

Diplomat

Afri



Women In Diplomacy Edition



**Dagmawit
Moges Bekele On
African Union
Peace Fund & The
Future of Africa**

**Multilateralism &
Peacekeeping Mulled
At 38th African
Union Summit**

**Power List
50**

**Women of African Descent
In Global Diplomacy**

**G20 Foreign
Ministers Converge
In South Africa**



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Every Card Must Face The Ceiling — Now!

In a world where perception often outwit truth, Africa doesn't want to be seen as a joker that strayed to the table of shrewd and business-minded nations and bloc powers

One major source of concern at this time is broken multilateralism almost across the five oceans. Everywhere you turn, true consensus seems to be few and far between, as geopolitical convenience pervades everywhere. In Africa, everyone seem to be holding their choicest cards to their chests, as African Union gets micromanaged by member states. National politics seem to lord it over consensus, that's why only a few member states have shown bold leadership on topical issues like visa-free travel for Africans and Africa's diaspora, air connectivity, reconnection of Africa with her diaspora through right of abode for people of African descent (especially those from the Americas), common front on energy diplomacy etc.

AfCTA protocol is progressing, but facing key challenges like tariff and non-tariff barriers. AfCFTA aims to eliminate tariffs on 90% of goods, but non-tariff barriers like variations in regulations, digital infrastructure, customs procedures, import restrictions still slow down intra-Africa trade. Yamoussoukro Declaration is struggling for full implementation, not because AFCAC isn't giving Single African Air Travel Market its best shot, but because of differences in policy, regulatory frameworks and interests of member states that are signatory to the treaty. Africa must understand that it'd never be enough to have common goals. Every Tom, Dick & Harry can want the same thing. What makes the difference is the courage for every party involved to lay down their cards, facing the ceiling.

There's been a number of calls for reforms of the UN Security, financial architecture – for inclusivity. Staunchly backed by United Nations Secretary General António Guterres, Africa has requested to have two permanent, but rotational seats on the UN Security Council. Nigeria, being the giant of Africa has pushed for one of those seats. The other one is being considered to be reserved for the African Union, but Nigeria has a different opinion on that.

With US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio acknowledging that multipolarity has come to stay; I am convinced that the gravitational forces of geopolitics will eventually ensure Africa gets her two seats. Here's my worry, however. In a world where perception often outwit reality, Africa doesn't want to be seen as a joker that strayed to the table of shrewd and business-minded nations, and bloc powers.

This is why it is not enough to periodically gather to draft and revisit policies by which the AU runs. It is equally crucial to find a point of harmony for policies and regulations of different member states, on key issues, otherwise Africa will keep having beautifully lofty goals and ideas that take decades to reach a quarter of their potentials.

Member states can decide to guard their individual ponds with hounds, to ensure there's a catfish each time they need one or pool an ocean for all to fish from. We must remember that no matter how beautiful a pond is, a whale will never stray into it.





PG50

38th AU Summit



PG9

Power List 100

Women of African Descent
in Diplomacy



PG30

Dagmawit Moges On AU Peace Fund



PG57

G20 Foreign Ministers' Summit In South Africa



PG41

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AUPF's Accra Platform & 79th UNGA Engagement: A Mission for Resource Mobilization for Peace And Sustainable Development In Africa & The Growing Confidence In AU Peace Fund



In a groundbreaking step to boost peace financing across the African continent, the African Union (AU) Peace Fund held its High-Level Strategic Partnerships Platform in Accra. The event convened influential stakeholders from governments, the private sector, multilateral financial institutions, and development partners. The key objective was to forge strategic partnerships and secure sustainable resources to bolster peace initiatives across Africa. One of the most significant outcomes from the platform was securing a remarkable total contribution of USD 216 million.

Major pledges were made by Afreximbank, Ethiopian Airlines, Standard Bank, and the AU Staff Association. This milestone is a testament to the growing confidence in the AU Peace Fund as an innovative, home-grown mechanism to finance peace and security efforts on the continent.

The AU Peace Fund Board of Trustees commended the Secretariat's resource mobilization efforts, underscoring how this achievement bolsters the African Union's leadership in conflict prevention, and mediation efforts. They stressed such achievements not only attract more partners but also empower the Fund to better deliver on its mandate.

Participants at the Accra Platform reiterated the importance of scaling up resource mobilization to meet the increasing demand for sustainable peace financing. The Peace Fund leadership shared recent progress, including successful engagement with over 40 private sector partners and multilateral institutions, as well as strong involvement from AU member states.

The Accra Platform marked a pivotal moment in the AU Peace Fund's journey, underscoring the critical role of strategic partnerships in advancing its mission. With ongoing commitment from stakeholders, the AU Peace Fund is poised to lead efforts in mobilizing resources for a sustainable and peaceful Africa.

Following this momentum, the African Union Peace Fund (AUPF) took center stage during the 79th session of the United Nations

General Assembly (UNGA 79) in New York. Led by Mrs. Dagmawit Moges, Director of the AU Peace Fund Secretariat, the Peace Fund team engaged in a series of productive meetings focused on strengthening partnerships, sharing knowledge, and mobilizing resources to enhance peace initiatives across the continent. The week of high-level diplomacy and renewed commitments further solidified the Fund's vital role in driving peace efforts in Africa.

The Fund's engagement at UNGA signified not only its growing prominence on the global stage but also the expanding network of partners committed to supporting Africa's journey toward lasting peace. One of the key highlights was the meeting with the leadership

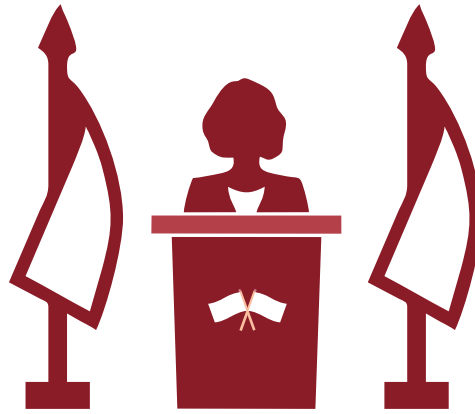
of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), led by Mr. Pedro Guazo, Representative of the UN Secretary-General. The discussion offered valuable insights into fund management strategies and performance optimization. Mr. Guazo and his team shared their expertise on managing large-scale investments, providing guidance on benchmarks and productivity metrics for fund managers.

These exchanges were invaluable, as the AU Peace Fund continues to refine its approach to resource mobilization and management, ensuring that funds are effectively utilized for conflict prevention and peace initiatives across the continent.

The commitment to leveraging partnerships and maximizing impact was also echoed in meetings with key stakeholders such as Mr. William Asiko, Vice President for the Africa Region at The Rockefeller Foundation. The conversation with Mr. Asiko was particularly focused on the opportunities to draw from the Foundation's long-standing experience in private sector engagement and endowment fund management. The potential collaboration with The Rockefeller Foundation presents an exciting opportunity to deepen the Fund's reach and expand its resource mobilization strategies.

In a continuation of these fruitful dialogues, Moges attended a reception hosted by Mrs. Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women, where discussions centered around gender equality and peacebuilding. She engaged with key women leaders on advancing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a gender lens, reinforcing the interconnection between peace, development, and gender equality. These engagements at UNGA 2024 demonstrated the African Union Peace Fund's growing impact and its commitment to leveraging global partnerships to finance sustainable peace across Africa.

As Moges noted in several of her discussions, the journey ahead is both promising and challenging, but with the continued support of the international community, the Peace Fund will remain a cornerstone in Africa's quest for peace.



Diplomat Afri Power List 50

Women Of African Descent In Diplomacy

global and continental players edition

from brokering and keeping world peace, championing global fiscal policies, keeping international trade going and bolstered, shaping foreign policies and geopolitics; women of African descent have shown themselves up to the bill and proven to be as effective as their counterparts from other climes and extract. For example, half of the women deployed into global peacekeeping troops are from Africa.

The editorial board of Afri Diplomat have researched and presented in this list our very own feminine rockstar in global diplomacy, as we encourage African nations and the global south to deepen inclusive diplomacy. This list comprises of those still actively serving and legends who have taken to the back bench, to inspire generations to come,

1. Amina J. Mohammed

Deputy Secretary-General of United Nations

Ms. Amina J. Mohammed is the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Mohammed served as Minister of Environment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria where she steered the country's efforts on climate action and efforts to protect the natural environment. Ms. Mohammed first joined the United Nations in 2012 as Special Adviser to former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon with the responsibility for post-2015 development planning. She led the process that resulted in global agreement around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the creation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Ms. Mohammed began her career working on the design of schools and hospitals in Nigeria.



1

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**Director-General of World Trade Organization**

Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the seventh Director-General of the World Trade Organization. She is the first woman and African to serve as Director-General, after taking office on 1st of March, 2021. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is former Minister of Finance and Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Federal Republic of Nigeria. She previously served as a Managing Director of the World Bank where she had oversight functions as the World Bank's operational portfolio Director for Africa, South Asia and Europe and Central Asia.

Epsy Campbell Barr**First Black VP of Costa Rica & UN IDFPAD Chairperson**

The former and first black person to become Vice President of Costa Rica – Dr. Epsy Campbell Barr championed the creation of International Decade for People of African Descent, and chaired the first United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent - 2022–2024.

The former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica is the founder of the Global Coalition Against Systemic Racism and for Reparations, and was elected in October 2024 as president of the Centre for Sport and Human Rights, replacing Mary Robinson.

Edith S. Sampson**First black US Representative to NATO**

2011 Time Magazine Most Influential People In The World Honoree Sampson was appointed as alternate US delegate to the United Nations on August 24, 1950, making her the first African-American to officially represent the United States at the UN. She was a member of the UN's Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee.

She was a member of the US. Commission for UNESCO. In 1961, she was elected to the US Citizens Commission and later became the first black US representative to NATO

**Ndemupelila Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah****Former Foreign Minister, Incoming & First Female President of Namibia**

Ndemupelila Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah is the president-elect of Namibia after winning the presidential election on 3 December 2024. She reputed as the first woman to be elected President of Namibia. NNN, as she's nicknamed, has in the course of her political career occupied some lofty positions including Vice Presidency, which also makes her the first woman to attain that height in Namibia. She has been a member of the National Assembly of Namibia since 1990. She has also served as the minister of information and broadcasting, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Minister of International Relations & Cooperation and Namibia's Deputy Prime Minister.

Dr. Condoleezza Rice**First Female National Security Adviser & First African American Secretary of State**

In 1987, Dr. Condoleezza Rice served as an advisor to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In 1989 she was appointed director of Soviet and East European Affairs on the NSC. Two years after, she returned to Stanford where she later became a provost in 1993 until 1998.

She is the first woman to serve as National Security Advisor (2001-2005) and the first African American woman to serve as Secretary of State (2005-2009).



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Women Foreign Minister Roll Call

Name	Country	From-To
Danielle de St. Jorre	Seychelles	1989-1997
Princess Elizabeth of Toro	Uganda	1974 (Feb. - Nov.)
Maria do Nascimento	São Tomé & Príncipe	1978-1985
Gloria Amon Nikoi	Ghana	1979 (June - Sept.)
Gaositwe Chiepe	Botswana	1984-1994
Pascaline Bongo Ondimba	Gabon	1991-1994
Maria do Nascimento da Graça Amorim	Haiti	1991 Feb. - Sept.
Claudette Werleigh	Haiti	1993-1994/1994-1995
Billie Miller	Barbados	1994-2008
Dorothy Musuleng-Cooper	Liberia	1994-1995
Janet Bostwick	Bahamas	1994-2002
Sy Kadiatou Sow	Mali	1994 - 1995
Shirley Gbujama	Sierra Leone	1996-1997
Lila Ratsifandrihamanana	Madagascar	1998-2002
Hilia Barber	Guinea Bissau	1999 (Jan.-May)
Aïchatou Mindaoudou	Niger	1999-2000/2001-2011
Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma	South Africa	1999-2009
Lilian Patel	Malawi	2000-2004
Mahawa Bangoura	Guinea	2000-2002
Filomena Mascarenhas Tipote	Guinea Bissau	2000-2002
Alda Bandeira	São Tomé & Príncipe	2002 (March-Oct.)
Fátima Veiga	Cape Verde	2002-2004
Fatumata Djau Baldé	Guinea Bissau	2003 (July-Sept.)
Edna Adan Ismail	Somaliland	2003-2006
Condoleezza Rice	United States	2005-2009
Alcinda Abreu	Mozambique	2005-2008
Fatoumata Kaba	Guinea	2005-2006
Antoinette Batumubwira	Burundi	2005-2009
Asha-Rose Migiro	Tanzania	2006-2007
Mariam Aladjì Boni Diallo	Benin	2006-2007
Joyce Banda	Malawi	2006-2009
Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala	Nigeria	2006 (June-August)
Joy Ogwu	Nigeria	2006-2007
Olubanke King Akerele	Liberia	2007-2010
Zainab Bangura	Sierra Leone	2007-2010
Paula Gopee-Scoon	Trinidad & Tobago	2007-2010
Maria da Conceição Nobre Cabral	Guinea Bissau	2007-2009
Laure Olga Gondjout	Gabon	2008 (April-Oct.)
Maxine McClean	Barbados	2008-2018
Adiato Djaló Nandigna	Guinea Bissau	2009 (Jan.-Oct.)
Maite Nkoana-Mashabane	South Africa	2009-2018
Etta Banda	Malawi	2009-2011
Naha Mint Mouknass	Mauritania	2009-2011
Marie-Michèle Rey	Haiti	2009-2011

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is a South African politician and former United Nations official, who served as the Executive Director of UN Women with the rank of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mlambo-Ngcuka served as Deputy President of South Africa from 2004 to 2008, as the first woman to hold the position and at that point the highest ranking woman in the history of South Africa.



7

Fatou Bensouda

Former Prosecutor of International Criminal Court



8

On 12 December 2011, Ms Ms Bensouda Fatou was sworn in on 15 June 2012, having been elected by consensus as Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, by the Assembly of States Parties

She has been serving as Gambian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom since 2022.

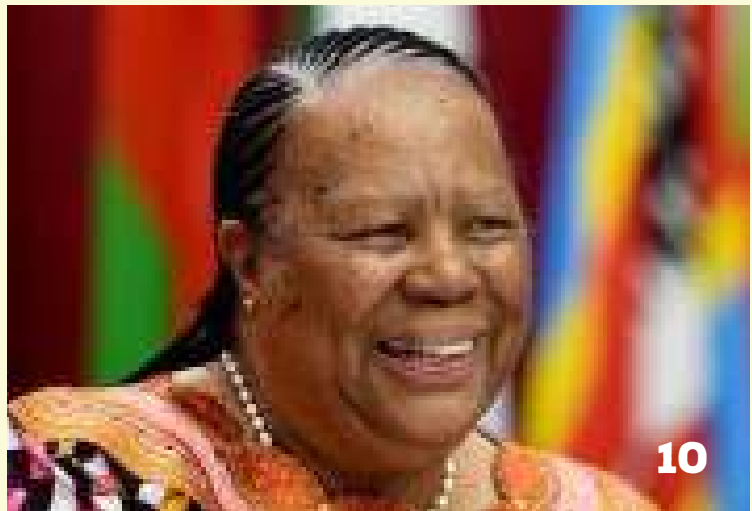
Dagmawit Moges Bekele 9

Former Minister of Transportation & Communication

Dagmawit served as Deputy Mayor of Addis Ababa until 2018, when she was appointed as Ethiopia's Minister of Transportation & Communication. In March 2023, she became the Director General of African Union Peace Fund where she is advancing peacekeeping processes on the continent.

Naledi Pandor

Former Foreign Minister of South Africa



10

Naledi Pandor is a 3-time minister of The Republic of South Africa, who served as the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation from 2019 until 2024, and minister of Education and Minister of Science & Technology, prior to her stint with foreign relations. She also served as a Member of Parliament (MP) for the African National Congress (ANC) from 1994 to 2024.

She reputes as one of the loudest female voices on the Israel-Gaza war.

Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey

Secretary-General Designate of the Commonwealth of Nations





















































Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey is the incoming Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations. She once served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State at the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing under President John Kufuor.

As at the time of her appointment as The Commonwealth Secretary-General, she was Ghana's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration under Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo.

Prior to her appointment as Foreign Minister, she was a Member of Parliament for Anyaa-Sowutuom from 2013 to 2021



11

Louise Mushikiwabo	Rwanda		2009-2018
Aminatou Maïga Touré	Niger		2010-2018
Yvette Sylla	Madagascar		2011-2011
Susan Waffa-Ogoo	The Gambia		2012-2013
Fawzia Yusuf Haji Aadan	Somalia		2012-2014
Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah	Namibia		2012-2024
Natália Pedro da Costa Umbelina Neto	São Tomé & Príncipe		2012-2014
Hanna Tetteh	Ghana		2013-2017
Amina Mohamed	Kenya		2013-2018
Léonie Banga-Bothy	CAR		2013-2014
Viola Onwuliri	Nigeria		2013-2014
Arisoa Razafitrimo	Madagascar		2014-2015
Clarice Modeste-Curwen	Grenada		2014-2016
Francine Baron	Dominica		2014-2019
Neneh MacDouall-Gaye	The Gambia		2015-2017
Béatrice Atallah	Madagascar		2015-2017
Vatma Vall Mint Soueina	Mauritania		2015 (Jan.-Sept.)
Aïchatou Kané Boulama	Niger		2015-2016
Makalé Camara	Guinea		2016-2017
Kamina Johnson Smith	Jamaica		2016 till date
'Mamphono Khaketla	Lesotho		2016-2017
Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey	Ghana		2017 till date
Yldiz Pollack-Beighle	Suriname		2017-2020
Monica Juma	Kenya		2018-2020
Lindiwe Sisulu	South Africa		2018-2019
Epsy Campbell Barr	Costa Rica		2018 (May-Dec.)
Unity Dow	Botswana		2018-2020
Kamissa Camara	Mali		2018-2019
Thuli Dladla	Eswatini		2018 till date
Elsa Teixeira Pinto	São Tomé & Príncipe		2018-2020
Sylvie Baïpo-Temon	CAR		2018 till date
Karen Cummings	Guyana		2019-2020
Nabeela Tunis	Sierra Leone		2019-2021
Naledi Pandor	South Africa		2019-2024
Suzi Barbosa	Guinea-Bissau		2019-2020
Awut Deng Acuil	South Sudan		2019-2020
Asma Mohamed Abdalla	Sudan		2019-2020
Marie Tumba Nzeza	DRC		2021-2021
Raychelle Omamo	Kenya		2020-2022
Ruth Monteiro	Guinea Bissau		2020 (Feb.-March)
Suzi Barbosa	Guinea Bissau		2020-2023
Beatrice Wani-Noah	South Sudan		2020-2021
'Matšepo Ramakoe	Lesotho		2020-2022
Edite Tenjua	São Tomé & Príncipe		2020-2022
Aïssata Tall Sall	Senegal		2020-2024
Mariam al-Mahdi	Sudan		2021 (Feb.-Nov.)
Najla Mangoush	Libya		2021-2023
Liberata Mulamula	Tanzania		2021-2022
Kandia Camara	Ivory Coast		2021-2023
Rosine Sori-Coulibaly	Burkina Faso		2021-2022
Nancy Tembo	Malawi		2022
Olivia Rouamba	Burkina Faso		2022-2023

Mia Motley**Prime Minister of Barbados**

Mia Motley has served across the three arms of government of Barbados. The first woman to hold either position – she is the eighth prime minister of Barbados and has been serving since 2018. She has also been the Leader of the Barbados Labour Party since 2008. She is also Barbados' first prime minister under its republican system, following constitutional changes she introduced that abolished the country's constitutional monarchy. She was also the first female Attorney-General of Barbados and a 2-time Opposition Leader in Barbados House of Assembly.



12

3. Amina Mohamed**Former Chairwoman of UN IOM**

13

Amina Mohammed is the immediate former Cabinet Secretary for Sports, Heritage and Culture in Kenya. She previously served as chairwoman of the International Organization for Migration and the World Trade Organization's General Council, as well as Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

She served as the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya from May 2013 to February 2018, under President Uhuru Kenyatta.

14**Khouloud Mansour****African Union Peace Ambassador of Peace to North Africa****15****Tene Maimouna Zoungrana****Recipient of UN Trailblazer Award for Women Justice & Corrections Officer****16****Brig. Gen. Lea Yangogo****Secretary-General of Higher Council for Military Condition****17****Steplyne Nyaboga****UN Military Gender Advocate of The Year 2020****Dr. Carla Barnett****Secretary-General of CARICOM**

18

Dr. Barnett is a Belizean economist and politician, currently serving as Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) since 2021.

Barnett is a former Deputy Speaker of the Senate and has held various ministerial positions in her country's government. She succeeds Irwin LaRocque, who served as Secretary-General from 2011 to 2021.







Amb. Liberata Mulala**Former Foreign Minister of Tanzania**

Liberata is a Tanzanian diplomat and politician who served as Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation.

Ambassador Mulamula rose through the ranks over a career period spanning more than 35 years as a diplomat and administrator in the Tanzanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation, during which she served as Permanent Secretary of the ministry and Tanzania's ambassador to the United Nations in New York City.



19

Amb. Stergomena Tax	Tanzania		2022-2023
Amb. Paulette Marcelline Adjovi	Benin		2023 (May-June)
Amb. Rasata Rafaravavitaika	Madagascar		2024 till date
Amb. Sara Beysolow Nyanti	Liberia		2024 till date
Amb. Yassine Fall	Senegal		2024 till date
Amb. Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu	Nigeria		2024 till date

Baroness Patricia Scotland
First Female Secretary General of The
Commonwealth of Nations

Born of an Antiguan father and a Dominican mother, Patricia Janet Scotland – Baroness Scotland of Asthal – is a Dominican-British barrister and politician, who served as the sixth secretary-general of the Commonwealth of Nations. She is the first woman to hold the post. Baroness Scotland was elevated to the House of Lords in 1997. She was the Attorney General for England and Wales and Advocate General for Northern Ireland.



20

Chido Cleopatra Mpemba
African Union Youth Envoy



21

Chido Mpemba is of Zimbabwean extract and African Union's Youth Special Envoy. She is the second to be appointed as such and the youngest senior official in the history of AUC. Chido is a 2016 Mandela Washington Fellow.

Selma Malika Haddadi
Deputy Chairperson of
African Union

An Algerian diplomat with a background in law – Amb. Selma Malika Haddadi is the newly elected Deputy Chairperson of African Union Commission. Until her election, she was Algerian Ambassador to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to African Union and UNECA.



22

Lerato M. Mataboge
African Union Commissioner
for Infrastructure & Energy

Lerato Mataboge is African Union's newly elected Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy. Lerato served as Deputy Director-General for Trade and Investment at the South African Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and Chief Director for Africa at the Department of Trade and Industry. Her diplomatic experience includes a term as Minister: Economic at the South African Embassy in Washington D.C., USA.. She has been certified on in trade negotiations, bilateral investment treaty negotiations, and project management from prestigious institutions including the European Institute of Public Administration, WTO/UNCTAD, and SADC Secretariat respectively.



23

Latifa Akherbach
Former Moroccan Secretary
of State

Latifa Akherbach is Morocco's former Secretary of State. She has a seasoned background in journalism which started with Al Maghrib and La Vie Eco magazine. She taught at Higher Institute of Journalism of Rabat in the 90s.

She was appointed in 2023, by King Mohammed VI as the head the "Higher Institute of Information and Communication. Akherbach co-authored two books on women rights titled "Women and Media" (Femmes et médias) and "Women and Politics" (Femmes et politique). She was an aspirant for the 2025 African Union



24

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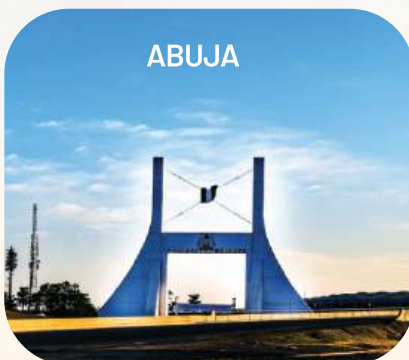


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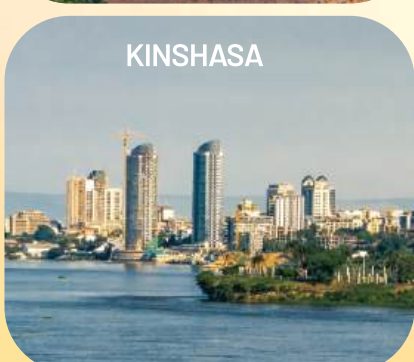
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Dr. Marit Kitaw
Interim Director of AU's African Minerals Development Centre

Dr Marit Kitaw is the Interim Director of the African Minerals Development Center (AMDC), a specialized agency of the African Union, dedicated to minerals for sustainable development in Africa, through implementing the Africa Mining Vision (AMV). She was previously an Economist at UNECA where she became a strong advocate of developmental mining. Dr Kitaw was also Chief Technical Advisor on Extractives for Sustainable Development at UNDP Mozambique, and has worked in COMESA, the AfDB and the Institute of World Affairs in Washington, DC. .



3. Adefunke Adeyemi
Secretary General of African Civil Aviation Commission



Adefunke Adeyemi has a remarkable journey through the world of international aviation system. She was recently reelected for her second term as the Secretary-General of African Civil Aviation Commission, a specialized agency of the African Union. Prior to this, she was Regional Director, Advocacy & Strategic Relations for Africa at International Air Transportation Association (IATA).

Adefunke headed the Diversity & Inclusion initiative of IATA in Africa Middle East, also leading its Women in Leadership program in the region. Her leadership inspired the launch of Single African Air Transport Market by African Heads of State in January 2018.

Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa
Immediate Past Deputy Chairperson of African Union

Dr. Nsanzabaganwa is a Rwandan economist, politician and diplomat, who has served as the vice-chairperson of the African Union Commission, since 6 February 2021. Before that, between 2011 and 2021, she served as the deputy governor of the National Bank of Rwanda.



Bineta Diop
African Union Special Envoy for Women

Ms. Diop is African Union Special Envoy for Women, Peace, and Security, She co-convenes, the African Women's Leaders Network, which comprises women elders, young women, and rural women, spanning 35 national chapters. Endorsed by the UN and AU, this movement aims to advance women's leadership in the agendas for 2030 and 2063.



Ms. Diop contributed in the shaping of Africa's gender normative frameworks, such as the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights and the African Union Convention on Human Rights.

Kongit Sinigiorgis
Africa's Longest Serving Diplomat

Ambassador Konit Sinigiorgis is regarded as Africa's longest serving diplomat, having served in Ethiopia's foreign ministry for 53 years, under three governments. She witnessed the creation of Organization of African Unity in 1963 and its transition to African Union in 2002. Ambassador Konjit served as an officer in charge of decolonization Affairs in the Ethiopian Permanent Mission to the UN in New York. In 2009, she was appointed as Ethiopia's Permanent Representative to the OAU, and eventually to the AU and UNECA, and played key role in the metamorphosis of OAU to the AU.



Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee
Former UN Assistant Secretary-General for Africa

Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee served as UN Assistant Secretary-General for Africa. She is part of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.





Joyce Banda
Former Foreign Minister & President of Malawi



Joyce Hilda Banda is a Malawian politician and former Vice-President of Malawi from May 2009. In April of 2012, her superior President Bingu wa Mutharika passed on and Joyce took office, making her the first female President of Malawi. Prior to this, she was Malawi's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Gender And Child Welfare and a member of Malawi's Parliament. She is an educator and women's right activist.

Abike Dabiri-Erewa
CEO, Nigerians In Diaspora Commission



2. Nkosazana Clarice Dlamini-Zuma
First Female African Union Chairperson

Dlamini-Zuma served in the cabinet of every post-apartheid South African president. After she served as Minister of Health under President Nelson Mandela, she was appointed by Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Kgalema Motlanthe to serve as their Minister of Foreign Affairs. During the first term of President Jacob Zuma, she was Minister of Home Affairs. During President Cyril Ramaphosa's second term, she was, for a short while, the Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.

While still heading the Ministry of Home Affairs, Dlamini-Zuma contested the position of Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission. There was a deadlock. Six months after, a second election took place and she won, making her the first female Chairperson of the African Union.

Sarah Mbi Enow Anyang
African Union Special Envoy for Women



H.E. Sarah Mbi Enow Anyang, from Cameroon, was elected as the new Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology of the African Union Commission. H.E. Anyang has over fifteen (15) years' experience in the field of Academia. She is a Professor of African and Commonwealth Literature, Department of English. Previously she was the Deputy Vice Chancellor in Charge of Research, Cooperation and Relations with the Business World (DVC-RCB) in the University of Bamenda, North West Region, Cameroon. Commissioner Anyang has written a number of academic Books and Publications to contribute to the Continent.

3. Asha-Rose Migiro
Former Foreign Minister of Tanzania & Deputy Secretary-General of UN



Tanzanian politician and diplomat Asha-Rose Mtengeti Migiro is a former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations from 2007 to 2012, after which she was appointed as the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa on 13 July 2012.

She served as Tanzania's foreign minister. She also served as President of the United Nations Security Council during its open debate on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes Region.

Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa OON is a journalist turn politician who was elected in 2003 into Nigerian Federal House of Representatives, representing Ikorodu Constituency in Lagos State – for two terms. She was the Chairman of the House Committee on Media & Publicity. She was also the former Chairperson of the House Committee on Diaspora Affairs.

In 2015, she was appointed as the Senior Special Assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari on Foreign Affairs and Diaspora. She served in this capacity until 2018, when she was appointed as Chairman/CEO of Nigerians in Diaspora Commission.

Kamina Johnson Smith**First Female Foreign Minister of Jamaica**

An attorney-at-law and Senator of Afro-European descent – Johnson Smith Kamina is Jamaica's first female Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. She also serves as Leader of Government Business in the Senate.

Daughter of a diplomat, Johnson Smith chairs the International Relations Sub-Committee and is a member of the Economic Growth and Job Creation Sub-Committee and Jamaica's National Security Council.

Sara Beysolow Nyanti**Highest Ever Ranking Liberian In The UN & Incumbent Foreign Minister of Liberia**

Liberian international development expert bred by more than 2 decades of experience, Sara Beysolow Nyanti is a pastor and incumbent Foreign Minister of Liberia. She was the United Nations Assistant Secretary General from December 2021 to her retirement in July 2023.

As the highest ranking Liberian in the UN, she has worked for the UN in Nepal, before becoming UNICEF HIV/AIDS advisor to the representatives in Namibia and Kenya in 2009. She was head of the UNICEF office in Lagos from 2015 to 2015. She was UNICEF Representative in Gambia from 2015 to 2017[8] and in Yemen from 2019 to 2020.

Amb. Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu**Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs for States**

One of the finest combinations of beauty and brain – Amb. Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu is a Nigerian politician, diplomat, lawyer and beauty pageantry titles holder. businesswoman and beauty pageant titleholder. She is currently the Federal Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. She is ex Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria, Miss Africa, and Miss Intercontinental. She once served as adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan. She has also served as Nigeria's ambassador to Ghana and Spain. During her service in Spain, she was also Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

**Amb. Patricia Roberts Harris****First African-American Woman to be appointed an Amb. in The US**

Amb. Patricia Harris is the first African-American Woman to hold the rank of ambassador when she was appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson as Ambassador to Luxembourg on June 4, 1965. In 1969, she became the dean of Howard University's Law School. This made her the first African-American to head a law school. In 1977, Amb. Harris served under President Jimmy Carter, as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, making her the first African American woman to hold a Cabinet post, and the first to be in line of succession to the Presidency.

Monica Juma**Kenya's Former Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs**

Monica Kathina Juma currently serves as National Security Advisor to President William Ruto. Under President Uhuru Kenyatta She served as the Cabinet Secretary for Defence. In her diplomatic stint, she has served as Kenya's concurrent ambassador to Ethiopia, Djibouti, the African Union, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. She has served as the Principal Secretary in the Kenya Ministry of Defence, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of the Interior and Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Kandia Camara**Current Senate President and Former Foreign Minister of Ivory Coast**

Kandia Camara is the President of the Senate of Ivory Coast since 12 October 2023. Prior to this, she served as the former minister of foreign affairs in the government of President Alassane Ouattara.

She was once the Deputy Mayor of Municipality of Abobo and Minister of National Education.

She is a professional handball player and was part of the ASC Bouaké team that won African Cup of Champion Clubs in 1981.

**Stergomena Lawrence Tax****Tanzania's Former Foreign Minister**

Stergomena Lawrence Tax was Tanzania's Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of East African Cooperation and Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation. Before that, she served as the executive secretary of the Southern African Development Community. After a sterling performance at these previous roles, she was appointed as Minister of Defence and National Service, making her the first woman to hold the title since the country's independence.

Zuriel Oduwole**Child Education Advocate & Noble Peace Prize Nominee**

Zuriel Elise Oduwole is an American child education advocate and filmmaker.[1] In 2010, at the age of 10, Oduwole was the world's youngest person to appear in Forbes.[2] In November 2014, Zuriel became the youngest filmmaker to self-produced and edited a screened work;[3][4] she was featured by CNBC.[5][6][7]

**Yassine Fall****Former Foreign Minister of Senegal**

Yassine Fall served as Senegal Minister of African Integration and Foreign Affairs. She has over 30 years of experience in public policy, multilateral governance and management in Africa and around the world.

She was once Director of Economic Division at UN and Senior Economic Advisor at the UN Millennium and made a significant contribution to the 2005 UN sponsored book, "The End of Poverty".

Dame Janet Bostwick**First Female Attorney-General and Acting Prime Minister of Bahamas**

Dame Janet Gwennett Bostwick DBE is a Bahamian politician with a background in law. She was the first woman to serve as acting Prime Minister, first woman Attorney-General and the first woman Member of Parliament in the Bahamas.

For twenty years, she served as MP for Yamacraw. While serving as Attorney-General, she also held the position of Foreign Affairs Minister. She also served as Minister of Housing and Labour and Minister of Justice and Immigration at different times. The Janet Bostwick Medal for Women in the Foreign Service is named after her.



Amb. Judith Sefi Attah**First Female Permanent Secretary of Nigeria's Foreign Affairs Ministry**

Amb. Judith Attah was the first Nigerian Ambassador to UNESCO in Paris. She was appointed first female Permanent Secretary of Federal Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of External Affairs (now Foreign Affairs). She was the first woman to assume duty as Nigerian Ambassador to Italy. In her records of firsts, she reputed as the first Minister of Women Affairs, among other accomplishments. Ambassador Attah remains a UNESCO Lifetime Goodwill envoy.



46

Amma Twum-Amoah**AU Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian & Social Development**

47

Amma Adomaa Twum-Amoah is African Union's newly elected Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian & Social Development. Until her election, she was Ghana's ambassador to Ethiopia. She has also served as Deputy Director of Policy Planning and Research Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Accra, Minister/Head of Chancery of the Embassy of Ghana in Washington, D.C. in the United States, Counsellor/Head of Chancery for the Ghana Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland and acting Head of Mission for the embassy before Lieutenant General Joseph Henry Smith was named Ghana Ambassador to the USA.

Kamissa Camara**Former Foreign Minister of Mali**

She is probably the youngest African to serve as Foreign Minister. – Kamissa Camara, a Malian political analyst and politician was appointed as Mali's foreign minister at age 33. She is the former chief of staff to the President of Malian Republic.

She also served as the Minister of the Digital Economy and Planning.

She had a stint with International Foundation for Electoral Systems, overseeing West Africa

She also worked for a while with US former Secretary of state and presidential candidate Hillary, Clinton.



48

Lindiwe Sisulu**4-time Minister of South Africa/Former Foreign Minister**

Daughter of prominent apartheid activists – Sisulu served as Minister under four presidents, as Minister of Intelligence, Housing, Defence and Military Veterans, Public Service, Human Settlements, International Relations and Cooperation, Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation and Tourism, her last position in government.

In the first post-apartheid elections, Sisulu was elected into the National Assembly of South Africa, where she served as Joint Standing Committee chair.

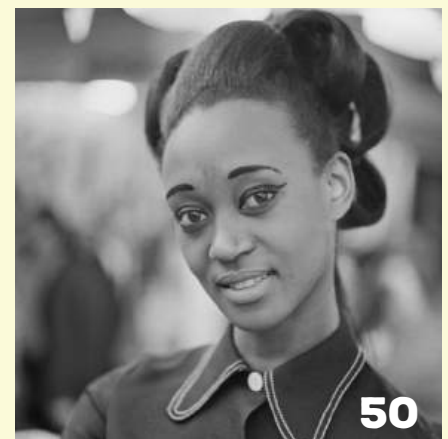


49

Princess Elizabeth of Tooro**Uganda's First Female Foreign Minister & Royalty**

Princess Elizabeth was the Batebe of the Kingdom of Tooro. She was a Ugandan lawyer, politician, diplomat, and model. She is the first East African woman to be admitted to the English Bar.

She had a short stint as Minister of Foreign Affairs under President Idi Amin. Years after, she was appointed ambassador to the United States, by Yoweri Museveni, a position she held until 1988. She was later appointed as Ugandan ambassador to Germany, Vatican and then Nigeria.



50



Volker Türk – UN Human Rights Chief

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed the Second International Decade for People of African Descent, which will run from 2025 to 2034. UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk welcomed this development, emphasizing that the new decade will build on the progress made over the past 10 years to advance the human rights of people of African descent globally.

Türk noted that the first International Decade, which began in 2015, saw significant progress despite persistent challenges. More than 30 countries changed their laws and policies to tackle racial discrimination and address specific issues faced by people of African descent. The Permanent Forum on People of African Descent was also created, along with International Days to celebrate the contributions of people of African descent, including women and girls.

The UN Human Rights Chief emphasized that racial justice demands collective action. He called on states and individuals to confront the legacies of enslavement and colonialism, dismantle systemic racism, and deliver reparatory justice. Türk also highlighted the importance of elaborating and adopting a draft

UN Gives Nodding To 2nd Decade of People of African Descent

UN declaration on the respect, protection, and fulfillment of the human rights of people of African descent.

Strong leadership, political will, and increased financial and human resources are crucial to delivering on the Decade's ultimate goals of recognition, justice, and development for people of African descent. It is also essential to ensure their meaningful participation in policies and decisions affecting their lives. The UN Human Rights Office will continue working to foster concrete and meaningful actions and support people of African descent in claiming their human rights.

The Second International Decade for People of African Descent presents an opportunity for the international community to come together and address the systemic racism and discrimination faced by people of African descent. It requires bold action and a commitment to delivering real change. As Türk emphasized, "We need bold action to deliver real change."

The UN Human Rights Office will support the implementation of the High Commissioner's Agenda towards transformative change for racial justice and equality. This includes supporting the eight UN human rights anti-racism mechanisms. By working together, it is possible to create a more just and equitable world for people of African descent.

The Second International Decade for People of African Descent is a crucial step towards achieving this goal. It is a call to action for governments, civil society, and individuals to work together to address the systemic racism and discrimination faced by people of African descent. By supporting this initiative, we can help create a more just and equitable world for all.

NiDCOM, Cuban Embassy Partner On Cultural Exchanges

Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, Chairman/CEO, Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM), says African descent globally, should unite for the common goal of promoting their diversity, strength and progress of the continent.

The NiDCOM Chairman stated this at a strategic meeting with the Cuban Ambassador to Nigeria, Miriam Morales Palmero, in Abuja. Dabiri-Erewa stressed that The Decade for the People of African Descent is an opportunity for Africans, all over the world to build a stronger, united and upward continent. She further added that the Commission is eager to work with the Cuban people and government, for effective and efficient diaspora engagement to galvanise cultural exchanges.

The Cuban Ambassador to Nigeria, Miriam Morales Palmero acknowledges the crucial role and importance of exchanges in building cultural identities, given similar historical imperatives. The Cuban Ambassador, therefore extended an invitation to the NiDCOM Boss to celebrate The Decade for the People of African Descent, holding in December, in Havana, and Matanzas provinces.

Amb. Palmero explained that the event is similar to the Badagry Door of Return Festival in Lagos, that captures the spiritual and socio-economic significance of the Historic African Diaspora. She commended the leadership of Dabiri-Erewa for the impressive

works done to engage with the diaspora, and is looking forward to establish mutually beneficial relationship with the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission.



L-R: Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa - Chairman/CEO NiDCOM and Cuban Ambassador to Nigeria - Amb. Miriam Morales Palmero



Amb. Yusuf Maitama Tuggar

Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria

Foreign Policy And The Path To Peace In A Dangerous Neighbourhood

I was born in a civil war and was not able to vote for my leader until I was in my 30s. Nigeria is now a country guided by the rule of law and a constitution that clearly defines our system of government. This includes our foreign policy objectives, and rightly so, because in an interconnected world, we define our sovereignty in the context of certain, key principles: our right to self-determination; our right to defend our autonomy and secure our borders; and responsibility to respect our obligations under international law.

As foreign minister, I think these provisions are not just reasonable but vital - both for our own democracy, domestic peace and prosperity but also for a more just and stable international order. But the point is this: it is the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, not the manifesto of a political party or predilections of a particular politician, that lays out these provisions. In a democracy, we have the privilege of healthy debate about our values, policies and performance. But if we are to live up to the responsibilities that come with democracy, that debate should be informed, fair and reasonable.

I respect the Constitution and its vision for Nigeria's place in the international community, as do many of us. It has been an honour and a privilege to protect and promote those constitutional principles. They are the best guarantees for legitimacy, and the authority all governments need if they are to deliver. It is complex and time consuming. To our cost, we have learnt that there are no short cuts. Some Nigerians find fault in our Constitution, while others seek to amend it. There is always room for serious debate in a healthy democracy. But the fact remains it is the very document

that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and every public official has sworn to uphold since 1999.

Nigeria's Constitution declares that sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria, from whom government, through this Constitution, derives all its powers and authority. The same Chapter of the Constitution goes on to state Nigeria's five foreign policy objectives: promotion and protection of the national interest, African integration and support for African unity, promotion of

international cooperation for peace and mutual respect, respect of international law and treaty obligations and promotion of a just world economic order. Those who suggest Nigeria does not have a foreign policy or those who agitate for a shift away from an Afro-centric foreign policy are wrong; either they are ill-informed, or deliberately disingenuous. The irony of it all is that Nigerians are able to speak in support of our military-ruled neighbours, governed without constitutions, precisely because Chapter Four of our own constitution guarantees them these rights and freedoms. This is not the same for the citizens ruled by the very regimes for which they seek to cheerlead of those countries governed without constitutions. Nigerians who are older than 30 know this to be true because we have been there, done that. Somehow in the passage of time, some forget that the military regime here that despatched troops to restore democracy in Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 1990s had first - and by force - taken that same democracy and rule of law away from us - just as military regimes

In reality, the contemporary nation-state system is highly competitive and Nigeria exists in a self-help world. Our Constitution and international laws are meant to serve as guard rails in navigating the system. And by virtue of our size, we have the additional responsibility of being the regional power.

continue to do the world over.

The Constitution also makes clear why any responsible Nigerian government should be concerned when neighbours are governed without a constitution or codified rules. It goes without saying that

the sovereignty of our neighbours is their business. They can grant powers to whatever governing structures they deem fit and should expect their autonomy to remain safeguarded. But when our Interdependence Sovereignty overlaps, we equally have a right to exercise control over our borders in those cases where neighbours face insurgencies that significantly comprise territorial integrity and state authority.

International Legal Sovereignty also becomes an issue when we consider that respect for international law and treaty obligations is one of our irreducible foreign policy objectives. This is not the Tinubu administration's foreign policy; it is a constitutional provision that every Nigerian President and government official swears to uphold. Nigeria is a member of ECOWAS, which is founded on treaties and protocols to which our foreign policy objectives commit us. All 15 member countries are signatory to the treaties and protocols, which is why it was no surprise that President Tinubu, as one who swore to uphold the Constitution, abided by it when ECOWAS leaders collectively objected to Unconstitutional Changes of Government.

In reality, the contemporary nation-state system is highly competitive and Nigeria exists in a self-help world. Our Constitution and international laws are meant to serve as guard rails in navigating the system. And by virtue of our size, we have the additional responsibility of being the regional power. Regardless of how some may try to diminish our standing, it is the way other countries perceive us. Our Constitution further reifies this leadership role right from the preamble- dedicating ourselves to promoting inter-African solidarity, to the foreign policy objectives- promotion of African integration and support for African unity and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations.

The Tinubu administration comes at a time when an interlocking suite of occurrences have made our neighbourhood less secure; implosion of Libya, failure of the EU Sahel Strategy, terrorism and criminal gangs, effects of climate change and population explosion. Nigeria did not create these challenges and was equally contending with its own domestic issue as these challenges escalated. Nigeria was not part of Operation Barkhane or the G5 in the Sahel, which were intended as efforts to fight terrorism and irregular migration but instead strengthened some irridentist Azawad/Tuareg groups that controlled border areas. This created a cauldron of disharmony between them and their national militaries, trained for a lifetime to keep their countries intact.

Nor was Nigeria part of the Partnership Framework with Third countries that conditioned aid and trade deals for Sahelian migration transit states in exchange for reducing the flow of migrants, with penalties for those who do not comply. In the case of

As several of my colleagues in the region remind me, we are the hegemony, whether we admit it or not. And global politics works almost like physics, with polarity, ordering principles, distribution of power,

Niger, a moment of truth was the passing of Law 2015-36 in May 2015 when its government, in consultation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and technical and financial support from the European Union and its member states, criminalized ancillary activities of the migration economy, such as providing transportation and accommodation to foreign nationals anywhere north of Agadez, in direct contravention of ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of people. They were persuaded to use a blunt hammer to crack a delicate nut. There is a highly politicised migration crisis in parts of Europe, that together we can and should resolve. But it was reckless to seek to solve one problem by creating another.

There is a reason why we have free movement in West Africa; seasonal migration- referred to in Hausa as 'Ci Rani'. Seasonal migration in the semi-arid Sahel can be a matter of life and death, which is why we have always had turbaned Tuaregs going as far as Lagos and Port Harcourt to work as Maigadis (security) during the dry months, only to return back north during the rainy season. The weaponisation of sub-Saharan migration in Europe as a political tool led to the securitisation of the Sahel region, further exacerbating the security situation by forcing many of those affected to turn to criminal activities and terrorism. European migration figures show majority of migrants are from Syria, Afghanistan and Central Asia, not sub-Saharan Africa.

Yes, we need to work with our Sahelian neighbours to fight terrorism, by maintaining a right of pursuit into each others territories. But it would be myopic to think of this in absolutist terms, because we can accede to all conditionalities laid by them, it would still not be enough to tackle the challenges without a lasting solution to the bifurcated Libyan State as a source of weapons, training and fighters, as well as the shadowy involvement of a range of other state and non-state actors.

To achieve a lasting peace in Libya and the Sahel, Nigeria needs to deal with all the

countries in the neighbourhood as well as all the major powers. For this reason, it does not make sense to simply deduce that Nigeria has to distance itself from France because that is the prevailing trend in its former colonies. The fulcrum of the Tinubu administration's foreign policy is Strategic Autonomy, providing us with the clarity to engage with any and all nations based on our national interests and not those of others. As a nation, Nigeria is adult enough and sophisticated enough to deal with countries without being unduly influenced, because that has been part of our historical and civic tradition. You cannot cure an illness by picking which symptoms to consider and which to ignore.

Nigeria and ECOWAS will continue diplomatic efforts towards Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. At a minimum, we have shared interest in peaceful co-existence. President Tinubu has sent a number of high-level delegations that included a former Head of State, traditional rulers and religious scholars. President Tinubu pushed for the unconditional removal of ECOWAS sanctions imposed on Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. What he has consistently asked of the countries in question is for them to come up with a timetable for the restoration of constitutional rule and, in the case of Niger, the release of ousted President Bazoum.

Their response was to declare their intention to leave ECOWAS. With the one-year notice period coming to an end in January 2025, President Tinubu further pushed for ECOWAS to extend the grace period for another six months whilst intensifying diplomatic efforts. The response to this initiative last month was evidence-free allegations that Nigeria was harbouring foreign soldiers and as sponsoring state terrorism. Whenever President Tinubu and other democratic leaders offer stoic statesmanship and an opportunity to work together towards our common interests, it is met by confected controversy designed to divert and distract from a failure to meet the basic responsibilities of public administration. I know why coup leaders might seek to do that: it's harder to

understand the motives of apologists closer to home.

On my part, since assuming the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs on 21st August 2023, I have engaged diplomatically without pause, proposing personal visits and inviting senior government officials and representatives. Response has been akin to a diplomatic cold shoulder. We constituted a ministerial advisory committee that visited Niger and Mali and facilitated the visit of the Nigerian CDS to meet with his counterpart in Niamey. I regret that a proposed return visit was suspended by Niger after a date had been set. But let there be no doubt: we will continue to pursue diplomatic efforts assiduously, with a Ministry of Foreign Affairs that has existed for 67 years.

Nigeria's principle of strategic autonomy is one that abhors the presence of foreign forces and private military companies in our region, whether from east or west. Nigeria presently has troops on peace keeping operations in Guinea Bissau and Gambia, with Sierra Leone on the way, where it is also supporting the setting up of a logistics base in Lungi. Nigeria is also leading the actualisation of the ECOWAS standby force, all in an effort to fight terrorism and instability within our region under the rule of law. We work closely with our partners on sharing of intelligence in order to guarantee the same rights and freedoms are enjoyed by all the people of the region.

As several of my colleagues in the region remind me, we are the hegemony, whether we admit it or not. And global politics works almost like physics, with polarity, ordering principles, distribution of power, balancing, etc. Nigeria has never had expansionist tendencies, never been threatening towards our neighbours and always chosen the path of peace and conciliation. This in part may have to do with the makeup of our polity and social fabric. Being such a huge country, we are used to the virtues of principled compromise. It is not by accident that we are the only country on the continent with six former leaders living in peace and harmony within our borders. Diversity, not division, is our strength. This is as true for Nigeria as it

is for the smallest of countries – and collectively for all of our region.

The Constitution also makes clear why any responsible Nigerian government should be concerned when neighbours are governed without a constitution or codified rules. It goes without saying that the sovereignty of our neighbours is their business.



To achieve a lasting peace in Libya and the Sahel, Nigeria needs to deal with all the countries in the neighbourhood as well as all the major powers. For this reason, it does not make sense to simply deduce that Nigeria has to distance itself from France because that is the prevailing trend in its former colonies.



They can grant powers to whatever governing structures they deem fit and should expect their autonomy to remain safeguarded. But when our Interdependence Sovereignty overlaps, we equally have a right to exercise control over our borders in those cases where neighbours face insurgencies that significantly compromise territorial integrity and state authority.

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In reality, the contemporary nation-state system is highly competitive and Nigeria exists in a self-help world. Our Constitution and international laws are meant to serve as guard rails in navigating the system. And by virtue of our size, we have the additional responsibility of being the regional power. Regardless of how some may try to diminish our standing, it is the way other countries perceive us. Our Constitution further reifies this leadership role right from the preamble- dedicating ourselves to promoting inter-African solidarity, to the foreign policy

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penalties for those who do not comply. In the case of Niger, a moment of truth was the passing of Law 2015-36 in May 2015 when its government, in consultation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and technical and financial support from the European Union and its member states, criminalized ancillary activities of the migration economy, such as providing transportation and accommodation to foreign nationals anywhere north of Agadez, in direct contravention of ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of people. They were persuaded to use a blunt hammer to crack a delicate nut. There is a highly politicised migration crisis in parts of Europe, that together we can and should resolve. But it was reckless to seek to solve one problem by creating another.

There is a reason why we have free movement in West Africa; seasonal migration- referred to in Hausa as 'Ci Rani'. Seasonal migration in the semi-arid Sahel can be a matter of life and death, which is why we have always had turbaned Tuaregs going as far as Lagos and Port Harcourt to work as Maigadis (security) during the dry months, only to return back north during the rainy season. The weaponisation of sub-Saharan migration in Europe as a political tool led to the securitisation of the Sahel region, further exacerbating the security situation by forcing many of those affected to turn to criminal activities and terrorism. European migration figures show majority of migrants are from Syria, Afghanistan and Central Asia, not sub-Saharan Africa.

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Yes, we need to work with our Sahelian neighbours to fight terrorism, by maintaining a right of pursuit into each others territories. But it would be myopic to think of this in absolutist terms, because we can accede to all conditionalities laid by them, it would still not be enough to tackle the challenges without a lasting solution to the bifurcated Libyan State as a source of weapons, training and fighters, as well as the shadowy involvement of a range of other state and non-state actors.

To achieve a lasting peace in Libya and the Sahel, Nigeria needs to deal with all the countries in the neighbourhood as well as all the major powers. For this reason, it does not make sense to simply deduce that Nigeria has to distance itself from France because that is the prevailing trend in its former colonies. The fulcrum of the Tinubu administration's foreign policy is Strategic Autonomy, providing us with the clarity to engage with any and all nations based on our national interests and not those of others. As a nation, Nigeria is adult enough and sophisticated enough to deal with countries without being unduly influenced, because that has been part of our historical and civic tradition. You cannot cure an illness by picking which symptoms to consider and which to ignore.

Nigeria and ECOWAS will continue diplomatic efforts towards Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. At a minimum, we have shared interest in peaceful co-existence. President Tinubu has sent a number of high-level delegations that included a former Head of State, traditional rulers and religious scholars. President Tinubu pushed for the unconditional removal of ECOWAS sanctions imposed on Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. What he has consistently asked of the countries in question is for them to come up with a timetable for the restoration of constitutional rule and, in the case of Niger, the release of ousted President Bazoum.

Their response was to declare their intention to leave ECOWAS. With the one-year notice period coming to an end in January 2025, President Tinubu further pushed for ECOWAS to extend the grace period for another six months whilst intensifying diplomatic efforts. The response to this initiative last month was evidence-free allegations that Nigeria was harbouring foreign soldiers and as sponsoring state terrorism. Whenever President Tinubu and other democratic leaders offer stoic statesmanship and an opportunity to work together towards our common interests,

it is met by confected controversy designed to divert and distract from a failure to meet the basic responsibilities of public administration. I know why coup leaders might seek to do that: it's harder to understand the motives of apologists closer to home.

On my part, since assuming the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs on 21st August 2023, I have engaged diplomatically without pause, proposing personal visits and inviting senior government officials and representatives. Response has been akin to a diplomatic cold shoulder. We constituted a ministerial advisory committee that visited Niger and Mali and facilitated the visit of the Nigerian CDS to meet with his counterpart in Niamey. I regret that a proposed return visit was suspended by Niger after a date had been set. But let there be no doubt: we will continue to pursue diplomatic efforts assiduously, with a Ministry of Foreign Affairs that has existed for 67 years.

Nigeria's principle of strategic autonomy is one that abhors the presence of foreign forces and private military companies in our region, whether from east or west. Nigeria presently has troops on peace keeping operations in Guinea Bissau and Gambia, with Sierra Leone on the way, where it is also supporting the setting up of a logistics base in Lungi. Nigeria is also leading the actualisation of the ECOWAS standby force, all in an effort to fight terrorism and instability within our region under the rule of law. We work closely with our partners on sharing of intelligence in order to guarantee the same rights and freedoms are enjoyed by all the people of the region.

As several of my colleagues in the region remind me, we are the hegemony, whether we admit it or not. And global politics works almost like physics, with polarity, ordering principles, distribution of power, balancing, etc. Nigeria has never had expansionist tendencies, never been threatening towards our neighbours and always chosen the path of peace and conciliation. This in part may have to do with the makeup of our polity and social fabric. Being such a huge country, we are used to the virtues of principled compromise. It is not by accident that we are the only country on the continent with six former leaders living in peace and harmony within our borders. Diversity, not division, is our strength. This is as true for Nigeria as it is for the smallest of countries – and collectively for all of our region



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South Africa's G20 Presidency for 2025: A Catalyst for Energy Investment in Africa

By leveraging this platform to advocate for financing and foster partnerships between G20 nations and African energy producers, South Africa can play a pivotal role in advancing the continent's energy future and contributing to global energy security

In 2025, South Africa will hold the rotating presidency of the G20. Given its position as Africa's most industrialized nation and an energy hub, South Africa's leadership could play a pivotal role in attracting investment to the continent's energy sector. By leveraging its G20 platform, South Africa can push for increased funding from global partners, particularly for natural gas projects, which are critical for Africa's energy security and economic development.

While renewable energy is rapidly expanding across the continent, Africa continues to rely heavily on coal, oil and natural gas to meet growing demand and drive economic growth. Gas is increasingly viewed as a cleaner transitional fuel in Africa's energy mix, and many G20 nations are leading investment in gas exploration and production across the continent.

For instance, the U.S. Export-Import Bank, U.K. Export Finance, China Development Bank and Japan Bank for International Cooperation, among other lenders, have

played a key role in financing TotalEnergies' \$20 billion Mozambique LNG project. Additionally, several G20 countries are driving further investment, with Italy's Eni developing new LNG facilities in the Republic of Congo, bp expanding operations in Senegal and Mauritania, Norway's Equinor advancing the Tanzania LNG development and ExxonMobil spearheading Rovuma LNG in Mozambique. South Africa can advocate for G20 nations to increase their financial backing for new gas projects, which have the potential to boost production, enhance energy security and attract much-needed investment to the continent.

While natural gas is essential for Africa's energy security, combining it with renewable energy sources could help diversify Africa's energy mix. South Africa's own experience with large-scale energy projects, such as its successful Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Program, can serve as a model for blending financing and developing both gas and renewable projects. By advocating for mixed investment, South

Africa can show G20 nations that supporting a variety of energy sources will allow Africa to meet its energy demands while transitioning toward greener energy.

In addition to advocating for investment in specific projects, South Africa can focus on creating favorable conditions for financing. One way to achieve this is by encouraging the G20 to support debt relief or concessional financing for African countries with high debt burdens. This would free up resources for governments to invest in energy infrastructure and allow them to prioritize projects that will improve energy access and support economic growth. South Africa could work closely with organizations like the World Bank, IFC, BRICS Bank, European Investment Bank and more to unlock financing mechanisms that reduce the risk for international investors.

The role of South Africa's G20 presidency in facilitating greater engagement between G20 nations and African energy markets cannot be overstated. By using its platform to promote key energy projects, South Africa can attract much-needed investment for both traditional oil and gas and clean energy developments. At the same time, it can help establish new financing structures that make these projects more attractive to investors.

African countries like Nigeria, Angola, the Republic of Congo, Senegal, Namibia and Mozambique stand to benefit from increased G20 support for their oil and gas sectors, and other African nations can follow suit by aligning their own energy priorities with the goals set forth by South Africa during its presidency.

This year's African Energy Week (AEW): Invest in African Energies conference in Cape Town serves as a key platform for attracting global attention and investment to Africa's energy sector, facilitating discussions among G20 nations, financial institutions and energy companies. AEW acts as a conduit for driving investment into critical energy projects, positioning South Africa as a catalyst for sustainable development across the continent while ensuring Africa's energy needs are met. With South Africa's G20 presidency presenting a unique opportunity to secure crucial investments in Africa's energy sector, the 2025 edition of AEW is more significant than ever.

By leveraging this platform to advocate for financing and foster partnerships between G20 nations and African energy producers, South Africa can play a pivotal role in advancing the continent's energy future and contributing to global energy security.

Source: Africa Energy Week

Dagmawit Moges Bekele

African Union Peace Fund & The Future of Africa

Dagmawit Moges Bekele is a former Deputy Mayor of Addis Ababa, Minister of Transportation in Ethiopia. She currently heads AU Peace Fund, an agency with a statutory role of keeping Africa secured, stable and flourishing with peace. In this interview with Afri Diplomat, she explains why the agency is critical to the growth of the continent

What inspired your leadership in promoting African peace and security through the Peace Fund?

My leadership in promoting African peace and stability through the Peace Fund is inspired by my commitment to advance African-led solutions. The Peace Fund embodies the principle that African solutions are the most effective for African problems. Its mission to support African ownership and leadership in peace and security aligns perfectly with my belief that the most impactful solutions to our continent's challenges come from within.

This represents a crucial shift from reliance on external assistance to a model where African nations harness their resources, knowledge, and leadership to address conflicts. Leading this initiative allows me to contribute to ensuring that future generations inherit a more secure and prosperous Africa.



By supporting these efforts through the Peace Fund, I am dedicated to a vision where Africans are not merely recipients of peace but are empowered to be the architects of their futures. The sense of empowerment and pride that accompanies leading one's peace-building efforts is both motivating and rewarding.

How do you envision the Peace Fund supporting African ownership and leadership of peace efforts?

The Peace Fund is designed to empower African countries to take the lead in peace-related initiatives. By availing sustainable, predictable, and adequate resources, the Fund enables Member States to design and implement strategies mainly aimed at preventing conflicts and by engaging in preventive diplomacy and other related efforts. Moreover, the Peace Fund helps build local capacity and institutional resilience, reinforcing the principle of African ownership over peace processes.

What successes has the Peace Fund achieved since its revitalization in 2018?

The African Union Peace Fund has been in place since 1993, but progress was limited until recently. In line with the overall AU reform process, the Peace Fund was revitalized in 2018 with robust governance structure. To give you a perspective, from 1993 to 2018, the Peace Fund only managed to raise 25 million USD. However, since its revitalization in 2018, significant progress has been made under the AU reform process previously overseen by H.E President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and currently by H.E President William Ruto of Kenya. We have now managed to mobilize close to 400 million USD.

This important achievement demonstrates the unwavering dedication of our Member States and the African Union Commission to promote peace and stability on our continent. With the goal of mobilizing additional resources – our secretariat – under the guidance of the Executive Management Committee (EMC) of the African Union Peace Fund, following the decision of our Member States, is actively engaging with the private sector, multilateral financial institutions, state-owned enterprises, high-net-worth individuals and billionaires residing in five member states: Kenya, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, and Cameroon. These engagements have been pivotal in forging strong partnerships and securing the support necessary for our peace-related activities.

Following these engagements, we have launched the first resource mobilization platform in Accra, Ghana alongside the African Union mid-year coordination meetings. The event was highly successful in mobilizing resources, with commitments

exceeding USD 216 million pledged to the Peace Fund over a period of 3 to 5 years.

How can innovative solutions address the resource mobilization efforts of the Peace Fund?

Innovative solutions can significantly enhance the resource mobilization efforts of the African Union Peace Fund in various ways. Public-private partnerships are essential, as collaborating with private sector entities can bring in additional resources for Peace Fund. Engaging in innovative fundraising events including digital crowd funding platforms can also attract small-scale donations from individuals in our continent.

This initiatives can also raise awareness and generate resources while highlighting the AU's peace initiatives. Additionally, tapping into the African diaspora networks can mobilize resources and create a sense of ownership in peace-building. Furthermore, encouraging voluntary contributions from staff of the African Union and other continental institutions can also play a crucial role, fostering a culture of commitment and solidarity. By integrating these strategies, the AU Peace Fund is working to establish a more robust and diversified funding landscape.

How does the Peace Fund embody the principle of "African solutions to African problems" in practice?

The African Union Peace Fund is an extraordinary testament to Africa's unwavering commitment and remarkable progress towards realizing its exemplary ideals, a testament to Africa's Unity of Purpose, the current manifestation of our founding fathers' ideals of Pan-Africanism.

It is an institution that has been meticulously designed to harness the full potential of our collective resources to propel our development and advance our peace efforts. The Peace Fund embodies this principle by prioritizing projects and initiatives conceived and led by African leaders. We focus on supporting Member States, Regional Economic Communities, and Regional Mechanisms. This approach ensures that solutions are culturally sensitive and have a higher chance



We focus on supporting Member States, Regional Economic Communities, and Regional Mechanisms. This approach ensures that solutions are culturally sensitive and have a higher chance of sustainable success. By fostering domestic ownership and leadership, the Peace Fund reinforces the idea that African countries are best positioned to address their own challenges.





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Can you share a story of the Peace Fund's positive impact in a conflict or crisis situation?

The Peace Fund, even though established in 1993, is only operational in its current structure starting from 2023. Following the revitalization, through the Executive Council's decision, the Peace Fund has facilitated several disbursements through the Department of Political Affairs Peace Security (PAPS) under the Crisis Reserve Facility (CRF) in 2023. These interventions include support for the East African Community (EAC) Regional Force in Eastern DRC, addressing shortfalls for the African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), funding for the second phase of technical pause for ATMIS, and efforts for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration in Northern Ethiopia's Tigray Region to sustain the Pretoria peace process.

Currently, we are making the necessary preparation to make additional resources available from our fund, USD 5 Million for pilot projects and USD 7 Million under our crisis reserve facility.

How do you encourage member states to increase their contributions and engagement with the Peace Fund?

Encouraging member states to increase their contributions and engagement with the Peace Fund involves demonstrating the tangible impact of the Fund's work and highlighting the benefits of active participation.

One key approach is to regularly share success stories and detailed reports on the outcomes of the Peace Fund activities. By showcasing how contributions are making a real difference on the ground, will help member states see the direct benefits of their support and how it contributes to meaningful peace and stability of our continent.

We emphasize that contributing to the Peace Fund supports a stable business environment, essential for confident operations and growth. Peace fosters stability, reduces trade and investment barriers, and expands market access, which enhances economic prospects and revenue potential. Additionally, it mitigates risks by reducing disruptions to supply chains, transportation, and

infrastructure. Thus, increased contributions not only advance peace but also benefit economic growth and operational efficiency. It is evident that investing in peace contributes to long-term sustainability.

Sustainable Peace is the bedrock for ongoing economic development and prosperity. When member states increase their engagement with the Peace Fund, they are laying the foundation for a stable and prosperous future, which ultimately benefits their economies and enhances their global standing. We always aim to demonstrate to member states that their increased contributions to the Peace Fund are not merely an expense but a strategic investment in their own economic future and regional stability. This perspective helps build a compelling case for greater engagement and support for the Peace Fund.

What potential partnerships or collaborations could enhance the Peace Fund's impact and reach?

Firstly, I would like to indicate that we are preparing a robust resource mobilization, partnerships and communication strategy



Women often excel in skills like empathy, communication, and consensus-building, which are crucial for resolving conflicts effectively. In my experience, women tend to focus on community and relational aspects of peace. This means they often address the root causes of conflicts and work towards building social cohesion, rather than just tackling the immediate symptoms. Overall, integrating women's perspectives and leadership into international peace efforts leads to more effective and sustainable outcomes.



that would guide this process. This would be our foundation for future enhanced engagements with our stakeholders. We will make a concerted effort to reach out to all stakeholders on our continent and beyond.

Partnerships with international organizations and regional bodies can also enhance the Peace Fund's impact by providing additional resources, expertise, and logistical support. Collaborating with philanthropic organizations and private sector entities can also bring innovative solutions and funding opportunities. Strengthening networks with civil society organizations and grassroots groups ensures that the Peace Fund's initiatives are grounded in local realities and have broader community support.

Our resource mobilization engagements of the past months were the beginning of what we envision as a long and fruitful journey. These initial steps have provided us with invaluable insights and lessons that will enhance our future engagements. We will continue engaging with the remaining stakeholders residing in all member states and beyond, including the citizens of our continent in the diaspora. We will make sure that we can reach to as many stakeholders as we can.

What is your vision for the Peace Fund's future as a flagship program for African peace and security?

My vision for the Peace Fund is to see it become a leading example of successful, African-led peace initiatives on the global stage. With the support of our Member States, I envision the Fund expanding its reach and impact by continuously adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities. This includes enhancing our funding mechanisms, strengthening partnerships, and investing in innovative approaches to conflict prevention.

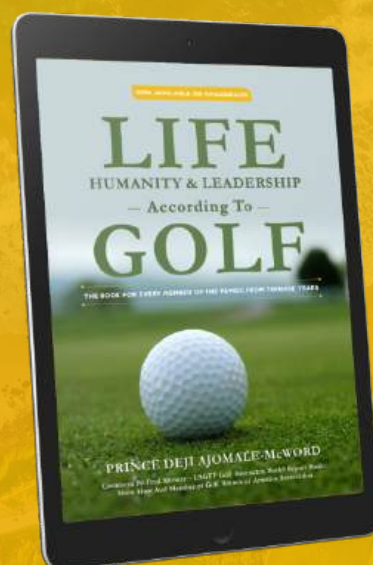
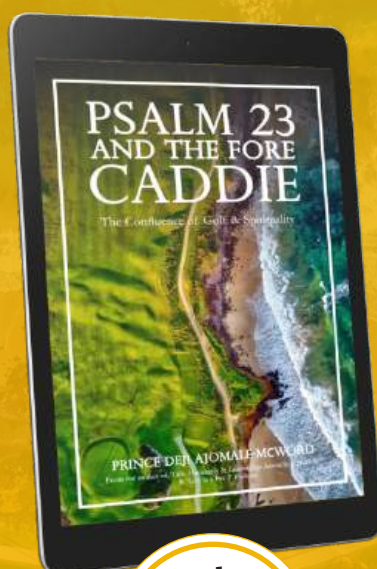
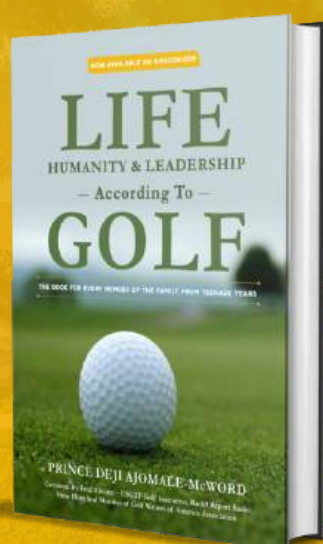
The goal is to establish the Peace Fund as a robust and sustainable mechanism that contributes to long-term stability and serves as a foundation for development across Africa. By fostering a culture of proactive and resilient peace building, the Peace Fund can truly embody its role as a flagship program for African peace and stability.

In your view, how does a woman's nature impact peacemaking and peacekeeping in international cooperation?

From my perspective, a woman's nature brings distinct and invaluable strengths to peace-related efforts. Women often excel in skills like empathy, communication, and consensus-building, which are crucial for resolving conflicts effectively. In my experience, women tend to focus on community and relational aspects of peace. This means they often address the root causes of conflicts and work towards building social cohesion, rather than just tackling the immediate symptoms.

This approach not only helps in resolving current issues but also in creating long-lasting peace by addressing underlying problems. Women's unique perspectives, shaped by their experiences, especially in conflict zones, can lead to innovative and comprehensive strategies that might be missed. In peace-related efforts, having women on the ground can significantly enhance mission effectiveness.

When women engage with peace-related initiatives, they often build stronger connections with local communities, including women and children, who may be more open to engaging with them compared to predominantly male teams. They also serve as role models and advocates for gender-sensitive policies, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive peace process. Overall, integrating women's perspectives and leadership into international peace efforts leads to more effective and sustainable outcomes. Their contributions help create environments where peace can genuinely thrive and where every voice, regardless of gender, is valued and heard.



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Crystal Cummings

A Journey Home: My Path to Reconnection

When I first arrived in Lagos, Nigeria, I wasn't sure what to expect. I had traveled extensively, but this trip felt different. From the moment I stepped off the plane, I was enveloped by the city's vibrant energy—the hum of traffic, the calls of market vendors, the rhythmic beats of Afrobeat music drifting through the air. But it wasn't just the sights and sounds that captivated me. It was something deeper, something I couldn't quite name.

It felt like my soul recognized this place, like I was finally home. That first trip to Lagos was more than just a visit; it was a turning point. For me, a tourism and hospitality professional, it was the beginning of a journey that would change my life—and, ultimately, the lives of countless others in the diaspora.

A Connection to the Motherland

My connection to Lagos was immediate and profound. As I explored the city, I found myself drawn to its history, its culture, and its people. I visited bustling markets, where traders sold everything, from colorful fabrics to fresh produce. I walked through historic sites, like the National Museum and the Badagry Slave Route, where I learnt about the transatlantic slave trade and its impact on the African continent.

But it wasn't just the history that moved me; it was the living, breathing culture of the city. I attended traditional festivals, where drummers and dancers celebrated their heritage with pride. I sat with local families, sharing meals and stories, and learned about the diverse tribes and traditions that make up Nigeria's rich tapestry. Everywhere I went, I felt this deep sense of connection. It was like I was rediscovering a part of myself that I didn't even know was missing.

A Professional Passion

My work in Nigeria's tourism industry deepened my connection to the country. Over the years, I played a key role in developing and promoting the sector, working with local communities to create sustainable tourism initiatives that celebrated Nigeria's cultural heritage. Working in tourism gave me a unique perspective. I saw how travel could be a powerful tool for education and empowerment. But it wasn't until I visited Lagos that I truly understood what it meant to connect with a place on a deeper level.

Through my work, I learnt about the history, culture, and traditions of Nigeria's many tribes. I visited remote villages, where elders shared stories of their ancestors and the ways of life that had been passed down through generations. I explored the country's natural beauty, from the lush forests of Cross River to the expansive savannahs of the north. Every experience taught me something new. But more than that, it gave me a sense of pride in my heritage. I realized that our history didn't begin with slavery. It's a history of kingdoms, traditions, and resilience—and it's a history that deserves to be celebrated.

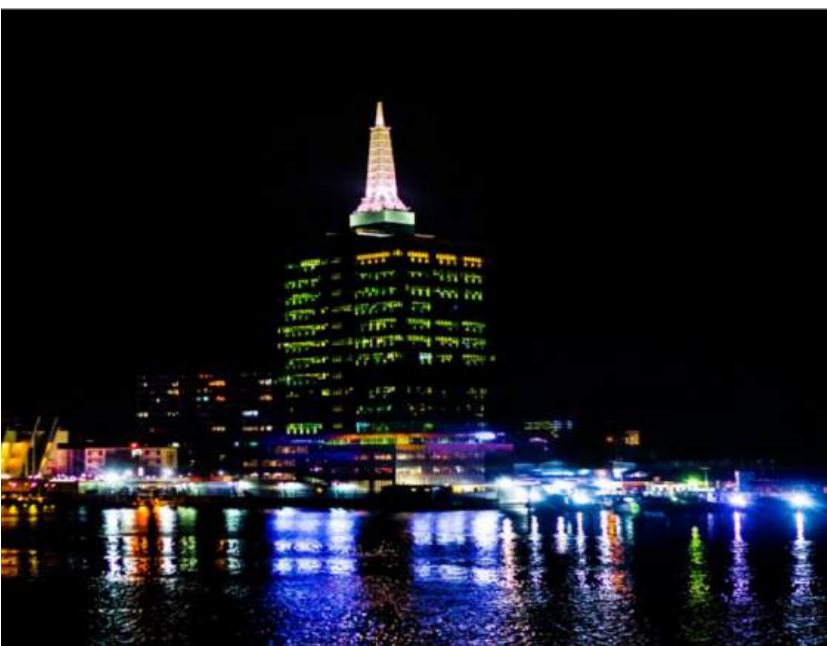
A Vision for the Diaspora

My experiences in Nigeria sparked a passion for bridging the gap between the Caribbean and the African continent. I saw how the diaspora had been disconnected from its roots, how the narrative of slavery had overshadowed the rich history and culture that came before it. For so many of us, our history starts with slavery. But there's so much more to our story. Our ancestors were kings and queens, artisans and warriors.



Crystal Cummings is a seasoned tourism and hospitality professional from Trinidad and Tobago with over 15 years of experience in cultural tourism, event planning, and diaspora engagement. She serves as the Tourism Ambassador for the Afro-Caribbean Chamber of Culture and Tourism (ACCCAT), working to strengthen connections between Africa and the Caribbean. Crystal has played a key role in the IPADA Carnival and has represented Trinidad and Tobago at international cultural festivals, promoting its heritage and the steel pan. She is also the founder of CMC Corporate Services, which offers business and personal concierge solutions, and its tourism branch, Echoes of Africa Tours, specializing in immersive





They had traditions, languages, and cultures that were taken from them. I wanted to create a way for people to reconnect with that history—to learn about who they were before slavery happened to them.

This vision became the driving force behind my work. I began to imagine a way to help others in the diaspora experience what I had felt in Lagos—a sense of belonging, of reconnection, of pride in their heritage.

The Birth of An Idea

It was my cousin, Sibongile Cummings, who first brought me to Nigeria. She had been living here and working as a travel influencer, and she knew how transformative the experience would be for me. It was during that first trip, inspired by the deep connection I felt to Lagos, that I made the decision to work in Nigeria's tourism industry. Sibongile had always been passionate about showcasing the beauty and diversity of Africa, and her influence had already inspired hundreds of people in the diaspora to visit places like Lagos and

Accra. When Sibongile brought me to Nigeria, I had no idea how much it would change my life. But she knew. She understood the power of reconnecting with our roots, and she wanted me to experience it for myself. Sibongile and I had always been close, but our shared experiences in Nigeria brought us even closer. We realized we both had this deep desire to help others in the diaspora reconnect with their roots. Together, we founded Echoes of Africa Tours, a tourism product designed to help the diaspora explore their ancestral heritage. The company offers bespoke travel experiences that go beyond the typical tourist itinerary, focusing on cultural immersion, historical education, and community engagement.

Our goal is to help people reconnect with their roots in a meaningful way. We want them to learn about their history, celebrate their culture, and feel a sense of pride in their heritage.

A Movement of Reconnection

For me, Echoes of Africa Tours is more than

a business; it's a calling. It's about healing the wounds of history and creating a space where the diaspora can come home, even if just for a little while. I'll never forget the first time I saw someone step off the plane in Accra and kneel to kiss the ground. That's when I knew we were doing something important. This isn't just travel. It's a homecoming. Through Echoes of Africa Tours, Sibongile and I are helping to rewrite the narrative of the diaspora. We're showing that our history didn't begin with slavery—it's a history of resilience, beauty, and strength. And we're inviting others to join us on this journey of reconnection, one step at a time.

If you've ever felt the pull of the motherland, if you've ever wondered about the stories behind your name, your skin, your soul—this is your invitation. Your journey home begins here.

If you've ever felt the pull of the motherland, if you've ever wondered about the stories behind your name, your skin, your soul—this is your invitation. Your journey home begins here.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM DAVOS 2025: Oduwole Emphasized On Africa's Digital Trade Potentials

Nigeria's Minister of Trade and Investment, Jumoke Oduwole, is championing the cause for Africa to lead the way in digital trade and economic growth. In a recent interview, Oduwole emphasized that Nigeria's engagements at the World Economic Forum Davos 2025 are specifically targeted at promoting the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and digital trade. This move is a proof that Nigeria is dedicated to enhancing intra-continental and global trade through digital platforms.

As Africa's largest economy, Nigeria is well-positioned to play a leading role in regional and global affairs. Oduwole highlighted the importance of African businesses being well-prepared to harness the benefits of digital infrastructure and public services like single windows. By doing so, African businesses can overcome traditional barriers to trade and connect with partners across borders. The AfCFTA digital trade protocol has been completed and is set to be ratified next month, signaling Africa's commitment to leading the way in digital trade and economic growth.

Digital trade offers African businesses unprecedented opportunities to drive economic growth. Through digital marketplaces and e-commerce platforms, businesses can connect with global markets and overcome traditional trade barriers. Oduwole cited the example of Afrexim Bank's payment system, which enables intra-African trade in local currencies, saving the continent billions of dollars annually. This innovative solution shows Africa's potential to develop homegrown solutions to its economic challenges.

Nigeria's economic agenda under Oduwole's leadership is guided by three key pillars. The first pillar focuses on attracting businesses to generate profits within Africa, emphasizing that the continent is not merely a destination for corporate social responsibility but a platform for wealth creation and circulation. The second pillar promotes impact investment, highlighting Africa's potential to address social challenges at scale, through innovative



technologies and solutions. She stressed that every investment in Africa has the power to impact millions of lives, making it an attractive destination for socially conscious investors.

The third pillar centers on sustainable development, with a focus on environmental stewardship and responsible investment practices. Oduwole emphasized the need for investors to adhere to sustainable principles while engaging with African markets. As Africa positions itself for economic growth and digital transformation, she emphasized the importance of nurturing the continent's youthful population and leveraging their talents. With Africa's population being the youngest and fastest-growing globally, there is a significant opportunity to channel youth energy and creativity towards productive ventures.

Oduwole advocated for policies that support job creation, talent retention, and skill development to equip African youth for the demands of the global marketplace. By fostering a conducive environment for entrepreneurship and innovation, Nigeria and the broader African continent can lead the way in digital trade and economic progress. As Africa continues to navigate the complexities of global geopolitics and geoeconomics, it is essential to recognize the significance of what Nigeria's Minister of

Industry, Trade & Investments posits on this matter. Nigeria's readiness to engage with the global community and attract investment is a promising indication of the country's future success.

Nigeria's participation in the World Economic Forum is a proof to its dedication to global cooperation and economic development. As Africa's largest economy, Nigeria is well-positioned to play a leading role in regional and global affairs. Oduwole's leadership will be instrumental in achieving this goal. By embracing digital technologies, enhancing trade facilitation, and empowering its youth, Africa is well-positioned to lead the world in economic growth and innovation.

The success of Nigeria's economic agenda will depend on its ability to balance its national interests with its commitment to global cooperation. Oduwole's emphasis on Nigeria's openness for business and its desire to build strong partnerships with countries around the world is a promising indication of the country's future success. As Nigeria continues to position itself as a strategic global partner, it is likely to face both opportunities and challenges. The country's ability to navigate these complexities will depend on its ability to build trust with the global community.

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The Diplomatic Games Week: NiDCOM, US, Britain, French Embassies Triumph



Martine Sobey from British High Commission (front row, left); Ms. Sookjae Choi wife of the Korean Ambassador to Nigeria; Sòkò Deji Ajomale of McWord, organisers of The Diplomatic Games Week; H.E. Amb. Mersole Mellejor, ambassador of Philippines to Nigeria; Michael D. Salazar from Philippines Embassy. Amb. Ben Okoyen, Chief of Protocol at Ministry of Foreign Affairs (back row, left); Florent Mangin from Embassy of France and Brian Neubert, Public Diplomacy Officer U.S. Embassy at the golf activity of The Diplomatic Games Week



The Diplomatic Games Week — The weeklong event which featured golf, tennis, chess and soccer — started as Diplomacy Stableford Golf Tournament in 2019, in Ikoyi Club 1938, Lagos was upped and made more inclusive, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It held from 4th to 10th of November, 2024, in the diplomatic beehive city of Abuja. As usual, especially with the golf activity of The Diplomatic Games Week, it was a colorful gathering of diplomats of diverse nationalities.

TENNIS

The week started with tennis, as diplomats and members of the tennis section of IBB International Golf & Country Club took to the court to slug it out for prizes and trophies. At the end of the 5-day tennis matches, the duo of AVM Abiola Amodu and Adamu Salisu won the mixed doubles title, while Ikani Agabi and Sani Tijani emerged runners up. AVM Saliu Atawodi, Obinna Ofodum, Biodun Jegede and Zacchy Akinjogbin were the semifinalists.

CHESS

The chess activity of the week held at Fraser Suites the embassy of Argentina

was represented by Pedro Alurralde, Davyd Hohiia, represented The Embassy of Ukraine, Chidera Chukwu represented British High Commission. The host of the chess tournament, Fraser Suites also fielded a player of Nigerian extract. In the Semi Finals, Nigeria (Fraser Suites) encountered British High Commission, Argentine Embassy slugged it out with Ukrainian Embassy.

Chidera Chukwu of British High Commission edged out Emmanuel Ogar of Nigeria (Fraser Suites), to make it to the finals, where he checkmated Danielle of Embassy of Ukraine. The third place match



was between Emmanuel Ogar and Pedro Alurralde of Argentina, and Pedro came third.

SOCCER

In a knockout format, 5-man teams from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigerians In Diaspora Commission and Embassy of Japan slogged it out, playing against one another. In a with 10 and 7 unreplied goals respectively, MFA and NIDCOM recorded victory over The Embaassy of Japan. Having won its matches against MFA and Embassy of Japan, NIDCOM emerged the winner of the soccer tournament of The Diplomatic Games Week, with 6 points.

GOLF

The Diplomatic Games Week rounded up with 6th edition of Diplomacy Stableford Golf Tournament. It was, as usual, a convergence of diplomats from embassies and international organizations, and non-diplomats alike.

The 2024 edition witnessed more diplomats winning the usual coveted prizes. With 54 Stableford points, Florent Mangin from Embassy of France won the men's category. British High Commission's Martine Sobey carded 47 Stableford points, which made her top the ladies' category. Both Florent and Martine went home with a flight ticket and a weekend stay at a golf resorts courtesy of Uganda Airlines and Lake Victoria Golf Resorts & Spa. 'Best Diplomat Score', which is a special prize reserved for diplomats, to ensure that at least one diplomat goes home with a prize, was recorded by Brian Neubert of the United States embassy.

Speaking on why the ministry decided to support The Diplomatic Games Week, Amb. Ben Okoyen, the Chief of Protocol at Ministry of Foreign Affairs — who performed ceremonial tee off on behalf of the Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Amb. Yusuf Maitama Tuggar — said that the event is one that the diplomatic community in Nigeria has been waiting for, as it provides prime opportunity for interaction and cooperation that can advance sports diplomacy between Nigeria and nations whose diplomatic missions she plays host to, and consequently contribute to sports development in Nigeria.

Sòókò Deji Ajomale-McWord, CEO of Diplomacy Publishing & Events — organizers of The Diplomatic Games Week and TTRC - The Trade Relations Cup™ — expressed joy over the zest with which the diplomatic community welcome the idea of a recreational convergence of the diplomatic community. "4 days into The Diplomatic Games Week, my phone was still ringing incessantly, from calls from different embassies. The acceptance is more than encouraging and it can only grow bigger from here", he said.



Nigeria's Special Economic Zones

Travails, Success Stories And The Future Ahead

With over 7000 free trade zones in over 145 economies, employing over 100 million people; Special Economic Zones (SEZ) have proven themselves very crucial to both developing and developed economies, because they serve as geographically designated area — within the given countries — where incentives like unencumbered and unambiguous regulations, tax breaks and better infrastructure are provided with the sole purpose of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), which in turn bolsters industrialization, creates jobs, encourages economic diversification and facilitates value added exports.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), these zones account for more than \$3.5 trillion in exports annually, contributing approximately 20% of global trade in goods. This underscores their fundamental role in global commerce and economic development.

Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), an economic reform program championed by Gen. Ibrahim Babangida in the 1980s promulgated acts that established Export Processing Zones and Free Trade Zones; which gave birth to authorities that regulate them.

As governments change across the world and trade dynamics shift, current realities are compelling many to rewrite trade policies, review tax policies and seek new trade alliances. Nigeria isn't sleeping on this. The country has kept itself busy in the last 8 months with its much talked about tax and industrial reforms.

From the first established FTZ — Calabar Free Trade Zone — in

1992, Nigeria now boasts of 20 FTZs including those near completion. According to the country's Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade & Investments; FTZs in Nigeria have attracted over \$300 billion in investments, contributed over N650 billion to government revenue, and created significant employment opportunities. International Finance Corporation recently announced a \$50 million equity investment in the Lagos Free Zone (LFZ). This investment is expected to create approximately 30,000 direct and indirect jobs.

In the bid to address challenges facing the FZE community in Nigeria; Nigeria Economic Zones Association, Oil & Gas Free Zones Authority of Nigeria and Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authority collaborated to create a conversational convergence among membership and ultimately the government, where better conditions vis-a-vis policy consistencies, infrastructure buoyancy, and relaxed bureaucracy are negotiated.

Now in its third year, Special Economic Zones Annual Meeting pooled stakeholders and administrators from around the country, to the economic capital of Nigeria — Lagos — under the theme 'Fostering Strategic Synergies for Enhanced Special Economic Zones Operations And Sustainable Economic Growth'.

The meeting also served as avenue for highlighting and celebrating the success stories of special economic zones in Nigeria. Chief Nabil M. Saleh, Chairman of NEZA remarked that SEZ scheme has driven industrialization in ways that were once unthinkable. "Consider the Lekki Quadrant, where transformative projects like the Dangote Refinery, Lekki Deep Sea Port, Eco Atlantic Free Zone, Lagos Free

Zone, Alaro city Free Zone are reshaping Lagos State into a global hub of industrial activity. These projects not only attract investment but also create thousands of jobs, setting a benchmark for integrated economic zones worldwide. The Oil and Gas Zones such as the Onne Oil and Gas Free Zone, Notore, Indorama, Bestaf, Snake Island Integrated Free Zone, and LADOL have become critical assets in supporting Nigeria's energy sector", he said.

According to the Minister of Industry, Trade & Investments, Dr. Olajumoke Oduwole, SEZs are important to the current administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu,





because “the ministry recognizes that every zone and enterprise is an investment hub, producing goods and services that are then traded”. Therefore, under this Administration, SEZs, properly

Top Facts On Nigeria’s SEZ Scheme

1986: The Babangida administration introduced the SAP

1991: The Nigerian Export Processing Zone Authority (NEPZA) was established

1992: The Nigerian Export Processing Zone Decree was promulgated

1996: The Oil and Gas Export Free Zone Decree was promulgated

1997: The Onne oil and gas free zone was established

2000: The Oil and Gas Free Zone Authority (OGFZA) began regulatory operations in Onne

2024: The Orashi Special Energy Oil and Gas Free Zone was established

achieve this by deploying strategic synergies among key concerned sectors in order to ensure fiscal, monetary, and trade policies alignment.

As home to 5 out of 9 unicorns in Africa, Nigeria which was declared Digital Trade Champion at the recently concluded 38th African Union Summit has established Presidential Committee on the Promotion and Establishment of Digital Special Economic Zones, which is “adapting existing SEZ regulations to drive local domiciliation of intellectual property; create highly skilled and high-paying jobs; foster an investment-friendly digital economy, and build future industries within Nigeria’s borders”.

While Oduwale commended the efforts of NEZA, she acknowledged the fact that — when compared to few other countries in Africa like Morocco — the special economic zones in Nigeria aren’t operating at their full potential. For context, Nigeria’s

- > **51 (2 public)** Special Economic Zones
- > **About \$5bn** in annual exports volume
- > **Over \$300bn** in investments
- > **Over \$600bn** in government revenue
- > **About 30,000** direct & indirect jobs

non-oil exports currently stand at below \$5bn annually, while Morocco records over \$40bn. There’s no gainsaying that one of the biggest usefulness of SEZ is exports and international trade. This explains the collaborative efforts across concerned government institutions to address inhibiting policies and regulations.

At a consultative session between Nigeria’s Ministry of Industry, Trade & Investments and stakeholders; multiple taxation, levies and bureaucracy was profusely decried by exporters, but watching events unfold reveals efforts to ensure SEZ in Nigeria get what they need to reach their full potentials.

One of such efforts are on taxation. The Chairman of the Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms, Taiwo Oyedele, while speaking at the meeting said that the initial plans of the tax reforms was to place up to 25 per cent taxes on Free Zone businesses exporting their goods to Nigeria’s Customs Territory while those exceeding this threshold pay tax on all their sales. But after much needed engagements with stakeholders, the proposed tax bill was reviewed to exempt 100 per cent of exporters from taxation, while those selling in Nigeria would be taxed only on domestic sales.

Governor Babatunde Sanwoolu represented by Honorable Commissioner of Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade & Investments, Folashade Ambrose-Medebem extolled the efforts of the organizers to keep the meeting going yearly, while highlighting the importance of the annual meeting to Nigerian economic development “the continuity of this annual meeting is essential to sustaining the progress we have made in advancing the Special Economic Zones agenda in Nigeria. Regular meeting engagement among stakeholders fosters policy consistency, strengthens investor confidence, and ensures that emerging challenges are swiftly addressed. By maintaining this platform, we can continuously evaluate our progress, share best practices, and introduce innovative solutions that will keep Nigeria’s SEZs competitive on the global stage. A sustained dialogue between government bodies, private sector players and international investors is key to driving long-term industrial growth and economic prosperity”, she added.

leveraged and repositioned, are being prioritized and will be at the heart of Nigeria’s economic resurgence”. The ministry intends to



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With a career spanning almost 2 decades, extensively decorated Nike Macaulay shattered ceilings and established herself among Africa's travel industry mavericks.

Take us through your journey in aviation and tourism?

I've spent over 15 years in the industry, passionate about promoting travel to and from Africa and leading teams to soar to new heights. Currently, I'm the CEO at Wakanow Nigeria Group, Africa's largest online travel company.

Before joining Wakanow, I made history as the first female and Nigerian to be appointed General Manager for Lufthansa Group in Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea where I led the teams in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and Malabo, driving all commercial and sales activities for Lufthansa Group in the region.

I also held various leadership roles across Sub-Saharan Africa in Lufthansa, where I honed my expertise and skills in various travel terrains.

Wakanow is regarded as the biggest deal in online travel agency. What mix brought the

brand thus far?

That's correct, we are regarded as the biggest deal in travel in Africa and its not by accident but a sheer combination of visionary founders, enabling investors, excellent management, trusting partners, a professional and dedicated team and superior tech capabilities have and continue to propel the brand forward;

- **Our Innovative Technology:** Our goal is to improve tourists' online booking experience by providing them with cutting-edge technology. Bookings for flights, hotels, holiday packages, and other travel-related services are all easily accessible through our user-friendly mobile app and website platforms.

- **Diverse Product Offering:** To meet the dynamic needs of our clients, we provide a wide range of travel-related products and services. From affordable flight options to luxury hotel accommodations, holiday packages, visa assistance, travel insurance, protocol and rides services; there is something

for everyone. We offer a one-stop shop for any needs pertaining to travel.

- **Strategic Partnerships:** Wakanow has forged strategic partnerships with airlines, hotels, tour operators, and other travel suppliers to offer competitive prices and exclusive deals to its customers. These partnerships enable us provide a wide selection of travel options at competitive rates, enhancing its value proposition in the market.
- **Customer-Centric Approach:** Exceptional customer service and fulfillment are very important to us. The organization is dedicated to providing its clients with fast support, personalised assistance, and easy booking process. By putting passengers' needs as well as preferences first, Wakanow has developed a loyal customer base and earned commendable reviews.
- **Market Expansion:** Wakanow has extended its reach beyond its home market in Nigeria to serve customers throughout Africa and beyond under the Wakanow Group structure, which includes Wakanow Nigeria Group. We have established our presence in Ghana, Gambia, Togo, Cameroon, Senegal, Benin, Dubai, and the United Kingdom, allowing it to tap into new customer segments and capitalize on growth opportunities while we continue our expansion plans to other continents.
- **Brand Recognition:** As a dependable and trustworthy travel partner, Wakanow has established a great brand reputation. Wakanow has become a household name in the travel sector and won the trust and devotion of millions of customers via focused marketing efforts, innovative partnerships, and consistent provision of high-quality services.
- **Innovative Marketing Strategies:** Wakanow uses cutting-edge marketing techniques to build its reputation and attract customers. Wakanow leverages a range of channels, including influencer relationships, sponsorships, social media campaigns, and digital marketing efforts, to connect with and engage its target audience.

Anything new from the stable of Wakanow?

Our major goal is to be accessible to our customers and for the Wakanow Nigeria Group, we will continue our expansion plans into different states and cities in Nigeria offering incredible travel deals and services to our customers. Today we have over 37 travel centers across 18 Cities in Nigeria and our goal is to plant our flags closer to our customers across all cities in Nigeria.

Also, taking into consideration the tough economy conditions, we are driving Wakanow's Social Impact initiatives directly through our CSR program 'WakaCares'; across the following four (4) key pillars anchored on SDG #5 and SDG #8: Local Economy growth, Gender Equity, Training Youth and Women empowerment and Access to finance; by partnering with both public and private sector institutions to train youth and women on creating economic value through travel with access to finance leveraging our PaySmallSmall product.

In your opinion, what's that attribute of a woman that makes her a natural at tourism and hospitality trade and why should there be more inclusion and diversity in the industry?

I'd like to state that there is no industry where women cannot thrive including the travel and tourism space, where there is a good level of inclusion and diversity from a gender perspective. The Honorable Minister of Tourism in Nigeria is a woman and most of the leading travel companies in Nigeria are led by women so women are very well represented in the travel and tourism

sector in Nigeria.

Whilst certain attributes are not only embodied by women, some attributes stand out as possible reasons women stand out in the tourism and hospitality trade:

Empathy and Compassion: Women often possess strong empathetic and compassionate qualities, which are invaluable in the tourism and hospitality industry. These qualities enable women to connect with guests on a deeper level, anticipate their needs, and provide personalized service that enhances their overall experience.

Effective Communication Skills: Women are often known for their strong communication skills, including active listening, verbal articulation, and non-verbal cues. These skills are essential for building rapport with guests, resolving conflicts, and effectively conveying information about services and amenities.

Attention to Detail: Women tend to have a keen eye for detail and a meticulous approach to tasks, which is crucial in the hospitality industry where the smallest details can make a big difference.



Whether its ensuring rooms are impeccably clean, table settings are perfect, or guest preferences are noted, attention to detail is key to delivering exceptional service.

Multitasking Abilities: Women often excel at multitasking, juggling multiple responsibilities and priorities simultaneously. In the fast-paced environment of tourism and hospitality, where demands can be unpredictable and varied, the ability to multitask efficiently is essential for managing guest needs and operational tasks effectively.

Cultural Sensitivity: Women often exhibit high levels of cultural sensitivity and awareness, which is invaluable in the diverse and multicultural context of the tourism industry. Understanding and respecting cultural differences allows women to interact respectfully with guests from various backgrounds and ensure their experiences are inclusive and welcoming.

As for why there should be more inclusion and diversity in the tourism and hospitality industry:

Representation: Increasing diversity in the industry ensures that a wide range of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences are represented, both among employees and in the services and products offered to guests. This enhances the industry's ability to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of travelers from around the world.

Innovation and Creativity: Diversity fosters innovation and creativity by bringing together individuals with different viewpoints, ideas, and approaches. Inclusive work environments encourage collaboration, problem-solving, and the exchange of innovative ideas, leading to the development of new products, services, and experiences that drive industry growth and competitiveness.

Employee Engagement and Satisfaction: Inclusive workplaces promote employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention by fostering a sense of belonging, respect, and appreciation among all employees. When employees feel valued and supported, they are more motivated, productive, and committed to delivering exceptional service to guests.

Community Impact: A diverse and inclusive tourism and hospitality industry has a positive impact on local communities by creating opportunities for employment, economic development, and cultural exchange. By hiring and supporting individuals from diverse backgrounds, the industry contributes to the social and economic well-being of communities worldwide.

Global Competitiveness: In an increasingly globalized world, diversity and inclusion are essential for maintaining competitiveness in the tourism and hospitality industry. Companies that embrace diversity are better positioned to attract top talent, appeal to diverse customer segments, and adapt to changing market dynamics, ultimately driving long-term success and sustainability.

Overall, promoting inclusion and diversity in the tourism and hospitality industry not only fosters a more welcoming and inclusive environment for guests but also enhances employee engagement, drives innovation, strengthens communities, and ensures the industry's continued relevance and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

In your opinion, are tourism and diplomacy interdependent?

Yes, tourism and diplomacy are interdependent in several ways.

Cultural Exchange: Tourism serves as a platform for cultural exchange between nations. When people travel to other countries, they experience different cultures, traditions, and ways of life firsthand. This cultural exchange fosters mutual understanding, appreciation, and respect between nations, which are essential elements of diplomatic relations.

People-to-People Diplomacy: Tourism facilitates people-to-people diplomacy by creating opportunities for individuals from different countries to interact and form personal connections. These interactions can lead to friendships, partnerships, and collaborations that transcend national borders, fostering goodwill and cooperation between nations.

Economic Diplomacy: Tourism plays a significant role in economic diplomacy by driving economic growth, creating jobs, and generating revenue for host countries. Strong tourism industries can strengthen diplomatic ties between nations through trade, investment, and business partnerships, contributing to mutual prosperity and development.

Diplomatic Initiatives: Diplomatic efforts often include tourism-related initiatives aimed at enhancing bilateral relations and promoting peace and stability. Countries may collaborate on tourism projects, cultural exchanges, and heritage preservation efforts as part of their diplomatic strategies to strengthen ties and promote mutual interests.

Soft Power: Tourism can be a powerful tool for projecting soft power and shaping international perceptions. Countries often use tourism initiatives to promote their cultural heritage, natural beauty, and tourist attractions to attract visitors from around the world. Positive experiences by tourists in a country can enhance its reputation and influence on the global stage, contributing to its diplomatic objectives.

Overall, tourism and diplomacy are closely intertwined, with tourism serving as a catalyst for cultural exchange, soft power projection, people-to-people diplomacy, economic cooperation, cross-cultural communication, and diplomatic initiatives, all of which contribute to building stronger and more resilient diplomatic relations between nations.

When 5pm clocks or the week ends, what is Nike's world like?

I would like to say I switch into mum and wife mode, but we all know the many hats are worn all together hence the constant balancing act. I, however, prioritize family time as much as is possible outside official business hours.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE ELECTION:

Robustly Laureled Elias Secures Nigeria's Endorsement for ICJ Judge Candidacy



Dr. Olufemi Elias, an erudite international law czar recently visited home to advance engagements on his International Court of Justice judge candidacy and this prophet was honored at home, as Nigeria through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs throws its weight behind Elias' aspiration to become the country's representative as a judge of ICJ.

This was made known by Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs for States – Amb. Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, who extolled Elias' exploits in the international law and United Nations ecosystem. Amb. Ojukwu assured him that Nigeria is solidly behind him and putting her money where her mouth is, on his candidacy in the ICJ elections taking place next year, even as she implores him to roll up his sleeves in preparations for securing justice on and for the continent.

According to her remarks, she believes that Nigeria is too important on the continent not to be represented in the ICJ project, therefore, a Nigerian of Elias' stature in the international ecosystem must be supported to sit on such important international table and advance the interest of not just Nigeria, but the entire continent.

"On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

whose officers have been your major campaigners, I congratulate you. Be rest assured that we will keep pushing until you get there and we have absolute confidence that not only will you make Nigeria proud, but also Africa. And you will leave your footprint on the global map. Be assured that between now and the election, we will keep pushing. The ICJ must be made fit-for-purpose. Seeing what is happening now with DRC and Rwanda, it means you have something already on your plate," Amb. Odumegwu-Ojukwu said.

A recipient of 2018 Honorary Member Award of the American Society of International Law for distinguished service to international law; Dr. Elias oozes of confidence in his ability to get the work that comes with the position done, because of his 25 years of hands-on experience in the international law system and having received the endorsement of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu; he implored the ministry to have his candidacy on its agenda at any given opportunity for briefing with the president.

Aside being son of Taslim Olawale Elias, the first African to be appointed as President of the International Court of Justice, who was later appointed to Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague; international civil

servant per excellence has served as he Executive Secretary of the World Bank Administrative Tribunal, Vice-Chairman of the Islamic Development Bank Administrative Tribunal, and Judge for Staff Appeals at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

His international system stints include service as the Registrar of the United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, with the rank of an Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations. The former law lecturer at the Universities of London, Buckingham and King's College, has also served as Legal Adviser of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. He was also legal adviser to Governing Council Secretariat of UN Compensation Commission. He later became Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary of the Commission.

The seasoned academic has taught international law at a number of prestigious institutions of higher education including Tufts University (Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy) the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and University of Amsterdam.



PEBEC Wins Big At

Given the season and its propensity for rain, It was a great day to golf, as golfers took to the course, at the high level, recreational, international trade engagement known as TTRC - The Trade Relations Cup™, which held in Ikoyi Club 1938. The golf tournament which was teed off ceremonially by Dr. Olajumoke Oduwole - now Honorable Minister of Industry, Trade & Investments, Mrs. Folashade Ambrose-Medebem - Honorable Commissioner for Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade & Investments and Mr. Zaya Kuyena - Economic & Commercial Counselor of Canadian Deputy High Commission; according to the organizers — is a celebration of bi- and multilateral trade and commercial cooperation among nations of the world, with focus on United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Targets 10,11 and 12).

The initiative garnered strategic partnership with Presidential Enabling Business Council, Lagos State Ministry of Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade & Investments and bilateral trade entities like European Business Chamber Nigeria, Franco-Nigeria Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Nigerian-American Chamber of Commerce, Delegation of German Industry & Commerce Nigeria and Friends of Ireland Nigeria. In her keynote address, Dr. Oduwole said that “The Trade Relations Cup serves as a vital platform for networking, knowledge sharing, and forging new partnerships. It is an opportunity for us to showcase Nigeria's progress and potential, while learning from the best practices of other nations. Our involvement in this event underscores our dedication to engaging with the global community, promoting trade, driving

economic prosperity”.

While delivering her goodwill message, Lagos State Honorable Commissioner for Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade & Investments - Mrs. Folashade Ambrose-Medebem - said “As its name connotes, The Trade Relations Cup, a recreational and diplomatic engagement initiative, is a laudable programme that should be supported by all, as it provides unique opportunity to facilitate investment opportunities, along with trade and commercial relations among participants, and by extension, between nations. I believe this is very innovative, strongly expressive and highly commendable”.

Guillaume NIARFEIX, President of Franco-Nigerian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in his note, gave FNCCI's reason



The Trade Relations Cup

for choosing to partner TTRC. He said “FNCCI is proud to be a partner on this significant event, alongside the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC, and other chambers of commerce. Our participation underscores our unwavering commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and fostering a dynamic environment for trade and investment between France and Nigeria”.

In the words of Yann Gilbert, President of Eurocham, “This prestigious event not only celebrates our shared passion for golf, but also underscores the importance of fostering strong trade relations between our business communities. I am confident that this tournament will serve as a fantastic opportunity to build and strengthen relationships, exchange ideas, and enjoy friendly competition. I encourage everyone

to take full advantage of this unique occasion to connect, network, and create lasting memories”.

CEO/MD of Diplomacy Publishing & Events — organizers of the event — Sòókò Deji Ajomale-McWord thanked the partners and sponsors, while explaining the rationale behind the event. “trade is an integral part of the reason for diplomacy and interaction among nations of the world. Trade in itself brings about peace and prosperity in our world. We can’t do without trade. Even while America and Russia were disagreeing over Ukraine, there was still some trading going on between them. After all said and done, no one has it all. There’s always something that this nation needs, which can only be found in that nation. That’s why we said to ourselves: why don’t we create a platform where nations can mix business with

pleasure, while we strive for cordiality and global Harmony? And so, we stumbled on the idea for The Trade Relations Cup. Actually it’s a gift from God, that we fleshed up”.

The duo of Olusegun Toba and Desmond Mathew who represented PEBEC, recorded 36 and 38 Stableford points respectively, to arrive at 74 combined Stableford points, which made them winners of the Trade Foursome competition in the bi-format tournament. Playing off handicap 3, Desmond Matthew recorded 1-over the course par of 71, which gave him 69 net and victory in the singles category of the tournament.

38th African Union Summit **Report**

46th Ordinary Session of Executive Council

46th Ordinary Session of The Executive Council

African Foreign Ministers Unite
For Continental Development

The 46th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union (AU) kicked off on February 12, 2025, at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The two-day meeting brought together foreign ministers from AU member states to emphasize the urgent need for enhanced efforts in promoting continental development, stability, and unity.

This year's theme, "Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations," set the tone for the discussions. Chairperson of the AU Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat addressed the meeting, stressing the importance of collective efforts in promoting peace and security across the continent. He highlighted the need for good governance, socioeconomic development, sustainable financing, and institutional reform of the AU.

Mahamat also emphasized the importance of enhancing Africa's position and unity on the global stage. Recent initiatives have strengthened

Africa's pursuit of continental integration, public health, and education, driven primarily by the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mahamat recognized Africa's increasing influence and presence on the global stage, citing strengthened positions on climate change, agriculture, and the blue economy.

However, he acknowledged that significant challenges and shortcomings still face the continent. Ongoing violent conflicts remain a pressing issue, particularly in Sudan and the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mahamat stressed the urgent need to tackle security threats, emphasizing that the situation is worrying, especially when multilateralism is facing new challenges.

He urged African foreign ministers to take action, saying, "We have to pull ourselves up, and we need to do it here and now." The executive council meeting aimed to elect six commissioners for the



AU Commission and review the draft agenda and decisions for the 38th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU.

Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gedion Timothewos emphasized the importance of strengthening both the AU and the global multilateral system. Timothewos highlighted that addressing critical issues such as climate change, pandemics, and security threats requires collaboration at both the continental and global levels. He stressed that multilateralism is both a choice and a necessity for Africa and the Global South.

Timothewos said, "We are confronting the reality of turbulent changes that are severely challenging multilateralism. For Africa and t

he rest of the Global South, multilateralism is both a choice and a necessity."

The meeting demonstrated the commitment of African foreign ministers to promoting continental development, stability, and unity. The AU's theme for the year 2025 serves as a reminder of the importance of addressing historical injustices and promoting justice for Africans and people of African descent.

As the African continent continues to face significant challenges, the importance of collective efforts in promoting peace, security, and development cannot be overstated. The 46th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the AU marked a crucial step towards achieving these goals.

High Level Engagement On Visa-Free Africa

As African leaders gather for the 38th African Union (AU) Summit, the call for a visa-free continent has taken center stage. The AUC and the African Development Bank (AfDB) have jointly urged African governments to accelerate the removal of visa restrictions that continue to hinder regional integration, trade, and economic development.

Speaking at the High-Level Strategic Dialogue on Accelerating Visa-Free Movement for Africa's Transformation, on 12 February, AU officials, policymakers, and business leaders highlighted the contradiction between Africa's regional integration goals and the reality that many Africans still need visas to travel across the continent.

"We cannot talk about a united Africa if Africans themselves cannot move freely within their own continent. It is time for our governments to evaluate what has worked and what has not worked," said Ambassador Albert Mudenda Muchanga, the African Union Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals. Visa restrictions remain one of the biggest barriers to intra-African trade, he added.

The Africa Visa Openness Index, a joint initiative by AfDB and the AUC, has consistently shown slow progress in easing travel restrictions, despite policy frameworks like the AU Free Movement Protocol and

Agenda 2063's vision of a borderless Africa. The ninth edition of the Index reveals that while some countries, such as Rwanda, The Gambia, Seychelles, Benin, and Ghana, have embraced visa-free policies, many others remain restrictive. "The vision of an integrated Africa will not happen by chance. It requires bold leadership and collective commitment to dismantle visa barriers," noted Nnenna Nwabufu, Vice President for Regional Development, Integration, and Business Delivery at AfDB.

With over 50% of African nations requiring visas for most Africans, restricted mobility hampers labor migration, business and trade, skills, and innovation, slowing development. "If we truly believe in the AfCFTA, then free movement must be the backbone of our integration. We must align trade facilitation with mobility—because goods do not move themselves; people move them," said Mr. Prudence Sebahizi, Rwanda's Minister of Trade and Industry.

With momentum building for change, the AU and AfDB announced the launch of the 2025 Visa-Free Roadshow, a campaign designed to engage policymakers, businesses, and civil society in accelerating visa liberalization efforts across the continent. The initiative aims to showcase success stories, highlight economic benefits, and push for political commitments to break down travel barriers. As the AU Summit progresses, the push for visa-free movement is expected to remain a critical topic, with leaders being reminded to align policy commitments with concrete action. The AU's call is clear: Let the people move, and Africa will prosper.



Agenda 2063

African Leaders Unite To Mobilize African Investments And Financing

Press Release

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, February 27, 2025/ -- On the sidelines of the 38th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, African Heads of State, Government and Business Leaders convened for a Presidential Breakfast Dialogue to address the continent's financing and investment gaps. The event was held under the theme "Africa at the Forefront: Mobilizing African Investment and Financing for Implementing Agenda 2063".

The dialogue, which was hosted by His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana and Champion on African Union Financial Institutions, in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Alliance of African Multilateral Financial Institutions (AAMFI), reaffirmed the continent's commitment to accelerating self-reliant, sustainable economic development.

In his keynote address, President Mahama emphasized the urgency of strengthening Africa's financial independence through domestic resource mobilization, concessional financing, and strategic public-private partnerships. "Africa must harness its own financial and investment capacities to drive the transformative vision of Agenda 2063. We cannot continue to rely on external financing mechanisms that do not align with our long-term development goals," he stated.

Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General,



World Trade Organization (WTO) emphasized the need for Africans to take charge of their own development by shifting mindsets and strengthening financial self-sufficiency. She Said, "The Africa Club is a crucial step toward looking inward and harnessing our own potential. However, we need to focus on four key priorities for Africa's financial and economic transformation: Firstly, strengthening African financial institutions - If we are to finance our continent's development, we must capitalize our own financial institutions, including national development banks, ensuring they have the resources to support Africa's needs.

Secondly, let's address debt challenges to attract investment - we must focus on attracting and retaining investment, including foreign direct investment (FDI), and implementing coordinated strategies to leverage equity financing. Instead of relying on aid, Africa should push for partnerships that channel financial resources into investments. Thirdly, let's leverage domestic resources - with over \$250 billion in pension funds on the continent, we must tap into these resources for development. Strengthening our capital markets, integrating African financial institutions, and utilizing diaspora bonds can significantly boost Africa's financial resilience. Lastly, let's drive trade and economic growth - sustainable financing hinges on Africa's ability to grow its economies, trade more, and add value to its products. Without economic expansion, the resources needed to bridge financing gaps will remain out of reach."

Speaking during the dialogue, H.E. Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, highlighted Africa's immense

potential and the critical role of collaboration. "This is an exciting time for Africa, which has been stretching and renewing itself economically, politically, and socially in recent years. Only the grumpiest pessimists will bet against this new era of 'Africa Time' for its economic and social transformation as envisioned under Agenda 2063."

Dr. Nsanzabaganwa urged investors to seize the opportunities within Africa's evolving economic landscape. "You will be right to have faith and believe in investing in Africa. The continent is perceived as the 'new frontier,' the 'future paradise' that sharpens a race to markets by an increasing number of investors."

Speaking on behalf of AAMFI, Prof. Benedict O. Oramah, Chairperson of AAMFI's Governing Council and President of Afreximbank, underscored the significance of African financial institutions leading the charge in development finance. "AAMFI represents Africa's collective financial strength, and through coordinated action, we will mobilize resources at scale to achieve Agenda 2063," he stated.

He further emphasized Africa's need for financial solidarity in debt resolution: "We have developed a platform that will make it possible to jointly invest in projects that are impactful to the continent. There is no reason why the bridge across Congo Brazzaville and Congo Kinshasa should not be built, the cost is a mere US\$500 million; there is no reason why railways cannot be built across Africa, at best they cost about US\$1-2Bn. We cannot call for a reform of the international financial architecture on weak legs, no one will listen to us if they view us as mere beggars. We must rely on our own institutions and use this platform to leverage our individual and collective

resources to transform our continent. Let's strengthen our alliance to meet our set objectives."

The dialogue featured a high-level panel of distinguished leaders and finance experts, including: Dr. Donald Kaberuka, African Union (AU) High Representative for Financing of the Union and the Peace Fund; Samaila Zubairu, 1st Vice Chairperson, AAMFI and President & CEO of Africa Finance Corporation (AFC); Dr. Corneille Karekezi, 2nd Vice Chairperson AAMFI and Group Managing Director & CEO, African Reinsurance Corporation; Ahunna Eziakonwa, Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Africa, UNDP; and H.E. Amb. Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry, and Minerals, African Union Commission.

Discussions centered on innovative strategies for mobilizing African capital, strengthening financial institutions, and leveraging the role of African Multilateral Financial Institutions (AMFIs) in financing critical development sectors such as infrastructure, industrialization, and trade. The event also witnessed special investment announcements:

- African Trade Transformation Fund (ATTF), a groundbreaking USD5 billion concessional finance window initiative by Afreximbank to provide concessional financing to unlock new opportunities for African businesses and governments.

- Shelter Afrique Development Bank (ShafDB) introduced the Catalytic Capital Replenishment Fund to bridge the housing and urban infrastructure gap in Africa which is reported to be a 53-million-unit deficit requiring \$1.3 trillion to bridge.
- The African Reinsurance Corporation (Africa Re) Group has pledged \$1 million to the African Union Peace Fund. Additionally,

the Corporation donated \$500,000 to the Africa CDC during the COVID-19 pandemic and has now authorized the use of the balance for Mpox response efforts. The Group Managing Director further stated that Africa Re has committed 2% of its net profits to the African Re Foundation, which will allocate funds to support various initiatives across the continent, including disaster risk financing.

- The African Solidarity Fund (ASF) established two key partnerships: a \$320 million Guarantee Line to enhance access to housing credit and a \$240 million Credit Line Guarantee to support women and youth empowerment, fostering entrepreneurship in the WAEMU.

• Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) launched a Debt for Equity initiative to support the capitalization of African Multilateral Financial Institutions by mobilizing resources from the Arab world towards sub-Saharan Africa. African Heads of State & Government, including leaders from Angola, Nigeria, Mauritania, Rwanda, Zambia, Libya, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, and Equatorial Guinea, reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening Africa's financial ecosystem and supporting the growth of AAMFIs as key instruments of economic transformation.

The event concluded with a unified call to action for African governments, financial institutions, and the private sector to strengthen coordination and build strategic partnerships to accelerate Africa's development by His Excellency Ambassador Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry at the African Union Commission.

Top Quotes from 38th AU Summit



We send 80% of our cottons outside, when we can transform them here and wear beautiful clothes. I am challenging everyone. Let's be the change we are looking for.

— Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, DG World Trade Organization



The renewable revolution is unstoppable and Africa is poised to become global clean energy powerhouse. Yet, today, Africa receives less than 2% of global renewable energies investments.

— António Guterres, UN Secretary General



I stand here conscious and motivated by the dreams and works of the great pan-African pioneers. I'm conscious that, as children of the Caribbean, we have long dreamt for the moment of unity with our brothers and sisters in Africa, a division that was secured by those whose success and survival depended on separation of us, rather than the ability for us to act as one common people.

— Mia Motley, Prime Minister of Barbados



We cannot call for a reform of the international financial architecture on weak legs, no one will listen to us if they view us as mere beggars. We must rely on our own institutions and use this platform to leverage our individual and collective resources to transform our continent. Let's strengthen our alliance to meet our set objectives.

— Benedict O. Oramah, President of Afreximbank



NiDCOM Celebrates Five Years of Service And Counts Its Blessings

The Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) has marked its fifth anniversary, celebrating significant achievements in serving Nigerians in the diaspora. According to Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, Chairman/CEO of NiDCOM, the Commission has treated over 1000 petitions from Nigerians abroad, ranging from emergencies to deportation issues.

Dabiri-Erewa reflected on the Commission's performance and contributions to Nigeria's development over the past five years. She expressed gratitude for the progress made since NiDCOM's inception in May 2019. The Chairman also lauded the NiDCOM team, past and present, for their commitment and sacrifices.

NiDCOM has also recorded significant successes in attracting diaspora investments to Nigeria. The Commission has worked tirelessly to promote Nigeria's positive image abroad and protect the interests of Nigerians in the diaspora. Dr. Sule Yakubu Bassi, Secretary to the Commission, highlighted the staff's pivotal role in fostering diaspora engagement and attracting investment.

The anniversary celebration provided an opportunity for NiDCOM to recognize the outstanding contributions of its staff. Awards and prizes were presented to deserving staff members, acknowledging their hard work and dedication to the Commission's success. Despite facing challenges, NiDCOM remains committed to delivering effective services to Nigerians in the diaspora. The Commission is poised to build on its achievements over the past five years, envisioning a brighter future for Nigeria and its citizens abroad.

As NiDCOM looks to the future, it is clear that the Commission has made significant strides in serving Nigerians in the diaspora. With its commitment to excellence and dedication to its mandate, NiDCOM is well-positioned to continue making a positive impact on the lives of Nigerians abroad.

The anniversary celebration marked a significant milestone in NiDCOM's history, and the Commission is poised to continue building on its achievements in the years to come.



Akufo-Addo Welcomes Third Batch of People of African Descent As Ghanaian Citizens

It was a much awaited moment of reconnection between Africa and her diaspora when President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo granted 524 African-Americans Ghanaian citizenship, in a grand ceremony that took place in Accra. The occasion was in advancement of Ghana's 'Year of Return', a campaign aimed at encouraging people of African descent to visit and invest. The campaign metamorphosed into 'Beyond The Return' – an attempt to get African-Americans and others diasporans in the Americas to live in and contribute to Ghana's socio-economic development, while discovering and identifying with their roots.

It was also in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of first enslaved Africans in the Americas. The campaign saw thousands of African-Americans visit Ghana. Notable among the African-Americans that visited Ghana as a result of the campaign were Steve Harvey, Stevie Wonder, Naomi Campbell, Cardi B etc.

This is regarded as a strategic move to reverse the brain drain that Africa has experienced for hundreds of years, even long after official abolishment of slavery. As many of Africa's finest brains continually get voluntarily shipped (in search of greener pasture) to western nations where their talents get harvested, it is wise to lure the descendants of Africans who were involuntarily shipped out, to return home with their experience, expertise and wealth. With diaspora's remittances valued in the region of billions of dollars; this move ticks all the right boxes.

"We embrace you as our own, as fellow citizens of this nation and as part of Ghanaian family. Today, as we grant you citizenship, we welcome you not just as citizens, but as Ghanaians – fully and forever", President Akufo-Addo said, as the third batch of people of African descent take their oath of citizenship.

The diasporans granted citizenship expressed immense joy, many not being able to hold back tears, as they considered the historic moment an opportunity to journey towards healing from the legacies of colonialism and slavery. One of them considered her new Ghanaian passport an homage to the memory of her ancestors, whose dying wish was to make it back home, but never did.

Multipolarity Of Our World And The Foreign Policy That'd Take Africa Further



Sòókò Deji Ajomale-McWord

In 1931, Japan invaded China's province of Manchuria and took control of its resources and territory. By 1937, China had had a problem with Japan's expansionist policy targeted at its resources. This eventually led to resistance and war. American merchants having eyed China's resources like tea, porcelain, and silk, since America's independence, and of course because of the strategic importance of a military base in China, to gain air supremacy over the skies of Free China; America threw its resources and weight behind China against Japan. In the aftermath, The United States forged military alliance with China and went as far as considering the nation as one of the 4 'Policemen of the World' alongside Britain, Soviet Union, America.

The table turned. When President Donald Trump assumed office in 2018, he increased tariffs on imports from China, which led to trade war between one-time allies. The departure of President Trump didn't reverse the increment in tariffs, as President Biden maintained it. Even while still waiting to be sworn in, for a second term in office; President Trump declared fresh tariffs on imports from China, thereby deepening the trade war.

On the 10th of this very month of December, 2024, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Japan's Minister of Defense Gen. Nakatani had a bilateral meeting in Japan, with the goal of exploring avenues for military cooperation to deal with conflicts in the region — the same Japan that The United States

went ruthless on, by wiping off more than 120,000 people with two atomic bombs detonated in Hiroshima, August 1945, as reprisal for Japan's attack on American military personnel at Pearl Harbor.

This background establishes the fact that there are no such thing as allies. There are only two or more nations who have an understanding/agreement over a thing or two and remain cordial over it, for as long as the handshake serves mutual (sometimes lopsided) interest.

May I also add that there was momentarily a US-Soviet Alliance 1941-1945? Everyone knows what relation has recently been like between Russia and America.

There's often a place for fair weather friendship in these relations, let's face it. Away from all the niceties and lofty rhetoric, diplomacy is a game of interests and sometimes geopolitical convenience. In a world where advantage is a weapon, negotiation cannot be a game of fairness.

Short Zacchaeus cannot afford not to be the first to get to the crusade ground and find himself a vantage point on the oak tree, where the messiah may notice him in the midst of 'tall multitudes'. In other words, in a world where advantage is a weapon, if you aren't any of the powers, your foreign policy must be audaciously strategic.

The global north needs to thoroughly

consider this. More than ever, multipolarity is gaining grounds and presenting the bold a chance to journey towards self-actualization. G20 as a powerful forum for global economic cooperation has shown itself as a force of no mean stature, given that its members:

- Represent around 60% of the world's population.
- Represent around 80% of global GDP.
- Represent around 75% of global exports.

Now, at least 7 of the G20 members are also members of BRICS. In fact, a BRICS member recently took over the mantle of leadership at the G20. The protectionist policies of President Trump will certainly deepen and popularize more bilateral and multilateral blocs. These blocs will increase the number of oceans to fish from and more than ever, Africa needs multiple nets to secure her catch.

This is a time to act out the words of former President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria "I am for everybody. I am for nobody", because even staunch globalists have moments when they say 'me first'. And Africa must remember that she has never truly benefitted from inheriting anyone's enemies.

More than ever, these are times to fearlessly hone our advantages, take an unwavering stance and shake hands with everyone who extends a hand of cooperation and exchange, with every deal thoroughly scrutinized for implications hiding in plain sight.

This is how we must approach foreign policy, going forward.



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G20 South Africa 2025 Leadership Rallying The World Behind Critical Global Issues

For the first time in history, the leadership of the G20 nations will converge on the African soil, precisely Madiba's country, come November 2025. It is in preparations for this that foreign ministers of G20 member (with the exception of the United States) and guest states gathered in South Africa's Johannesburg, as they mull over next frontier in international cooperation on matters most pressing to our world, especially as affects the global south — issues like impact of climate change, conflicts/war, digital trade, sustainable development, transition to green energy, geopolitical tensions, and others that may threaten peaceful coexistence of nations.

The G20 represents more than two-thirds of the world's population and about 80% of global GDP. It is made up of some of the world's major economies, the European Union and African Union. As the world looks at 2030, the deadline of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, a distance only five years away and given the might and weight of member nations of the G20 who constitute two-third of the world's population, all of whom are signatory to The Goals; it becomes expedient to achieve and deepen consensus on matters of extreme poverty and inequalities of different nature. It is on these issues that South Africa puts itself forward as the 2025 leadership, to be the

voice of conscience and reasoning for solidarity on common challenges.

This is the tone set for the conversations to come, as South Africa's President Ramaphosa opened the G20 foreign ministers summit. His speech reveals how broken multilateralism seem to be a global problem, as it becomes increasingly difficult to get nations (especially the global north) to place their cards on the table of global cooperation on issues plaguing the world. Ramaphosa said that South Africa will like its 2025 leadership of G20 to be remembered as one where all voices are heard and all views count, as the global economic cooperation alliance reflects the hopes and aspirations of everyone who calls our planet home. He called for a review of the architecture of the United Nations to meet the current needs and nature of the world which has since experienced a shift.

Ramaphosa emphasized the need for international security and financial architecture to undergo reforms that'd make them fit for purpose and the time that we live in, especially as the "The UN must change accordingly. We continue to call for the UN Security Council, the multilateral trading system and the international financial architecture to be reformed to make them more

representative, more agile and more responsive to today's global realities." As the G20, it is critical that the principles of the UN Charter, multilateralism and international law remain at the centre of all our endeavors," the President asserted.

He dwelt substantially on the state of world climate and emphasized on the need to address the challenges from a common front "Last year temperature exceeded 1.5 degrees Celsius. This underscores the fact

that climate change is no longer a threat, but a catastrophe that must be addressed with collaborative efforts. The impact of the climate change places unjust burden on poorest of nations ", he submitted.

Ramaphosa decried how the war between Russia and Ukraine, the conflicts raging in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Sudan and in the Sahel continue to inflict high human toll, as South Africa welcomes the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Gaza. He added that His G20 leadership encourages diplomatic solutions to conflicts and humanitarian crises.

The foreign ministers meeting was followed by the meeting of G20 Finance Ministers, where deadlock and boycott was the order of the day. In the city of Cape Town, the 2-day meeting which was convened to address climate, debt and inequality was boycotted notably by the U.S., China, Japan, India and Canada. This makes one wonder if global multilateral cooperation isn't a mere geopolitical convenience masked by niceties of diplomacy. Think about it. The three key topics of discussion set before the congregating finance ministers are issues that impact mostly the global south.

CARICOM Development Fund & Afreximbank Sign Agreement to Establish Sustainability Facility

Press Release

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, February 27, 2025/ – The CARICOM Development Fund (CDF) and African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) have signed a €708,000 Grant Agreement to support the development of a Green, Resilience, and Sustainability Facility (GRSF). The agreement was formalized during the plenary session of the 48th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, recently held at the Wyndham Grand Barbados Sam Lord's Castle. The GRSF's commitment to providing blended financing, concessional financing, and other commercial funding options directly supports CARICOM's development by enhancing regional resilience, sustainability, and economic adaptability.

By offering flexible financial solutions, the fund empowers CARICOM member states to invest in critical infrastructure, climate adaptation projects, and sustainable development initiatives. This strategic approach aligns with CARICOM's vision for a more resilient and self-sufficient region, ensuring long-term growth while mitigating environmental and economic vulnerabilities.

Mr. Rodinald Soomer, CEO at the CARICOM Development Fund emphasized the importance of the partnership in advancing the Caribbean's sustainability agenda. "This grant from Afreximbank will enable the CDF to strengthen its support for CARICOM Member States as they navigate the pressing environmental and economic challenges of our time. The Green, Resilience, and Sustainability Facility is a critical step towards ensuring long-term resilience and economic sustainability."

On his part, Prof Benedict Oramah, President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Afreximbank, remarked that: "GRSF will provide a means of catalyzing and mobilizing investments to support Caribbean countries that are facing economic and fiscal challenges arising from the impact of frequent and intense adverse weather phenomena associated with climate change. It will also act as a mechanism to finance climate-related loss and damage and

build resilience that will mitigate impacts and empower Caribbean Community member states to withstand these challenges, working towards closing the regions US\$20 billion resilience financing shortfall."

Afreximbank and the CDF solidified their strategic partnership in August 2023 through a Memorandum of Understanding and the CDF's acquisition of shares in the multilateral development Bank, demonstrating a mutual commitment to future collaboration.

The grant agreement was signed at the 48th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM which brought together regional leaders to discuss pressing issues, including economic recovery, climate action, and sustainable development. The signing of the Grant Agreement marks a significant milestone in strengthening regional and international cooperation for sustainable growth. The CDF recognizes that as the region's development challenges become more complex, many can best be solved through market-based solutions.

CDF's Financial Innovation team is working to expand collaboration with various sectors and establish pioneering approaches that catalyze investments within disadvantaged countries, regions, sectors, and communities. Increasingly, investors and businesses are looking at emerging markets for new opportunities. However, investing in these markets is complex, and the CDF has an important role to play in mobilising investment into high-impact areas. Encouraging these investments requires new forms of collaboration. The CDF has engaged with several partners to collaborate in delivering its mandate since inception.

Most recently, it also partnered with the USAID in the delivery of the Caribbean Community Resilience Fund (CCRF), a blended finance fund aimed at mobilizing capital from commercial, development finance institutions, and impact investors towards climate resilience and economic sustainability in the Caribbean region.

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