

Is Africa ready?

"We will continue to increase assistance to Africa and cut debts owed by African countries as our ability permits," Chinese President Hu Jintao said on 16th February in Dar es Salaam. "We will expand trade and investment and strengthen practical cooperation with Africa."

China evidently sees Africa as part of its own economic stimulus plan. China is already Africa's second biggest trading partner: \$106 billion in 2008, up from \$10 billion in 2000, according to its Ministry of Commerce.

Do western countries see Africa the same way? On 14th February, G7 Ministers of Finance issued a communiqué after their meeting in Rome stressing the need to support emerging and developing countries' access to credit and trade financing and resume private capital flows. The G7 "is committed to explore urgently ways, including through multilateral development banks, to enhance this support."

As the effect of the economic downturn on Africa becomes more evident, including on revenues, jobs, nutrition, health, child survival, school attendance and poverty levels, this 'exploration' needs to happen immediately.

Both newer and more traditional partners should work together on an 'Africa-friendly' coordinated global stimulus plan, involving responsible investment, credit provision, well targeted aid, and timely support for the worst affected. Africa can take the lead by making a compelling case.

As industrialized countries are distracted by their own problems, the G20 London meeting in April provides the next opportunity to get attention and momentum. Is Africa ready?



The Daily Nation, Kenya 5 February 2009

News Overview

On Saturday the **Group of Seven finance ministers** met in Rome and [pledged to avoid resorting to protectionism](#) as they try to stimulate their own economies in the face of the economic crisis. The meeting concluded with the release of a [communiqué](#)

In **Zimbabwe**, the MDC national treasurer Roy Bennett is expected to appear before a Mutare magistrates' court today on allegations of attempting to commit acts of insurgency, banditry, sabotage and terrorism.

In **Madagascar** over 40,000 people braved a cyclone last week to gather in the capital to show support for President Marc Ravalomanana. This was in reaction to the anti-government protests the week before, led by the sacked mayor, Andry Rajoelina, which drew 5,000 people. Mr Rajoelina has declared himself president and announced his cabinet. Over a hundred people have died in protests amid the bitter power struggle between the two men.

South African President Kgalema Motlanthe has announced that the **South African Elections** will be held on 22 April. Jacob Zuma, president of the powerful ANC and widely expected to become the country's next president, is scheduled to face corruption proceedings four months after the vote. On Sunday, [Nelson Mandela](#) made a surprise appearance at a campaign rally for Mr. Zuma.

Kenya's government has delayed a parliamentary vote on the creation of a tribunal to try those implicated in the 2008 post-election violence. The court should begin hearings by 1 March, or a sealed list of suspects is to be handed over to the ICC. Meanwhile the UN special rapporteur on extra-judicial killings, Philip Alston, has begun a 10-day visit to Kenya.

Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke has been chosen to be **Somalia's** new prime minister by President Sheik Sharif Sheik Ahmed.

A camp to accommodate thousands of Somalis fleeing violence in their country is to be set up in south-eastern Ethiopia. An estimated 10,000 asylum-seekers have arrived at the border town of Dolo Ado since the beginning of the year, according to Save the Children and UNHCR.

Algerian President Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika is said to seek a third term in elections in April in which he is expected to face only weak competition. The 71 year old Bouteflika told a rally of about 6,000 in the capital, Algiers, that he'd received appeals from throughout the country to run again, which he described as his "moral duty".

A two-day conference on ['African Agriculture in the 21st Century: Meeting the Challenges, making a sustainable Green Revolution'](#) was held on 9-10 February in Namibia's capital, Windhoek. Ministers of Agriculture and related ministries from the continent supported the calls for an African Green Revolution to help boost agricultural productivity, food production and food security.

Featured Quotes

“It is your decision to respond to the call for unity, to push Africa forward towards the United States of Africa... I hope my term will be a time of serious work and not just words

Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, Libyan Leader, giving his inaugural speech as chair of the African Union

Au Secours, Kaddafi arrive!

Front cover of Jeune Afrique 8 Feb 2009

On the blogs

[Mail and Guardian's Thought Leader \(South Africa\): United States of Africa? Not likely, 3 February 2009](#)

Michael Trapido writes that "in essence before anyone starts thinking of a United States of Africa best the AU and regional bodies start to introduce a set of standards that everyone complies with. The individual countries in turn start to demonstrate stability ... Dumping 53 problems together doesn't give strength it just makes a huge mess out of lots of little messes".

[GEG Blog: What Africa needs from the G20, 2 February 2009](#)

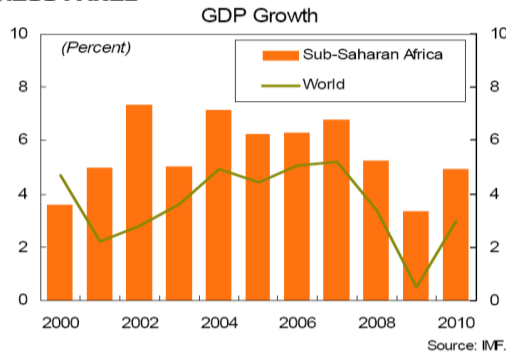
Ngaire Woods, Director of the Global Economic Governance Programme, University of Oxford, writes that "when the G20 meet in April the needs of African countries should be high on their agenda. The G20 have promised "comprehensively to reform the Bretton Woods institutions". The risk is that the powerful wealthy countries focussed on managing their own economic crises, will ignore the need to make the IMF and World Bank more responsive and supportive of African countries who are also weathering this crisis".

[Council on Foreign Relations: Davos, the Poor, and the Crash of '08, 9 February 2009](#)

Commenting on the outcomes of the Davos forum, Laurie A. Garrett, Senior Fellow for Global Health, writes that "given Italy's example, it is tempting to conclude that Rwanda's Kagame is correct - the wealthy will use the economic catastrophe as an excuse to cut aid ... if the world takes a nosedive into a depression, political leaders in Washington, London, Moscow, and Tokyo will face tough sells trying to convince their voters that it is vital to spend money feeding starving masses abroad".

APP Activities

On 5 February **Tony Blair** met President Obama at the 57th **National Prayer Breakfast** – an annual event held in Washington DC, gathering social, political and business leaders from all over the world. In doing so, Mr. Blair became one of the first senior European politicians to meet President Obama since his inauguration ◊ **Peter Eigen**, chaired the EITI Global Conference on "Establishing Resource Transparency" held in Doha, Qatar from 16-18 February 2009 ◊ The Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General, **Olusegun Obasanjo**, who is currently facilitating peace talks between the government of DRC and CNDP rebels was in the country to present a progress report on talks to President Kagame on 12 February ◊



Presentation: [The Global Crisis and Sub-Saharan Africa](#), by IMF African Department Director Antoinette Sayeh, 4 February 2009

G20 Update

Social Sectors

[UK – At the Geneva Health Summit Ivan Lewis highlighted the UK's commitment to supporting developing countries' health systems](#)

Financial Flows

[GERMANY - The German Development Ministry and the World Bank have launched a US\\$500 million scheme to help institutions facing difficulties in the current financial crisis](#)

[CHINA - China's Hu Pledges to Boost Aid, Trade with African Nations](#)

Politics

[ITALY – Foreign Minister Frattini visited Nigeria, Senegal, Angola and Sierra Leone](#)

[USA - President Obama has appointed Samantha Power, author of the influential work on the Rwandan genocide, 'A Problem from Hell', as a senior director at the National Security Council](#)

[GERMANY - Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier welcomes the appointment of Morgan Tsvangirai](#)

[JAPAN – Japan congratulates Mr. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi, Leader of Libya, on his inauguration as chairperson of the AU](#)

Economic Growth

[GERMANY - PRESS RELEASE: Joint statement on the global economic crisis by Chancellor Angela Merkel, OECD Secretary-General, WTO Director-General, ILO Director-General, IMF Managing Director and World Bank President](#)

[CHINA - Chinese President Hu Jintao embarked on a four-nation tour of Africa \(Mali, Senegal, Tanzania and Mauritius\) aimed at boosting China's image on a continent](#)

Opinions

[Joy Online \(Ghana\): Many Regional Blocs Delaying African Unity, 11 February 2009](#)

Mr. Alieu Jeng, Resident Representative of the African Development Bank said the regional economic blocs on the African continent were a major problem hindering regional integration.

[TIME: Muammar Gaddafi Shakes Up Africa, 10 February 2009](#)

Commenting on Muammar Gaddafi's vision of a United States of Africa, Time correspondent Alex Perry writes that "his idea of a United States of Africa may be far-fetched, given the poor governance and outright conflict that blights many of Africa's far smaller nation-states. But few would have believed at the end of World War II that Europe would converge in a union within a quarter-century".

[Business Daily \(South Africa\): Africa in dire need of strategic leadership, 6 February 2009](#)

Commenting on the election of Muammar Gaddafi as chairman of the African Union, journalist Sam Makinda writes that "the success of the AU, and particularly its capacity to utilize globalization forces and good governance principles and norms, depends on the availability of strategic leaders ... Unfortunately, Gaddafi does not fit the definition of a strategic leader.

[Washington Post \(USA\): Zimbabwe's False Hope - South Africa demands that the West aid a 'unity' government under Robert Mugabe. How to answer? 5 February 2009](#)

A leader in the Washington Post states that "South Africa has won a round in its relentless campaign to preserve Robert Mugabe's hold over a dying Zimbabwe".

[The National \(United Arab Emirates\): The World Must Not Forget Africa during this Crisis, 10 February 2009](#)

A commentary by Dominique Strauss-Khan, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund.

[Business Day \(South Africa\): Obama needs to choose his African battles with care, 9 February 2009](#)

Phillip van Niekerk, managing director of G3, the Good Governance Group (a risk assessment company based in Washington that focuses on the investment environment in Africa, the Middle East, and Russia) states that "in line with his long-term strategic thinking for the 21st century, Obama should also start a strategic dialogue with China aimed at creating a partnership to bring about a more rule-based international order, which China has a clear interest and an already declared desire to promote."

[Reuters: INTERVIEW-Global crisis an opportunity for Africa, 5 February 2009](#)

In an interview with Mathew Tostevin from Reuters, former World Bank economist Dambisa Moyo said that "in a way the crisis actually provides the African governments with the situation where they cannot rely on aid budgets coming through from the West ... there is a real opportunity for policymakers to focus on coming up with more innovative ways of financing economic development".

Multilateral Organizations

African Union

[Final Communiqué from the 12th Ordinary Summit of the AU Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa](#)

[The AU has urged the ICC to suspend its plans to indict Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for war crimes in the Darfur conflict](#)

AfDB

[The AfDB wants to triple its lending facilities for African countries hit by the financial crisis](#)

World Bank

[The World Bank's Board of Governors has approved a first phase of reforms to increase the influence of developing countries within the World Bank Group, including adding a seat for sub-Saharan Africa](#)

[Crisis Hitting Poor Hard in Developing World, World Bank says](#)

[MIGA, the political risk insurance arm of the World Bank Group, has announced that it is helping to facilitate up to \\$150 million of investments to small businesses in sub-Saharan Africa](#)

UN

[UNCTAD Secretary-General, Supachai Panitchpakdi said UNCTAD's work on commodities this year will have to address the food security crisis](#)

[On Red Hand Day Ban Ki-moon pledged to "Stamp Out" the use of child soldiers](#)

[UN's World Economic Situation & Prospects 2009 report has found that most African countries are ill-prepared to handle the food crisis](#)

[The new Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibés has launched the report "What countries need: Investments needed for 2010 targets", calling for funding to fill a gap of US\\$11.3 billion](#)

Geneva Health Summit

[At the Geneva Health Summit, NGOs, health ministers, and international institutions appealed to aid donors to follow through on their foreign aid commitments for health during the crisis](#)

Calendar

16-20 Feb	25 th Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. Nairobi, Kenya
19 Feb	International NGO meeting on climate change. Copenhagen, Denmark
20-21 Feb	Sustainable Capitalism: Finance, Commodities & the Common Good: conference organized by the Aspen Institute. Rome, Italy
23-25 Feb	G77 Ministerial forum on water. Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

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