

Introducing the APPG for Africa

- I. This submission has been prepared by Henrietta Bailey of the Royal African Society on behalf of the members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Africa. The Royal African Society provides the secretariat to the APPG.
- II. The APPG for Africa was established in 2009 and exists to facilitate mutually beneficial relationships between Africa and the UK and works to further understanding within UK parliament of contemporary African and Pan-African matters. The APPG creates space for parliamentarians to engage in dialogue with African diaspora, civil society, institutions, thought leaders and private sector to promote African led-development agendas and challenge outdated stereotypes through positive relationships between the UK and African countries. With a membership of over 200 parliamentarians from across-parties and houses, it is one of the largest and most active APPGs in UK parliament. The group is chaired by Chi Onwurah MP & Lord David Chidgey.

Executive summary

- III. This submission draws on recent policy reports and independent inquiries of the APPG for Africa as well as reflections from parliamentarians, civil society, academics and officials that we have engaged with at various meetings. It also draws on elements of the APPG's written submission to the House of Commons parallel inquiry into HMG's New Strategic Approach to Africa.
- IV. Reflecting on the terms of reference- the key points the group wish to make to members of the committee are:
 - a. The APPG welcomes the UK-AU Communique of February 2019 and we are pleased to see the UK committing to supporting Africa's home-grown development ambitions as set out in the AU's Agenda 2063.
 - b. It is difficult however to make a well informed assessment of how far the Government's new "Strategic Approach to Africa" commits to putting the agenda in the Communique into action. Apart from the former PM's speech in Cape Town in August 2018, the new approach has not been communicated in any detail in public.
 - c. We welcome the narrative of the strategic approach of building relations that are "win/win" and of mutual benefit. The top five broad themes of the strategy, although unsure how they were selected, on the surface seem complimentary to the Communique although no direct reference to the objectives laid out in the partnership is made.
 - d. If we are to have "win-win" relations with African countries, we need to ensure any trade agreements made post-Brexit between the UK and African states respect African priorities, such as the AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area) as well as our own, in particular the desire and ability of Africa countries to industrialise.
 - e. More action needs to be taken to ensure we are working with African partners to stop illicit financial flows out of Africa and return stolen revenue.
 - f. The additional mobilisation of investment promised by the UK needs to prioritise projects that create jobs and skills whilst supporting the ambitions of an African "new green deal" and also the infrastructure needed for the

AfCFTA. The UK should work to better incentivise development projects which fund the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems.

- g. African countries are likely to seek easier access to the UK for people. Our recent report found that African visitors to the UK are twice as likely to be refused a visa than applicants from any other part of the world. As such, many Africans and companies working in Africa are deciding to take their business elsewhere, often to other European countries, with diplomatic and economic consequences for the UK.⁴

Reflections on HMG's New Strategic Approach to Africa

- V. The APPG for Africa was consulted informally on the development of a new strategy by Guy Warrington from the FCO Africa Strategy Team in October 2015 who were working on a review of HMG's work on Africa, with a view to possibly working up a Strategy on Africa. This was of great interest to members who had long advocated for more engagement with African countries and pan-African initiatives. Since then the APPG has met 6 monthly with either the Minister for Africa and FCO Director Africa for updates on the FCO's work in this regard and meeting at least annually with each.
- VI. From these regular meetings, especially more recently, the APPG members have been left with the strong impression that the "New Africa Strategy" seems to be less a comprehensive 'strategy' than an outline of some broad policy themes where the UK would like to focus more with regards to Africa. From what we understand there is no internal documents outlining a strategy, and the lack of a public reference point, other than the PM's speech, limits its impact on African perceptions that the UK is re-prioritising the continent.
- VII. When the APPG Chairs and Officers requested something in writing back in November 2018- we were sent 10 bullet points entitled "The UK's New Approach to Sub-Saharan Africa" from the Africa Unit at the FCO.⁵ Unfortunately, this lacked any detail as to what the new strategy was, its motivation, how it would work with the private sector, its interaction with ODA and across departments or any timeframes or costings.
- VIII. A clear strategy is essential if the UK is to combat the impression that we are neglecting Africa, and effectively increase our engagement with and influence on the continent. Broadly speaking we welcome the emphasis on "win win" partnerships and strongly believe that this is the correct and only direction for the UK to take to recapture interest and relevance with African states. We also recognise that many other investment partners in Africa, including China, use a similar rhetoric and are active in engaging African Governments. To stand out as a valuable partner, the UK needs deliver real mutuality in our partnerships and consult African stakeholders on the strategy in its design and ongoing implementation. What we do know about the strategy is outlined below along with brief reflections raising concerns over where the UK may need to do more to ensure we are building the foundations of mutually beneficial relations.

How far does the HMG New Strategic Approach complement the partnership outlined in the Communique?

Five “strategic shifts” have been mentioned as part of the new approach by HMG and below we assess how far they complement the vision in the communique and make suggestions as to where more could be done:

1. Climate Change & Sustaining Natural Resources

- IX. Cooperation on tackling climate change is an opening theme in the Communique and we are pleased to see this being a clear priority for the Government with regards to Africa. We need to continue supporting African efforts to mitigate climate change and to transition to more renewable and sustainable energy sources, including additional support earlier on for micro-grids development that goes beyond DFID’s Result-Based Financing for low carbon energy access. Africa has significant, renewable energy resources and huge energy needs and the UK should ensure via the CDC, Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG), Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund (EAIF) and DFID’s Regional Infrastructure Programme for Africa, we are prioritising investing in sustainable energy in Africa and supporting the AU’s ambitions for a “new green deal for Africa”.
- X. Ecosystems are being destroyed at an alarming rate- 30 football pitches of rainforest are destroyed a minute globally- including in the Congo Basinⁱⁱⁱ. Scientific research has found that natural environments are essential for absorbing excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and combating climate breakdown^{iv}, for which Africa, despite not being a big contributor to the causes of climate breakdown, currently suffers the impacts far worse than western countries.
- XI. The UK should work in partnership with African governments, communities and development partners to urgently design and implement better funding incentives and programmes (for example watershed restoration Ghana^v) to protect and restore natural environments. Funding could be allocated to African countries from the International Climate Fund at BEIS and we would also like to see the application of sustainable farming methods being better supported, for example by AgDevCo.
- XII. British companies and their subsidiaries have in some cases caused environmental damage in African countries, often through the exploitation of natural resources. The UK Government should work in consultation with African governments to strengthen legislation to better enable companies to be held to account by affected communities in British and overseas courts. The Government should prioritise working with relevant authorities to ensure that clean up, restoration of the environment and compensation are properly delivered.

2. Inclusive growth & trade with focus on private sector

Trade agreements

- XIII. Increasing trade links and **mobilising investment** in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a key aim of the Communique. If the UK does leave the EU, the Government should prioritise continuity of trading terms with African countries in the short term. We were interested to learn of the recent agreement to rollover the SADC plus EPA which the APPG has found to be problematic for regional supply

chains. Longer term, however, the Government should critically reflect on the lessons of the EU's Economic Partnership Agreements with Africa as outlined in our 2017 report.^{vi}

- XIV. As such we would discourage the UK from pressurising countries such as Ghana to ratify a stepping stone EPA and should instead offer interim trading terms in event of a no-deal Brexit. Further, we were disappointed by the low standard of the impact assessments of July 2018 carried out by Department for International Trade on the impacts of EPAs on countries such as Ghana^{vii}.
- XV. Any future trade agreements with between the UK and African counties should be built on mutual ambition and must allow real policy space for African countries to industrialise and build value adding supply chains between African countries. Future trade agreements must be constructed in such a way as to strengthen Africa's regional integration ambitions and the African Continental Free Trade Area.
- XVI. With the ongoing boom in science and tech innovation across Africa, future trade agreements should ensure TRIPs (trade related impacts of intellectual property rights) and the interpretation of WTO rules, does not undermine science, research and tech partnerships whilst also protecting the IP rights of African companies.
- XVII. To complement any new trading agreements, in addition to DFID's Trade Advocacy Fund, there should be increased support for DFID's work in these countries to strengthen technical expertise within responsible departments and strengthen parliamentary and civil society oversight of trade agreements.

Illicit financial flows

- XVIII. We welcome the intentions to strengthen financial centres and markets through partnering with the City of London. There is also some support for this from the AU Commission but with more emphasis on growing the financial markets abilities to invest in pan-African infrastructure projects.
- XIX. Equally our African partners routinely recognise that inclusive growth as a concept is undermined by the continued illicit financial flows out of Africa from business and organised crime to the UK and elsewhere. As the report by the UN Economic Commission for Africa led by Thabo Mbeki found- Africa is a net creditor to the world and as such more needs to be done to work with Governments to strengthen their institutions to stop flows and to help recover identified stolen assets that are in the UK.^{viii} Not addressing this issue undermines all diplomatic efforts and is not in line with the communique's ambition to "***promote and protect equitable and inclusive rules-based international system***".

Data protection and privacy laws

- XX. Data is now recognised as the most valuable commodity in the world and as events such as the Cambridge Analytica scandal have shown, there is little international regulation of the legal use of data harvested from online applications and social media. If growth is to be inclusive on both a global and micro level then the UK must work in partnership with African countries to strengthen data and privacy laws to

protect the data rights of individuals and set clear boundaries for the ownership and use of that data by private tech corporations. Further, the UK must strongly advocate for full inclusion of African nations in the design of international frameworks for data protection.

3. Security & stability

- XXI. There is some concern that HMG may prioritise working with African Governments and new security partners over human rights. For example, the ongoing funding from the UK for Libyan detention centres where migrants are routinely tortured is not something we should tolerate or continue funding. This is also not in line with the Communique where the two sides pledged to support initiatives to “*protect victims of trafficking and smuggling*”.
- XXII. In the work with on strengthening police forces via the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF)- we would also like to see longer term commitments to peace keeping programmes. There is often a absence of consistency in standards and training depending on which partner is delivering training- so police officers within one force may be trained in completely different ways which cause division, mistrust and inconsistency in delivery of service. It is also difficult to access information on the programmes the CSSF fund is involved with and we would like to see a greater degree of transparency here.
- XXIII. The communique makes particular reference to the desire to “*find African solutions for African problems*” and to the ongoing negotiations on the use of UN-assessed contributions for AU-led Peace Support Operations. We hope the UK will explicitly support more contributions to AU-led operations at the UN.

4. Demography

- XXIV. The communique mentions “*the full participation of women and disabled people in society*” and we are aware of DFID’s excellent work on improving access to family planning and contraceptives services which are essential for the empowerment and participation of women and girls and the Disability Rights Fund. We are hopeful that a future cross-department strategy will protect and expand on this work towards ensuring every person has the opportunity to contribute to better their own livelihoods and that of the communities they live in. But the real solution to Africa’s demographic dilemma is economic.

5. The Sahel

- XXV. We welcome plans to open more consulates within the region but would like to see these also act as Visa Application Centres to make travel between countries in the region and the UK more accessible. The APPG supports the notion of “*enhanced policy engagement*” with the AU peace-keeping mission to **strengthen resilience** in the communique and we would welcome a more detailed strategy outline.

In addition, there are three key ambitions set out by HMG in their strategy-

XXVI. The UK will host a major Africa investment summit which has been delayed from 2019 to 2020-

We are awaiting further details as to which stakeholders, officials and businesses will be involved and are concerned the planning and sharing of details are being left too late. The Communique states that the two sides agreed to meet annually to assess the progress of the partnership. It would be useful to know if this will be taking place to coincide with the January summit and how this will be assessed.

XXVII. The UK to become the largest G7 investor in Africa including via CDC by 2022-

The communique expressly states that the UK and AU will “*work to mobilise investments for Africa’s sustainable transformation. This includes the promotion of UK-Africa trade and investment, the African Continental Free Trade Area and action to harness the demographic dividend*”. As such, whilst we strongly welcome this pledge of increased investment we would like to see HMG strategy do more to ensure more local content, quality job creation and skills transfer when working with the private sector and CDC. We would also like to see the CDC do more projects with other investors on larger and longer term inter-country green transport and infrastructure projects that strengthen regional supply chains and industry.

XXVIII. £3.5 billion from UK Government to be spent in Africa by 2022-

We would like more details as to whether this will count as ODA, what this will be spent on and who will be spending it. As mentioned under “Climate Change” above, we think it’s essential to fund programmes that support “Africa’s new green deal” and to better incentivise development projects which fund the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems.

Migration and human mobility– Visit visa problems

XXIX. The communique mentions **migration and human mobility** being managed to benefit host/origin countries for socioeconomic development. There is also a pledge to **invest in people** and “*build opportunities to deliver a skilled workforce through shared work on education, science and technology and skills development*”

XXX. Home Office statistics show that African visitors to the UK are twice as likely to be refused a visit visa than applicants from any other part of the world. After a 6 month inquiry looking into the issue we found the UK visit visa system is inaccessible to many Africans, under resourced, unaccountable and widely perceived as biased or even discriminating against Africans. Overall, the impact is that many Africans and companies working in Africa are deciding to carry out their business elsewhere, often in other European cities with economic consequences for the UK.

XXXI. However, HMG new strategic approach does not put much if any emphasis on the importance of mobility between the UK and African countries in order for Africans to pursue visits for business, academic and developmental partnerships on an equal ‘win win’ basis.

XXXII. The report found the visas system is undermining government funded initiatives from other departments that are designed to build bridges between the UK and African

countries and heard numerous cases where African diplomats and senior officials have been denied entry –which the former Immigration Minister, Rt. Hon. Caroline Nokes MP told us she regretted. The invasive nature of the information required is embarrassing and sometimes taken to be demeaning – a point raised with the APPG in person by a senior official at the African Union.

- XXXIII. British Ambassadors and High Commissions now have very limited power to intervene in visa cases, although we have found on occasions where there has been FCO intervention the situation has been resolved more quickly. As such we are calling for support for greater input from High Commissions and Embassies into the decision making process as a matter of course, with additional streamlined processes set up to simplify the process for VIPs.
- XXXIV. Further, it is imperative that any reform to the visa system be undertaken by the Home Office in consultation across Whitehall to ensure a reformed system no longer undermines government spending and initiatives in other departments. The UK cannot be an outward- looking nation or ‘open for business’ without improving the systems that allow access to people. UKVI’s treatment of Africans is entirely at odds with the narrative of a post-Brexit “Global Britain”, which risks being an empty slogan if changes are not made. Trade with Africa and other emerging markets is going to be even more crucial to us economically than it was before, and we cannot afford the handicap the visa system currently imposes.
- XXXV. In order to understand where UKVI is relied upon by other departments to deliver their objectives and identify what reforms are needed to allow strategic cross-department collaboration, we support an appointment of a Senior Responsible Officer as recommended by the Independent Chief Inspector for Borders and Immigration in January 2019 and we think the FCO need to recognise the gravity of this issue and support this recommendation with the Home Office.

Conclusion

- XXXVI. There are complementary elements to the Communique and HMG New Strategic Approach to Africa but given a lack of detail it is difficult to make a full assessment. It will remain to be seen how seriously HMG are about supporting Africa’s green industrialisation and the African Continental Free Trade Area when it comes to negotiating trade agreements in the event of Brexit.
- XXXVII. What is clear is that the UK has a great opportunity as it changes its status in the world to engage more actively and constructively in Africa. But the success of this will depend on Africans seeing clearly that it is genuinely a higher political priority for us. Actions will weigh more than words. And we cannot claim to be a ‘global Britain’ if we continue to exclude too many people with a genuine need and desire to visit.

ⁱ The APPG for Africa, APPG for Malawi & APPG for Diaspora, Development and Migration (2019) *Visa Problems for African Visitors to the UK*. Available at <http://bit.ly/VisaRefusals>

ⁱⁱ FCO Africa Unit (2018) *The UK's New Approach to Sub-Saharan Africa*. Available here <http://www.royalafricansociety.org/document/overview-hmg-new-africa-strategy-november-2018>

ⁱⁱⁱ The Independent, *Enough rainforest to fill 30 football pitches destroyed every minute last year* (25th April 2019). Online on 24th September 2019 <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/tropical-rainforest-lost-destroyed-football-pitches-every-minute-a8886911.html>

^{iv} Carbon Brief *Analysis: How 'natural climate solutions' can reduce the need for BECCS* (21st May 2018). Last accessed 24th September 2019 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-how-natural-climate-solutions-can-reduce-the-need-for-beccs>

^v Website last accessed 24th September 2019-
<https://www.equatorinitiative.org/2017/08/08/participatory-landuse-planning-and-management/>

^{vi} The APPG for Africa (2017) *The future of UK-Africa trade and development relations post Brexit*. Available at <http://www.royalafricansociety.org/sites/default/files/reports/APPG%20Africa-%20The%20future%20of%20Africa-UK%20relations%20post%20Brexit-%20Feb%202017.pdf>

^{vii} UK Department for International Trade, *Impact assessment for the EU-Ghana Economic Partnership Agreement* (July 2018) Last accessed 25th September 2019
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-assessment-for-the-eu-ghana-economic-partnership-agreement>

^{viii} UNECA High-level Commission on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa (2015) *Stop it! Track it! Get it!: Illicit Financial Flows*. Available here <https://www.uneca.org/publications/illicit-financial-flows>