development Landscape in Africa

As noted above, good governance and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing. Mr. Achonu advised the committee that support for democracy must be accompanied by the creation of economic opportunities, cautioning that, “[o]nce democracy is not delivering on the promise, then people will look for alternatives.”¹⁴⁸ In other words, Africa faces significant development challenges that, if left unaddressed, could derail progress on governance issues. The World Bank Group estimates that, by 2030, 90% of people living in extreme poverty will be in Africa.¹⁴⁹ In addition, while the UN Development Programme’s 2025 Africa Sustainable Development Report indicates Africa was making progress on 12 of 17

¹⁴⁷ AEFA, *Evidence*, December 11, 2024 (Prosper Higirot).

¹⁴⁸ AEFA, *Evidence*, February 7, 2024 (Stanley Achonu).

¹⁴⁹ World Bank Group, ed. Chorching Go, *21st Century Africa: Governance and Growth*, 2025, p. xix.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it noted that the current rate of progress is insufficient to achieve the SDGs by the target date of 2030.¹⁵⁰

As important as improvements to domestic governance are for enabling development on the continent, certain global phenomena also play a role. For example, the African Development Bank Group has described the global financial architecture as inadequate to the needs of African countries seeking to achieve the SDGs and has called for reform of that architecture.¹⁵¹ Climate change represents another global challenge with disproportionate effects on Africa. Despite its relatively limited contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions, Africa is disproportionately vulnerable to the impact of climate change.¹⁵²

As noted earlier in the report, the committee was told that African countries want to move beyond the traditional aid recipient–donor relationship and are instead seeking modern partnerships grounded in mutual respect and shared investment. To this point, Nicolas Moyer, Chief Executive Officer, Cuso International, told the committee that “Canada’s undertakings in Africa should not be defined by a charity mindset or an aid policy. Indeed, let us consider that Canada needs Africa more than Africa needs Canada. There are over a billion people on that continent; we are only 40 million in Canada.”¹⁵³ Professor Odoom also underlined that “African nations are no longer just recipients of foreign aid. Most of them are assertive partners that are forming new alliances.”¹⁵⁴

At the same time, the committee heard that “official development assistance, or ODA, still has a major role to play” in Canada’s engagement with Africa,¹⁵⁵ and that “many countries in Africa are still going to require basic development assistance.”¹⁵⁶ The situation is even more pronounced today. The committee conducted most of its study prior to the de facto shuttering of the United States Agency for International Aid (USAID) in early 2025, a development that has had enormous consequences for the African continent.

These cuts have affected areas including emergency food supplies, treatment for human immunodeficiency virus and efforts to prevent diseases like Ebola, cholera and malaria. Moreover, the cuts have occurred in a broader context of shrinking aid

¹⁵⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, *2025 Africa Sustainable Development Report*, September 24, 2025, p. xii.

¹⁵¹ African Development Bank Group, *African Economic Outlook 2025: Making Africa’s Capital Work Better for Africa’s Development*, p. 73.

¹⁵² UN Environment Programme, *Responding to Climate Change*.

¹⁵³ AEFA, *Evidence*, February 7, 2024 (Nicolas Moyer).

¹⁵⁴ AEFA, *Evidence*, November 27, 2024 (Isaac Odoom).

¹⁵⁵ AEFA, *Evidence*, February 7, 2024 (Stanley Achonu).

¹⁵⁶ AEFA, *Evidence*, February 8, 2024 (Christopher MacLennan).

budgets, including from large donors like Germany, France and the Netherlands.¹⁵⁷ In April 2025, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention declared that Official Development Assistance to Africa's health sector had declined by 70% from 2021 to 2025.¹⁵⁸

In a context of ongoing need and diminishing resources, Canada's role as a partner in Africa's development has grown more critical. Canada's Africa Strategy indicates that Canada's international assistance for Africa grew by 52% over the eight years prior to the release of the strategy.¹⁵⁹ This growth occurred in the context of an overall increase in Canadian international assistance spending. Looking forward, however, the 2025 federal budget indicates that the Government of Canada intends to return international development assistance to "a pre-pandemic level," planning to spend approximately \$2.7 billion less over four years on international assistance.¹⁶⁰

The committee heard from Ms. Urban that Canada cannot hope to make up for the "immense loss" caused by the dismantling of USAID and other cuts. Instead, said Ms. Urban, Canada's Africa Strategy seeks to make Canada's aid as effective as possible by using "innovative international assistance mechanisms," including "leveraging the private sector."¹⁶¹ The strategy likewise announces that Canada will prioritize the mobilization of finance.¹⁶²

Mobilizing private finance is in line with what the committee heard from Garreth Bloor, who said, "Canada's private sector can play a key role in the economic growth component that is vital to the overall agenda for development."¹⁶³ In the absence of robust public commitments to development spending, Canada will need to mobilize private finance and use existing international assistance resources as effectively as possible, including by identifying gaps in global funding where Canada possesses a comparative advantage and directing resources to those gaps. At the same time, as

¹⁵⁷ Ebere Okereke, "[Africa after USAID: who will pay the health bill?](#)" *Chatham House*, October 16, 2025.

¹⁵⁸ Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, [Africa's Health Financing in a New Era – April 2025](#), April 3, 2025.

¹⁵⁹ Government of Canada, [Canada's Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security](#), 2025, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ Government of Canada, [Canada Strong – Budget 2025](#), November 2025, p. 209.

¹⁶¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 30, 2025 (Cheryl Urban).

¹⁶² Government of Canada, [Canada's Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security](#), 2025, p. 14.

¹⁶³ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (Garreth Bloor).

noted above, several witnesses advised the committee that more traditional forms of international assistance continue to be required.¹⁶⁴

Regarding the mobilization of private finance, Canada's Africa Strategy announced that FinDev Canada would open a new regional office in South Africa in 2025.¹⁶⁵ A subsequent announcement suggested that the opening had been moved back to 2026.¹⁶⁶ The committee welcomes the announcement of this new office and encourages the Government of Canada to prioritize its prompt opening. The committee heard from Stéphanie Émond, Vice-President and Chief Impact Officer, FinDev Canada, that sub-Saharan Africa has always been one of FinDev's priority regions, representing approximately 40% of FinDev's portfolio.¹⁶⁷ FinDev Canada has an important role to play in supporting sustainable development in Africa, as the committee heard, but the Government of Canada should ensure that the organization has sufficient capital to carry out this role.¹⁶⁸ By contrast with Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, which included \$750 million "to enhance the capacity of FinDev Canada" in the Indo-Pacific region,¹⁶⁹ Canada's Africa Strategy does not detail the allocation of any new funds to FinDev Canada.

Canadian efforts to foster good governance and sustainable development on the African continent are in the interests of Canadians as well as Africans. High Commissioner Shaik told the committee that "for every dollar of Canadian development aid and assistance that flows into Africa, two and a half times that value flows back into Canada."¹⁷⁰ As discussed in the next section, Africa is a continent with considerable potential for economic growth. Good governance and sustainable development are two of the keys needed to unlock that potential.

¹⁶⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), February 7, 2024 (Stanley Achonu); AEFA, [Evidence](#), February 8, 2024 (Christopher MacLennan).

¹⁶⁵ Government of Canada, [Canada's Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security](#), 2025, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ Prime Minister of Canada, [Prime Minister Carney strengthens trade and investment partnerships at the G20 Leaders' Summit](#), November 23, 2025.

¹⁶⁷ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 17, 2024 (Stéphanie Émond).

¹⁶⁸ E.g., AEFA, [Evidence](#), February 7, 2024 (Stanley Achonu); AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 11, 2024 (His Excellency Rieaz Moe Shaik).

¹⁶⁹ GAC, [Canada launches Indo-Pacific Strategy to support long-term growth, prosperity, and security for Canadians](#), November 27, 2022.

¹⁷⁰ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 11, 2024 (His Excellency Rieaz Moe Shaik).

Recommendation 14

The Government of Canada should identify funding gaps in the development landscape in Africa where Canada possesses a comparative advantage and should commit to deploying resources, over the long-term, to address those gaps.

Recommendation 15

Within the framework of its Africa Strategy, the Government of Canada should make additional capital available to FinDev Canada for its African operations.

FinDev Canada should ensure that its activities in Africa are visible, targeted, and aligned with African continental priorities articulated in Agenda 2063.

Trade, Investment and Connectivity

Expanding trade with the continent will not only support Africa's economic development but also help Canada achieve its goal of trade diversification.¹⁷¹

- Barbra Chimhandamba, Public Policy Advisor, Canadian Foodgrains Bank,
December 4, 2024

Canada has an opportunity to stand out by offering something different. Canada doesn't need to compete directly with China. Instead, Canada can build partnerships based on trust, shared goals and Canada's unique strengths. The Canadian brand is strong in Africa, but it is underutilized.¹⁷²

- Isaac Odoom, Assistant Professor, Carleton University,
November 27, 2024

With a young and fast-growing population, a burgeoning middle class and an expanding consumer market, the committee heard that Africa is emerging as an engine of global growth. The African Development Bank estimates that Africa will account for 13 of the world's top 20 fastest growing economies in 2025.¹⁷³ Testifying in late 2024, Her Excellency Souriya Otmani, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Canada, noted that Africa was projected to be the second-fastest

¹⁷¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Barbra Chimhandamba).

¹⁷² AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (Isaac Odoom).

¹⁷³ African Development Bank Group, [African Economic Outlook 2025: Making Africa's Capital Work Better for Africa's Development](#), 2025, p. 14.

growing region of the world in 2024, after Asia, with 41 African countries experiencing stronger economic growth rates in 2024 than in 2023.¹⁷⁴

Africa holds immense economic potential and trade and investment opportunities, and the world has taken notice. During its hearings, the committee was informed that China and the U.S., as well as countries across the European Union, the Indo-Pacific and Middle East, are building their economic ties with African countries at an intensifying pace.

Canadian government officials indicated that Canada also sees Africa as a region of commercial opportunity. That said, Africa accounts for a very small share of Canada's overall trade activity, making up just over 1% of Canada's total merchandise trade in 2024. In that year, the value of Canada's merchandise trade with African countries was \$15.1 billion.¹⁷⁵ Combined, South Africa and Nigeria accounted for nearly 40% of Canada's merchandise trade with Africa in 2024.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, Canadian direct investment in Africa in 2024 was approximately \$12 billion.¹⁷⁷

While Mr. Lebleu indicated that Canadian trade and investment in Africa has increased substantially in the past five years, he acknowledged that "these numbers still fall well short of what might be expected."¹⁷⁸ For his part, High Commissioner Higiroy said that Canada's trade volume with Africa falls well below that of other G7 countries. High Commissioner Higiroy urged Canada to close that gap "by pursuing a consistent and systematic commitment to trade and investments" with Africa.¹⁷⁹

Canadian direct investment in Africa is highly concentrated in the mining sector. As noted above, Africa holds significant deposits of metal and minerals, which Joanne Tognarelli, Vice-President, Global Business Development, Export Development Canada (EDC), said "are critical to develop battery technologies, electronics and other elements in the green economy."¹⁸⁰ In 2023, Canadian mining assets owned by 101 Canadian companies were valued at \$39.1 billion, accounting for 17.7% of

¹⁷⁴ AEFA, *Evidence*, December 11, 2024 (Her Excellency Souriya Otmani).

¹⁷⁵ Government of Canada, *Canada's Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security*, March 2025.

¹⁷⁶ Government of Canada, *Report – Trade Data Online*, Canadian *imports* and *exports*, total for all industries, Africa, excluding Middle East, accessed November 12, 2025.

¹⁷⁷ AEFA, *Evidence*, October 30, 2025 (Ben Marc Diendéré); and Statistics Canada, *International investment position, Canadian direct investment abroad and foreign direct investment in Canada, by country, annual (x 1,000,000)*, database, accessed October 10, 2025.

¹⁷⁸ AEFA, *Evidence*, April 17, 2024 (Marcel Lebleu). Canada's merchandise trade with African countries has increased by more than \$6 billion since 2018, when it was approximately \$9.7 billion. GAC, *Canada and the African Union Commission conclude second Trade Policy Dialogue*, News release, November 8, 2024.

¹⁷⁹ AEFA, *Evidence*, December 11, 2024 (His Excellency Prosper Higiroy).

¹⁸⁰ AEFA, *Evidence*, April 17, 2024 (Joanne Tognarelli).

total Canadian mining assets abroad.¹⁸¹ After the Americas (excluding Canada), Africa was the region with the second-highest value of Canadian mining assets abroad globally. In 2023, approximately 45% of Canadian direct investment in Africa was in the mining sector.¹⁸² The main recipients of Canadian direct investment in Africa in 2023 were Mauritius, Mali, Namibia, Burkina Faso and South Africa.¹⁸³

Several witnesses argued that Canada's commercial involvement in Africa has become overly focused on resource extraction. According to Templar Kalundu Iga, "[w]hile this has generated short-term benefits, it overlooks opportunities in high-growth sectors such as technology, renewable energy and infrastructure."¹⁸⁴ Likewise, Hippolyte Fofack, Parker Fellow, United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Columbia University, said that Canada's direct investment in Africa has "been very low and skewed toward primary commodities in natural resources."¹⁸⁵ He urged Canada to diversify its investment in Africa, including by looking for opportunities in high-growth sectors like infrastructure.

Green energy is another possible growth area for Canadian investment in Africa. Africa holds vast wind, solar and hydroelectric potential and is becoming increasingly central to the green economic transformation. The committee was told that many innovative solutions to combat climate change are being developed in Africa and that there are opportunities for Canadian companies to support clean technology on the continent.

There are also opportunities for Canada in Africa in agricultural and agri-food. Kathleen Donohue, Assistant Deputy Minister, International Affairs Branch, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), noted that, over the past five years, Canadian exports of agriculture and food products to Africa have increased by 15% every year in value, culminating in an all-time high of \$3 billion in 2023.¹⁸⁶ Looking ahead, Ms. Donohue said that AAFC expects Canadian agricultural and agri-food exports to Africa to grow.

Canada's Africa Strategy indicates that the government will enhance economic cooperation with Africa through a high-level trade mission to the continent and the creation of a new Africa trade and development program. It also explains that the government will create an Africa Trade Hub to coordinate economic diplomacy and engagement across the Government of Canada and with provincial and territorial

¹⁸¹ Natural Resources Canada, *Canadian Mining Assets*, Information Bulletin, January 2025.

¹⁸² GAC, *Deputy Minister of International Development appearance before the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (AEFA) on the study on Canada's engagements and interests in Africa*, Briefing document, December 12, 2024.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ AEFA, *Evidence*, December 5, 2024 (Templar Kalundu Iga).

¹⁸⁵ AEFA, *Evidence*, May 8, 2024 (Hippolyte Fofack).

¹⁸⁶ AEFA, *Evidence*, April 17, 2024 (Kathleen Donohue).

governments. GAC officials told the committee on October 30, 2025 that the trade hub has been established and has become an important departmental tool for coordinating Canada's economic diplomacy and investment engagement across Africa.¹⁸⁷ For example, Cheryl Urban said the hub has already been helpful in coordinating with Canada's missions in Africa to support Canada's private sector on the continent.

While the committee supports the launch of the African Trade Hub and a trade mission to Africa, it believes that more changes are required to truly stimulate and incentivize Canada's trading relationships with African countries. Canada does not have a free trade agreement with any African country, a limitation that several witnesses said creates a competitive disadvantage for Canadian companies seeking greater access to the region.

The committee is troubled by the absence of any mention of Africa in the federal government's 2025 budget, including in relation to Canada's trade diversification objectives. The recent trade disruptions with the United States – by far Canada's largest trading partner – underscore the need to urgently diversify trade and business relationships with emerging economies, including in Africa. The committee believes that Africa should be integrated as a target region and strategic priority in Canada's trade diversification agenda.

Recommendation 16

The Government of Canada should designate Africa as a strategic priority within its trade diversification agenda and should explore opportunities to advance free trade agreement discussions with African countries.

GAC's Trade Commissioner Service provides an important link between Canadian businesses and international markets. However, the committee was told that the Trade Commissioner Service is underutilized in the African context. Specifically, the committee was informed that Canada lacks a sufficient presence of trade commissioners in Africa. When he testified in November 2024, Ambassador Diendéré told the committee that there are only 16 Canada-based trade commissioners in Africa, in addition to 47 locally engaged trade commissioners.¹⁸⁸ Paula Caldwell St-Onge, Chair of the Board, Canada-Africa Chamber of Business, said

¹⁸⁷ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 30, 2025 (Cheryl Urban).

¹⁸⁸ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 28, 2024 (Ben Marc Diendéré). The number of Canadian trade commissioners in Africa may have declined since this testimony. GAC indicates that, as of 2025, the Trade Commissioner Service has 53 Canadian and locally engaged trade commissioners working across 20 offices in Africa. See: GAC, [Canada and Africa](#), accessed November 12, 2025.

that the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service only has one locally engaged employee covering the entirety of the Democratic Republic of the Congo – a country of more than 100 million people.¹⁸⁹ The committee believes that Canada should scale up its trade commissioner presence on the African continent.

Recommendation 17

The Government of Canada should strengthen the Trade Commissioner Service and other tools and mechanisms designed to support Canadian companies wishing to invest in or trade with African countries.

De-risking Canadian Commercial Engagement in Africa

Notwithstanding high rates of economic growth across Africa, various factors appear to be undermining investor confidence and trade growth in Africa. For example, Joanne Tognarelli explained that trade growth in Africa is being hampered by weak infrastructure networks, limited integration in global financial markets, political corruption and operational security challenges. From a credit perspective, Ms. Tognarelli said that many African countries are suffering from high-debt distress which she said increases financial and investment risks.¹⁹⁰

Concerns about investment risk may also be limiting Canadian investment in Africa. That said, the committee heard that the perception that investment in Africa is inherently riskier than in other parts of the world is not supported by the facts.¹⁹¹ For example, Ms. Tognarelli explained that there are countries in Africa that are considered by EDC to pose a lower investment risk than Mexico, which was Canada's ninth-largest destination for direct investment in 2024.¹⁹² To that point, Susan Steffen, Director General, Pan-African Bureau, GAC, underscored that each African market is different, with some being much more developed than others.¹⁹³ According to Ms. Steffen, there is a "need to update the narrative on risk in Africa," in order to clarify the difference between the perceived and actual risk of investing on the continent.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (Paula Caldwell St-Onge).

¹⁹⁰ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 17, 2024 (Joanne Tognarelli).

¹⁹¹ AEFA, [Evidence](#), February 7, 2024 (Stanley Achonu).

¹⁹² AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 17, 2024 (Joanne Tognarelli); GAC, [Canada-Mexico relations](#).

¹⁹³ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 30, 2025 (Susan Steffen).

¹⁹⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 17, 2024 (Susan Steffen).

Witnesses urged the Government of Canada to strengthen its efforts to “de-risk” investment and business activities in Africa. Edward Akuffo, for example, said that the Government of Canada could boost investor confidence by creating an investment fund designed to provide risk capital for private investments in Africa.¹⁹⁵ Several witnesses also argued that Canada should pursue new foreign investment promotion and protection agreements (FIPAs) with African countries in an effort to build investor confidence. FIPAs aim to provide individuals with a framework of predictable rules to guide investment abroad. Canada currently has eight FIPAs in place with African countries.¹⁹⁶

The committee heard that GAC is working with the business community to reduce the risk perception of the African market, including by inviting Canadian companies on trade missions to the continent. At a broader level, Andrew Smith, Director General, Pan-African Affairs Bureau, GAC, told the committee that GAC was also addressing perceptions about investment risk by supporting the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.¹⁹⁷

Export Development Canada is another important instrument to encourage Canadian commercial engagement in Africa. As Ms. Tognarelli explained, EDC supports Canadian exporters and investors with a suite of financing and insurance products that help to mitigate the risk of doing business in Africa.¹⁹⁸ Lorraine Audsley, Senior Vice-President and Chief Risk and Sustainability Officer, EDC, added that EDC also helps Canadian companies doing business in Africa by reviewing their compliance programs to ensure that they are operating in a socially responsible manner.

Notwithstanding the valuable services that it currently provides, EDC’s activities and operations vis-à-vis Africa are very limited. At present, EDC only has one office in Africa, which is located in Johannesburg, South Africa. Moreover, Africa represents a disproportionately small portion of EDC’s business portfolio. Ms. Tognarelli told the committee that EDC facilitated \$1.4 billion in exports, foreign investment and trade development activities for the African region in 2023.¹⁹⁹ That sum represents little more than 1% of the total business facilitated by EDC globally in 2023.²⁰⁰ The

¹⁹⁵ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 2, 2024 (Edward Akuffo).

¹⁹⁶ Canada’s foreign investment promotion and protection agreements (FIPA) in Africa are with Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal. For more information on these FIPAs, see: Government of Canada, [Canada’s international trade and investment agreements](#).

¹⁹⁷ AEFA, [Evidence](#), October 30, 2025 (Andrew Smith).

¹⁹⁸ AEFA, [Evidence](#), April 17, 2024 (Joanne Tognarelli).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ For 2023, Export Development Canada (EDC) facilitated \$131.4 billion in exports, foreign investment and trade development activities globally. EDC, [Accelerating the Export Impact: 2023](#)

committee believes that the Government of Canada should better support EDC and other instruments designed to deepen Canadian commercial engagement in Africa.

Recommendation 18

The Government of Canada should pursue new foreign investment promotion and protection agreements with African countries to enhance investor protection and encourage greater two-way investment.

Recommendation 19

The Government of Canada should strengthen support for Export Development Canada and other instruments designed to de-risk and deepen Canadian commercial engagement in Africa.

Engaging Diaspora Communities

As noted above, the African continent is composed of five broad sub-regions. The AU, however, also recognizes the African diaspora as the continent's "sixth region." While figures vary, more than 200 million people of African descent are estimated to live outside of Africa.²⁰¹ The AU views the African diaspora as critical to the realization of Agenda 2063, with the potential to contribute significantly to the continent's social and economic progress.

There are approximately 1.3 million people of African origin in Canada, which is more than quadruple the number recorded in 2000.²⁰² Highly educated and well connected to Africa, witnesses indicated that the vibrant African diaspora in Canada

Integrated Annual Report. According to its 2024 annual report, EDC facilitated approximately \$2.8 billion in business in Africa and the Middle East in 2024. Taken together, Africa and the Middle East represented approximately 2.2% of EDC's geographic portfolio in terms of business facilitation in 2024. EDC, *Local to Global: 2024 Integrated Annual Report*.

²⁰¹ Robert Beamish and Deveney Smith, *How tapping into the power of the global Black economy can boost Africa's innovation and prosperity*, Geographies in depth, World Economic Forum, March 14, 2024. Other sources put the global African diaspora at between 170 to 350 million. See: See, for example: State of the African Diaspora, *The African Diaspora*; and the Diaspora Collective, *African Diaspora: A Global Impact*.

²⁰² GAC, *Canada launches its first global Africa Strategy: A partnership for shared prosperity and security*, News release, March 6, 2025; and Government of Canada, *Briefing book for the Prime Minister of Canada – State of the World*, 13 May 2025.

is a Canadian comparative advantage. The committee was told that closer and more strategic engagement with the African diaspora in Canada could facilitate inroads into the African marketplace for Canadian exporters, investors and companies. Referring to this population as a “critical asset,” Professor Odoom said that the African diaspora in Canada has deep personal contacts and local knowledge which can help build connections and relationships with African counterparts.²⁰³

Souad Elmallem, Chief Executive Officer, 6temik, suggested that Canada consider the creation of a Canadian council of the African diaspora. According to Ms. Elmallem, this council could establish a roadmap for Canadian partnership and economic engagement with African countries.²⁰⁴ A brief submitted to the committee by the Africa Study Group, a voluntary association of individuals who seek closer cooperation between Canada and African countries, also called for closer engagement with the African diaspora in Canada and the Canadian diaspora in Africa. According to the brief,

Canada cannot afford to ignore the strong connections and influence of its African diaspora, nor those of Canada’s diaspora in Africa. The wealth of skills, knowledge and extended networks in their home countries possessed by members of both diasporas will be critical to the success of Canada’s new African strategy. GAC needs to connect with these valuable allies.”²⁰⁵

The committee believes that the Government of Canada should find new ways to better draw on the strength of these diaspora communities. Importantly, in its new Africa Strategy, the Government of Canada undertakes to strengthen people-to-people ties with African countries, as well as with the African diaspora in Canada. Specifically, the strategy commits to establishing a new diaspora engagement mechanism involving youth, civil society and businesses aimed at informing the government’s approach to Africa.

The committee supports the creation of the diaspora engagement mechanism. However, to date, there has been little information on the goals, composition and structure of the mechanism. The committee encourages the government to publicly provide this information and ensure that the mechanism allows for meaningful interaction with diaspora communities.

²⁰³ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (Isaac Odoom).

²⁰⁴ AEFA, [Evidence](#), May 8, 2024 (Souad Elmallem).

²⁰⁵ Africa Study Group, brief submitted to the committee in April 2024.

Recommendation 20

The Government of Canada should ensure that the diaspora engagement mechanism allows for regular and meaningful interaction with the African diaspora in Canada, as well as the Canadian diaspora in Africa. Among other objectives, the Government of Canada should leverage the diaspora engagement mechanism to develop new people-to-people initiatives, including academic exchanges, between Canada and African countries. Going forward, the Government of Canada should also consider establishing a more formal advisory body to consult with the African diaspora in Canada.

Visa Processing

A final issue that came up with regard to fostering closer trade and investment links between Canada and African countries concerns visas. The committee heard that visa processing times for applicants from Africa are excessively lengthy and intrusive. Specifically, the committee was told that African businesspeople, professionals, scholars and even government officials face lengthy and burdensome visa processes when seeking to travel to Canada. According to High Commissioner Prosper Higiroy, Canada has too few visa issuing centres in Africa, which he said “limits the number of opportunities for high-level visits as well as exchanges between the private, academic and other sectors.”²⁰⁶

Professor David Hornsby indicated that visa-related challenges mean that Canada may end up missing out on learning from the knowledge and experience of African experts. He encouraged the Government of Canada to reform that visa system “with courage and haste.”²⁰⁷ The committee agrees and believes that the Government of Canada should review its visa procedures for people from African countries to ensure fairness and efficiency.

²⁰⁶ AEFA, [Evidence](#), December 11, 2024 (His Excellency Prosper Higiroy).

²⁰⁷ AEFA, [Evidence](#), November 27, 2024 (David J. Hornsby).

Recommendation 21

The Government of Canada should review its visa processing systems and structures with respect to the issuance of visas for individuals wishing to travel to Canada from African countries to ensure that the timelines and service standards are fair and reasonable.

Conclusion

Africa's economic growth, youthful population and geopolitical significance make it a region of strategic importance and opportunity for Canada. However, notwithstanding the substantial financial commitments it has made in Africa, Canada's engagement on the continent has tended to be episodic, fragmented and lacking in a coherent, long-term strategy. In an increasingly competitive global environment, the lack of a comprehensive approach to Africa has limited Canada's ability to seize emerging opportunities and has diminished its impact and influence on the continent.

The committee believes that Canada should pursue an ambitious and sustained approach to its engagement in Africa, grounded in the objective of enabling mutually beneficial partnerships. Canada's new Africa Strategy is an important step forward in this regard. The strategy signals Canada's intention to strengthen its diplomatic, economic, peace and security, development and people-to-people ties and cooperation with African countries.

While Canada's Africa Strategy represents an important milestone, the document is short on specifics about measurable objectives, timeframes and resources. For this reason, the committee is recommending that the Government of Canada produce a detailed and concrete action plan with measurable objectives, timelines and dedicated resources to ensure the effective and coherent implementation of Canada's Africa Strategy. This report also includes a series of other recommendations designed to give greater substance to Canada's Africa Strategy. Ultimately, the committee believes that sustained and partnership-driven engagement is crucial for Canada to contribute positively to Africa's future.

Appendix A – Witnesses

Thursday, October 30, 2025

Cheryl Urban, Assistant Deputy Minister, Africa Branch, Global Affairs Canada

Andrew Smith, Director General, Pan-African Affairs Bureau,
Global Affairs Canada

Ryan Clark, Director General, Central, Southern and Eastern Africa Bureau,
Global Affairs Canada

Susan Steffen, Director General, West Africa and Maghreb Bureau,
Global Affairs Canada

Ben Marc Diendéré, Canada's Permanent Observer to the African Union and
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Global Affairs Canada

Marcel Lebleu, Ambassador of Canada to the Republic of Senegal and Special
Envoy for the Sahel, Global Affairs Canada

Thursday, December 12, 2024

Christopher MacLennan, Deputy Minister, International Development,
Global Affairs Canada

Cheryl Urban, Assistant Deputy Minister, Africa and Pan-Geographic Affairs,
Global Affairs Canada

Tara Carney, Director, International Humanitarian Assistance,
Global Affairs Canada

Susan Steffen, Director General, West Africa and Maghreb Bureau,
Global Affairs Canada

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

His Excellency Ngole Philip Ngwese, High Commissioner, High Commission of
Cameroon in Canada

His Excellency Prosper Higiro, High Commissioner, High Commission of
Rwanda in Canada

Her Excellency Souriya Otmani, Ambassador, Embassy of the Kingdom of
Morocco in Canada

His Excellency Rieaz Moe Shaik, High Commissioner, High Commission of South Africa in Canada

Thursday, December 5, 2024

Templar Kalundu Iga, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for African Affairs and Policy Research

Robert Fowler, Retired Public Servant - As an individual

James Yap, Acting Director, International Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto – As an individual

Wednesday, December 4, 2024

Anne Delorme, Executive Director, Humanity & Inclusion Canada

Dr. Jason Nickerson, Humanitarian Representative to Canada, Doctors Without Borders

Wendy Harris, President and Chief Executive Officer, Catalyste+

Steve Gilbert, Chief Operating Officer, Nutrition International

Thursday, November 28, 2024

Ben Marc Diendéré, Canada's Permanent Observer to the African Union and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Global Affairs Canada

Christopher Fomunyoh, Senior Associate for Africa and Special Advisor to the President, National Democratic Institute

Barbra Chimhandamba, Public Policy Advisor, Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Wednesday, November 27, 2024

George Laryea-Adjei, Director, UNICEF Programme Group, UNICEF

David J. Hornsby, Vice Provost and Associate Vice-President (Academic), Professor, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University – As an individual

Isaac Odoom, Assistant Professor, Carleton University – As an individual

Thursday, October 3, 2024

Jacqueline O'Neill, Canada's Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security,
Global Affairs Canada

Caroline Delany, Director General, Central, Southern and Eastern Africa
Bureau, Global Affairs Canada

Susan Steffen, Director General, West Africa and Maghreb Bureau,
Global Affairs Canada

Pamela Moore, Executive Director, Peace and Stabilization Program,
International Assistance Partnerships and Programming,
Global Affairs Canada

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

Meredith Preston McGhie, Secretary General, Global Centre for Pluralism

Garreth Bloor, President, The Canada-Africa Chamber of Business

Paula Caldwell St-Onge, Chair of the Board, The Canada-Africa Chamber of
Business

Jean-Louis Roy, President, Partenariat International

Edward Akuffo, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Political
Science, University of the Fraser Valley – As an individual

David Black, Professor, Department of Political Science, Dalhousie University
– As an individual

Thursday, May 23, 2024

Shelly Whitman, Executive Director, Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and
Security

Ann Fitz-Gerald, Director, Balsillie School of International Affairs and
Professor of International Security – As an individual

Marie-Joëlle Zahar, Professor and Director of the Research Network on Peace
Operations, University of Montréal – As an individual

Nicholas Coghlan, former Head of Office of the Canadian Embassy in Sudan
and former Canadian ambassador to South Sudan – As an individual

Thursday, May 9, 2024

Geoffroi Montpetit, Senior Advisor, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

Sarah-Myriam Martin-Brûlé, Full Professor, Department of Politics and International Studies, Bishop's University – As an individual

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

Nola Kianza, President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Council on Africa

Souad Elmallem, Chief Executive Officer, 6Temik

Hyppolyte Fofack, Parker Fellow, United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Columbia University - As an individual

Thursday, May 2, 2024

Judith McCallum, Executive Director, Life and Peace Institute

Thomas Kwasi Tieku, Full Professor of Politics and International Relations, King's University College at the University of Western Ontario
– As an individual

Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Marcel Lebleu, Director General, West and Central Africa Bureau, Global Affairs Canada

Susan Steffen, Director General, Pan-Africa Bureau, Global Affairs Canada

Apeksha Kumar, Director, Maghreb and Egypt, Global Affairs Canada

Kathleen Donohue, Assistant Deputy Minister, International Affairs Branch, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Stéphanie Émond, Vice-President and Chief Impact Officer, FinDev Canada

Agathe Gouot, Senior Advisor to the Chief Investment Officer, FinDev Canada

Joanne Tognarelli, Vice-President, Global Business Development, Export Development Canada

Lorraine Audsley, Senior Vice-President and Chief Risk and Sustainability Officer, Export Development Canada

Thursday, April 11, 2024

His Excellency Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs,
Peace and Security, African Union Commission

Patience Z. Chiradza, Director for Governance and Conflict Prevention,
African Union Commission

Issaka Garba Abdou, Head of Division, Governance and Human Rights,
African Union Commission

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

Beth Bechdol, Deputy Director General, Food and Agriculture Organization of
the United Nations

Lauren Phillips, Deputy Director, Rural Transformation and Gender Equality
Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Nicholas Sitko, Senior Economist, Rural Transformation and Gender Equality
Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Thursday, February 8, 2024

Christopher MacLennan, Deputy Minister, International Development,
Global Affairs Canada

Cheryl Urban, Assistant Deputy Minister, Sub-Saharan Africa Branch,
Global Affairs Canada

Marcel Lebleu, Director General, West and Central Africa Bureau,
Global Affairs Canada

Susan Steffen, Director General, Pan-Africa Bureau, Global Affairs Canada

Caroline Delany, Director General, Southern and Eastern Africa Bureau,
Global Affairs Canada

Kate Higgins, Chief Executive Officer, Cooperation Canada

Carelle Mang-Benza, Policy Lead, Cooperation Canada

Julie Delahanty, President, International Development Research Centre

Marie-Gloriose Ingabire, Regional Director, West and Central Africa,
International Development Research Centre

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

Elise Legault, Canada Director, ONE

Stanley Achonu, Nigeria Director, ONE

Nicolas Moyer, Chief Executive Officer, Cuso International

Thursday, December 7, 2023

Cheryl Urban, Assistant Deputy Minister, Sub-Saharan Africa Branch,
Global Affairs Canada

Susan Steffen, Director General, Pan-Africa Bureau, Global Affairs Canada

Caroline Delany, Director General, Southern and Eastern Africa Bureau,
Global Affairs Canada

Pasquale Salvaggio, Acting Director General, West and Central Africa,
Global Affairs Canada

Appendix B – Briefs and Supplementary Evidence

Barbra Chimhandamba, Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Canada Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases

Cheryl Urban, Global Affairs Canada

Edward Akuffo, University of the Fraser Valley – As an individual

Egg Farmers of Canada

Jean-Louis Roy, Partenariat International

Julie Delahanty, International Development Research Centre

Kate Higgins, Cooperation Canada

Souad Elmallem, 6Temik



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