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# Crunch Time For Cameroon

By Ajong Mbapndah L

**B**arring a force majeure, Cameroonians will flock to the polls in October for Presidential elections. While he has remained mum on his own plans and intentions, the assumption is that President Biya will be seeking re-election. His partisans have flooded airwaves, held meetings across the country, and some have raised funds to support his re-election bid. From the highly fragmented nature of the country, crisis in the English speaking regions that will not be wished away, galloping unemployment, a restive youth population yearning for a generational change and more, certainly up the stakes for the election.

In terms of achievements, and looking at the state of Cameroon, many pundits will not be far from predicting the scenario of Ghana and Botswana in 2024 with historic defeats for the ruling parties. In power for forty plus years and in his 90s, it is unfathomable how President Biya or those around him think he can actually resolve the myriad of crisis facing Cameroon. Yet, we hear reports of motor bike riders endorsing the President, we hear reports of youth saddled with chronic unemployment calling on President Biya to run again.

Cameroon is Cameroon President Biya once said, and in a continent where Diomaye Faye of Senegal, Duma Boko of Botswana, John Mahama of Ghana, and Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah of Namibia play starring roles because of their youthful dynamism or the groundbreaking or historic nature of their victories, it is inconceivable that Cameroonians are only able to salivate at the fervor of such political exploits.

With the advantage of incumbency, the state machinery at his disposal, favours of the electoral commission which has never succeeded to shed accusations of bias, some of which is pretty brazen, many Cameroons have shown indifference in successive elections. Millions do not bother to register, talk less of voting, - the excuse? what difference will it make, the system is design for the President Biya to win. And "won", President



Ajong Mbapndah L, Managing Editor

Biya has at successive elections with record scores, even in elections where he made just one stop, he has prevailed.

Cameroon is a perfect blend of curiosity and the African paradox, a country with incredible potential, abundant natural and human resources, incredible talent in all fields from sports with global super stars like Roger Milla, Thomas Nkono, Samuel Eto'o and most recently Andre Onana of Manchester Utd, and Zambo Anguissa of Naples. It is the home of late Issa Hayatou, the man who literally gave Africa a voice and weight on the global stage when he led the Confederation of African football. It is home to Mix Martial Arts -MMA Champion Francis Ngannou. For adepts of the NBA, Cameroon is the country of origin of Joel Embid. In the world of music, it is home to the legendary musicians like Manu Dibango. Cameroon is one of the rare countries where two nationals served as Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity(OAU) which metamorphosed to the present day African Union.

From business, to academics, engineering, medicine, and tech, some of the best and smartest have come from Cameroon. You talk about tech in Africa today, and one of the most familiar names in the continent is Rebecca Enonchong from Cameroon. Move to democracy, and it will be hard to miss Dr Chris Fomunyoh of the Washington, DC based National Democratic Institute

who has midwived many transitions to democracy and overseen credible elections across Africa.

The Cameroon diaspora is amongst the most dynamic that Africa has. From nursing, to medicine, engineering to IT, from religion to politics, you will find Cameroonians excelling. In the last US Administration of President Joe Biden, a Cameroon native John Nkengasong was a Senate confirmed Cabinet member. In Congress, you will find staffer Angelle Kwemo of Cameroon origin playing a leading role in shaping African policy.

Cameroon used to be that safe heaven for nationals from different African countries fleeing conflict or seeking economic opportunity. From nationals of neighboring Nigeria to people from Niger, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Liberia, and others, Cameroon, was the sanctuary.

It is for understandable reasons that many who knew Cameroon in the past and those who know its potential scratch heads in confusion to see the country a pale shadow of itself, with a serious mismatch when potentials are compared to realities.

In the digital age that we live in, and considering its sheer importance in the Central African sub region and Africa, the eyes of the world will be on Cameroon for the 2025 elections. Elections with the potential to make or mar the country, elections with the potential for the country to hit the reset button on multiple fronts..

For the countries that are seen as references in terms of credible elections, peaceful transitions, or where decades old ruling parties have been dislodged, it has not been with the kind of apathy and cynicism that is often seen with many Cameroonians, or with the greed and self-centeredness that is the trademark of the political class especially the opposition seeking to replace President Biya.

Asked in one of his rare interviews on what he will like to be remembered for, Biya said he would like to be remembered as the man who brought democracy to Cameroon. The 2025 elections may well be a test on his legacy. Will the elections be free and fair? If he is beaten fair and square,

will he accept the results and retire gracefully to his village?

Talking about defeat, irrespective of the circumstances, it must not be considered as a pipe dream. One of the sound bites President Biya is famous for is that the impossible is not Cameroonian. Afterall, a coalition of political parties led by the late Ni John Fru Ndi of the SDF rattled and brought his regime to the brink in 1992.

As Cameroon glides into the 2025 elections, the saying that every people gets the leader it deserves hearkens. Blame the system all we may, the on goals from the opposition have been many too!. Division, lacking in vision, no coherent strategy, myopic and self-centeredness in leadership are some of the gapping shortcomings of the opposition. Everyone wants to be President. It is therefore not surprising that five months to the election, the number of opposition leaders expressing interest in running has been growing by the day.. It is not surprising that we still see opposition parties spending more energy squabbling amongst themselves than fighting the regime. The seriousness of the moment demands that personal goals and ambitions be sacrificed for the collective good of Cameroon. Instead of been viewed as a show of weakness, it will be seen as a show of strength and patriotism for leaders to shelve their personal ambitions and egos and rally behind the candidate with the best program and shot at beating President Biya and putting Cameroon back on the rails. Africa is watching and waiting on Cameroon to regain its bearings and take a stronger leadership role in forging a stronger destiny for itself and the continent. If it has been done in Senegal, in Gambia, In Botswana, in Ghana, then somehow, some way, something exciting can happen in Cameroon as well, The impossible is not Cameroonian

This issue of PAV takes a special look on the stakes and the candidates running to replace Dr Akinwunmi Adesina as President of the African Development Bank, AfDB, hopes and fears for Tanzania at 61, the forging of a legacy for Captain Ibrahim Traore in Burkina Faso, peace efforts in the DR Congo, Zimbabwe's Tariff diplomacy and more. Happy reading





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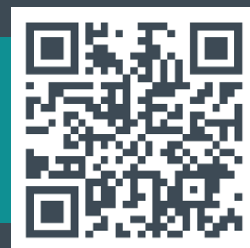


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# Tanzania at 61: A Union Forged in Hope, Now Demanding Balance and True Partnership

By Adonis Byemelwa

On April 26, 2025, Tanzania turned 61. Not as a simple post-colonial African state, but as a united republic—an audacious blend of two distinct nations, Tanganyika and Zanzibar, whose leaders dared to forge a political union at a time when others were splintering. That choice, bold and arguably improvised, created a new country stitched together by idealism, pragmatism, and an urgent need for stability.

If history is any guide, in 1964, just months after a fiery revolution shook Zanzibar and only three years after Tanganyika gained independence, Julius Nyerere and Abeid Amani Karume came together to sign the Articles of Union.

It was a bold, almost improvised move—two leaders from vastly different political and cultural backgrounds agreeing to unite their nations at a time of escalating global tension. The Cold War was sweeping across the Indian Ocean, and this union provided both stability and strategic strength.

Tanganyika, a vast mainland still finding its post-colonial footing, and Zanzibar, a small but storied archipelago with centuries of trade, identity, and resistance, couldn't have been more different. Yet in just 11 brief articles, they forged a pact—one many doubted would last. But here we are, more than six decades later, still under one flag. It's a remarkable feat, though not without its scars.

Officially, the union is held up as a symbol of harmony—proof that unity in diversity can succeed where others have fractured. And in many ways, it has delivered: one language, one defense force, one passport. For much of Africa, that level of integration is enviable.

But scratch the surface, and the cracks begin to show. Over time, the quiet discomforts have grown



Officially, the union is held up as a symbol of harmony—proof that unity in diversity can succeed where others have fractured.

into louder discontent, especially on the Isles. Walk through Stone Town or catch a conversation on a dhow in Pemba, and you'll hear it—concerns that Zanzibar's voice is often drowned out, its identity softened under a union that doesn't always feel balanced. It's not anger as much as a longing for fairness, for mutual respect, for a union that truly feels like a partnership rather than an arrangement.

The complaints don't come from the fringes either. Opposition voices on both sides of the union—mainland and Isles—have grown increasingly sharp. In Zanzibar, there are calls for greater autonomy, sometimes even secession. On the mainland, there's fatigue—a feeling that Zanzibar gets the benefits of sovereignty without carrying the full weight of responsibility.

Zitto Kabwe, leader of ACT-Wazalendo, doesn't mince words. "The current union structure is broken," he says. "It's top-down, it's outdated, and it fails to reflect the aspirations of the people, on both sides."

His party, with strong roots in Zanzibar, has been among the most vocal in demanding reforms. Their push isn't just rhetorical. In 2014, under the stewardship of retired Prime Minister and judge Joseph Warioba, a constitutional review commission laid out a bold vision for restructuring the country's political architecture.

Warioba, calm and analytical, saw the cracks before many others did. His commission didn't call for the breakup of the union, but for its deep redesign. "We proposed a three-government structure," he explained in a recent interview. "One for Zanzibar, one for Tanganyika, and one for the Union itself. This would help reduce the confusion and tension over which government handles what, and restore trust in the idea of unity."

His proposals weren't revolutionary; they were practical. But they stirred political fears. Some in the ruling party, CCM, saw them as a threat to the delicate balance that had held the country together. The recommendations were shelved. The conversation paused, but the

grievances didn't.

These tensions are not just in legal documents or elite debates. They live. Habiba Jawad, a trader who moves goods between Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar, says she feels both pride and frustration in equal measure. "The union opened doors for me," she admits. "But I still feel like Zanzibar is always waiting for permission. We are in the union, but are we truly heard?"

On the mainland, similar sentiments resonate—but in a different key. Some see Zanzibar's semi-autonomy as a luxury. It has its president, its own House, and domestic control over many issues. Yet, Zanzibar also sends MPs to the Union Parliament, benefits from national revenues, and shares in diplomatic recognition.

"It's like being part of a team, but one player gets to wear a different jersey and still calls the shots," said a mainland journalist in Dodoma, half-joking, half-serious.

Even President Samia Suluhu Hassan, the first Tanzanian head of state from Zanzibar, has found herself navigating these sensitivities.



Her leadership has drawn praise for stabilizing the country after the Magufuli era, but she hasn't escaped criticism. Some mainlanders view her recent decisions, including the land policies in Ngorongoro and a deal with DP World for port operations, as tilting too far toward Zanzibar's interests. Opposition figures have accused her of "auctioning off the mainland" in favor of elite deals.

But politics aside, the reality is that Tanzanians, on both sides of the union, are often more connected than divided. Walk through Kariakoo or down the alleys of Forodhani, and you'll find cross-marriages, joint ventures, and a Swahili spirit that defies administrative borders. Rashid Mzee, a tour operator with businesses in Arusha and Zanzibar, says it best: "We live the union. We are not waiting for politicians to tell us we are one. We already are."

Still, there's a sense that the union needs more than shared culture—it needs shared ownership. That means more equitable development, clearer governance, and honest conversations. The Warioba Commission wasn't just proposing political solutions. It was trying to put the soul back into a partnership that, over time, had become a bit too bureaucratic and less emotional.

And that soul is what people like



The current union structure is broken, it's top-down, it's outdated, and it fails to reflect the aspirations of the people, on both sides, says Zitto Kabwe, leader of ACT-Wazalendo

Judge Warioba still talk about. "A union must be built on mutual respect," he says. "You cannot have one side feeling marginalized. We created this together. We must grow it together."

Over six decades since its formation, the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar has become a cornerstone of Tanzania's identity—but it hasn't been without its uneasy silences. For years, open debate

about the union has been met with suspicion, as though questioning its structure is the same as undermining the nation itself. That fear has created a gap between what citizens feel and what leaders acknowledge.

Former Attorney General Joseph Warioba captured this tension well when he said, "We've spent too much time talking about the power of one part of the union. We forget this is a united country." His words echo

a widespread feeling, especially in Zanzibar, where people often speak of being part of Tanzania, but not always feeling equally valued within it.

Union Minister Hamad Masauni recently offered a refreshing shift in tone. Speaking in Dar es Salaam, he noted, "People are not complaining about the union itself—they complain about government structures. That's what we need to address." It's a small sentence, but a big moment. For once, a leader is listening, not just defending.

Real reform doesn't mean tearing down what's been built—it means improving how it works. Joint economic planning could replace the siloed approach. Shared tourism strategies might turn separate strengths into one powerful offering. And outdated laws, like requiring Zanzibaris to live three years in the Isles before voting, could finally be reconsidered.

Sixty-one years on, the union isn't breaking—but it is evolving. The future isn't about survival; it's about relevance. Unity isn't something you insist on—it's something people need to feel in their daily lives. Tanganyika and Zanzibar have come a long way together. The next step is making sure both sides truly walk in stride.



People are not complaining about the union itself—they complain about government structures, says Union Minister Hamad Masauni.

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# In Burkina Faso, Traoré's Legacy Could Extend Beyond Popularity And Promises

By Enoch Randy Aikins\*



Ibrahim Traoré's leadership has sparked hope with bold reforms, but time will show if it marks genuine transformation or repeats the mistakes of military rule.

The challenge will be translating the country's rich mineral resources and promising economy into stability and development.

At 36, Burkina Faso's Captain Ibrahim Traoré is the world's youngest president – in stark contrast to Africa's average leader age of 63. He took office in September 2022 after overthrowing Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba, who had ousted former president Roch Kaboré earlier that year.

The foundations of the country's coup administration have been rocky. Last week the military government survived another apparent coup attempt; one among several since Traoré came to power.

In his inaugural statement, Traoré said Burkina Faso faced an emergency, citing crises in security, defence, healthcare, social action and infrastructure. He pledged to combat terrorism and adhere to the transition timetable agreed with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which aimed to restore

democratic rule by 1 July 2024.

Under Burkina Faso's new transition plan, Traoré may remain in his position until at least 2029

However, Burkina Faso has since withdrawn from ECOWAS, forming instead the Alliance of Sahel States with Mali and Niger – countries also run by post-coup administrations. Under Burkina Faso's new transition plan, Traoré may remain in his position until at least 2029.

His popularity has soared since his ascension to power. At President John Mahama's inauguration in Ghana on 7 January, Traoré received the loudest applause of all 21 African heads of state. This showed not only his popularity but the trend of tolerance for military rule in Africa, especially among the youth.

Afrobarometer reports that almost two-thirds of Burkinabé believe the army should intervene when leaders abuse their power. Likewise, 66% accept military rule, up from 24% in 2012. The fact that the survey was conducted at a time when the country was under military rule portrays a

general acceptance of the regime.

However, Traoré's popularity goes beyond acceptance of military rule. He has embarked on radical reforms that resonate with many Burkinabé. These include reversing his predecessor's salary increase for government officials while he remains on his military captain earnings.

As part of efforts to take ownership of mineral resources, Traoré has nationalised two gold mines and stopped exporting unrefined gold to Europe – instead inaugurating a national gold refinery expected to process 150 tonnes annually.

Other significant achievements include establishing the National Support Center for Artisanal Cotton Processing, building a new airport, and considerable agricultural investment.

While these are noble attempts to industrialise Burkina Faso, the country must not fall into the usual traps of inefficiencies, corruption and mismanagement that characterise most African state-owned enterprises.

Further, Traoré has rejected

financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, insisting the country can develop without the West's loans and conditionalities. For some, this is a demonstration of Africans handling their own affairs. For the youth, Traoré's regime is a chance to show what young people can achieve. But for most ordinary Burkinabé, the priority is simply improving their daily living conditions.

At a time of increasing global uncertainty and a decline in international aid, Africa must strive for self-reliance and control of its resources. Like many African countries, Burkina Faso is blessed with natural resources that, if properly managed, could transform citizens' lives.

At a time of increasing global uncertainty, Africa must strive for self-reliance and control of its resources

The country has mineral resources and produces substantial quantities of gold, zinc, copper, manganese, phosphate and limestone. It also has

reserves of diamonds, bauxite, nickel and vanadium, most of which remain largely unexploited.

The country has made gains. Gross domestic product (GDP) (in market exchange rate) increased from US\$3.2 billion in 1990 to US\$18.3 billion in 2023, and extreme poverty declined from 83% to 27.7% in the same period. But significant challenges remain.

According to the 2023/2024 Human Development Report, Burkina Faso is classified as having low human development and is ranked 185th out of 193 countries on the Human Development Index. It placed 149th out of 167 countries on the 2024 Sustainable Development Goals Index, and on the Multidimensional Poverty Index, 64.5% of the population is multidimensionally poor.

However, the economy holds significant promise. Recent research by the Institute for Security Studies' African Futures and Innovation team shows that Burkina Faso's economy could grow at an average rate of 8% from 2025 to 2043.

This would translate into an additional GDP per capita of US\$1120 above a business-as-usual forecast –



Captain Traoré has nationalised two gold mines and stopped exporting unrefined gold to Europe and created a national gold refinery that is expected to process 150 tonnes annually. Photo courtesy

and reduce income poverty to only 2.6% of the population. This means an extra 2.4 million Burkinabés could be lifted out of poverty by 2043.

The study identified governance reforms as critical to unlocking the country's development potential. Indeed, good governance could raise GDP per capita by an extra US\$240 above a business-as-usual forecast, lifting 500 000 additional Burkinabé out of extreme poverty.

For this, Traoré must lead the country in overcoming political

instability, violent extremism and weak institutions. Institutional and structural reforms are needed to enhance security, accountability, public sector efficiency and governance inclusion.

The immediate priority is addressing terrorism, which resulted in the loss of about 40% of the country's territory, undermining the state's authority and ability to deliver public services, as thousands of schools and health facilities are closed in those areas. The UN

Refugee Agency estimates that over two million people are internally displaced, and those needing humanitarian assistance increased by 35% between 2022 and 2023.

Next should be building strong institutions and strengthening existing ones to improve public sector efficiency and combat corruption. Local governments must be empowered with the resources and capacity to implement development programmes tailored to communities' needs.

With a young, strong, charismatic leader, Burkina Faso could get its governance right and achieve its developmental aspirations

In the medium term, the country must transition into constitutional rule to ensure the political stability and legitimacy needed to drive economic growth. This would also enhance investor confidence, allowing Burkina Faso to attract the foreign direct investment needed for its development. The African Union, civil society organisations and development partners should support the 60-month transition plan to ensure a smooth transition to democracy.

This is not the first time such a charismatic figure has emerged on Africa's political scene. Many revolutionary leaders started the same way but later deviated from the course as they clung to power. In Ghana, 32-year-old Jerry Rawlings, nicknamed 'Junior Jesus', emerged in late 1979 in a bloody revolution to fight corruption and sanitise the country's political system. But after 19 years in power, his legacy was mixed.

With a young, strong, charismatic leader, Burkina Faso has a chance to get its governance right and achieve its developmental aspirations. This could be a lasting legacy for Traoré's regime.

\* Enoch Randy Aikins is a Researcher, African Futures and Innovation, ISS. This article was first published in Africa Tomorrow, the blog of the ISS' African Futures and Innovation programme.



Captain Traoré has rejected financial assistance from the IMF and World Bank, insisting that the country can develop without the loans and its conditionalities from the West. Photo courtesy





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# Kenya: Has Ruto Failed to Serve His People?

By Samuel Ouma

**K**enya's government, under the leadership of President William Ruto, is facing increasingly severe accusations of repression, human rights violations, and governance failures.

A recent release by civil society organizations, spearheaded by the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), paints a bleak picture of the country's slide into authoritarianism. The organizations highlighted a growing list of human rights abuses, including state violence, political repression, a collapsed healthcare system, and rampant femicide, all exacerbated by a government that seems indifferent to the suffering of its citizens.

In a significant development, the international watchdog organization CIVICUS downgraded Kenya's civic space rating from «obstructed» to «repressed» in 2025, citing the government's systematic violation of human rights. The report accuses the Ruto administration of employing violent tactics to silence dissent and stifle public criticism.

«Our country is bleeding,» the statement declares, as it details the mounting deaths and injuries caused by the government's actions. The Kenyan state is tightening its grip on power, with little regard for the fundamental rights of its citizens.

«Kenya's slide into repression is a tragedy that has been unfolding before our eyes,» the civil society organizations said in their release. «We are witnessing a government that is willing to trample on human rights, silencing critics and punishing anyone who dares question its authority.»

## State Violence and Crackdowns on Dissent

One of the most alarming trends raised by the organization is the escalation of state violence against its citizens, especially in the context of protests and political dissent. They said that since the beginning of 2025,



The going has gotten tough for the hustler President in Kenya.

the government has been increasingly aggressive in its crackdown on opposition and civil society actors. Schoolchildren from Butere Girls who performed a play critical of the government's accountability, were among those targeted in this unrelenting pursuit of control.

The Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU) reported that between January and September 2023 alone, there were 228 cases of police torture, 67 extrajudicial killings, and one enforced disappearance. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) further documented 63 deaths, 610 injuries, and 1,376 arbitrary arrests during the so-called Gen-Z protests between June and November 2024.

«These atrocities were allegedly committed by units within the DCI, Administration Police's Rapid Deployment Unit, Military Intelligence, Anti-Terrorism Police Unit, and the National Intelligence Service,» claimed the organizations, reflecting the growing concerns over the systematic and institutionalized use of force by state agencies.

The violence has not been limited to civilians; political activists and opposition figures have also been targeted. In one instance, during the

anti-femicide march in December 2024, police arrested 10 protesters and injured many others. Meanwhile, opposition events have been disrupted, with police often resorting to tear gas and other forms of violent suppression to prevent dissent from spreading.

«These acts are not just a violation of rights; they are an attempt to intimidate and suppress any form of public opposition,» they said.

The scope of repression under the Ruto administration has even extended beyond Kenya's borders. The country has increasingly become a hub for politically motivated abductions of foreigners, raising serious concerns over its international reputation. Tanzanian activist Maria Sarungi Tsehai, Ugandan opposition figure Kizza Besigye, and numerous individuals from South Sudan, Ethiopia, Turkey, and Uganda have all been abducted by Kenyan authorities, allegedly for political reasons. In Kisumu alone, 36 Ugandans were taken in a politically motivated operation.

The international community has expressed alarm over the situation, especially after reports surfaced that journalists covering these abductions were targeted with harassment and

physical assaults.

«Journalists covering these incidents have faced intimidation and assault,» the civil society organizations lamented. The targeting of journalists adds to the climate of fear and suspicion, making it increasingly difficult for the media to operate freely within the country.

## Political Violence

Political violence has also become a hallmark of Ruto's administration. Hired thugs, often with ties to political factions, have disrupted public meetings and rallies, creating an atmosphere of lawlessness and fear. An alarming example occurred on March 20, when a traders' meeting in Limuru, Central Kenya, was violently disrupted by goons. Ruto's rallies in Nairobi have also been marred by robbery and violent attacks against Kenyans attending the events.

Even the former Deputy President, Rigathi Gachagua, has not been spared. His public events have been disrupted by hired thugs, underscoring the extent of political violence in the country. Despite numerous incidents of violence, the government has failed to take action against those responsible.

«Zero accountability from the



government,” the organizations added.

The issue of police violence, particularly the use of non-lethal weapons such as tear gas, water cannons, and batons, has been a point of contention. The government’s continued use of these weapons remains unregulated, with no laws governing their acquisition or use. They called for immediate reforms to protect the right to peaceful assembly and expression, which has been increasingly under threat under the current regime.

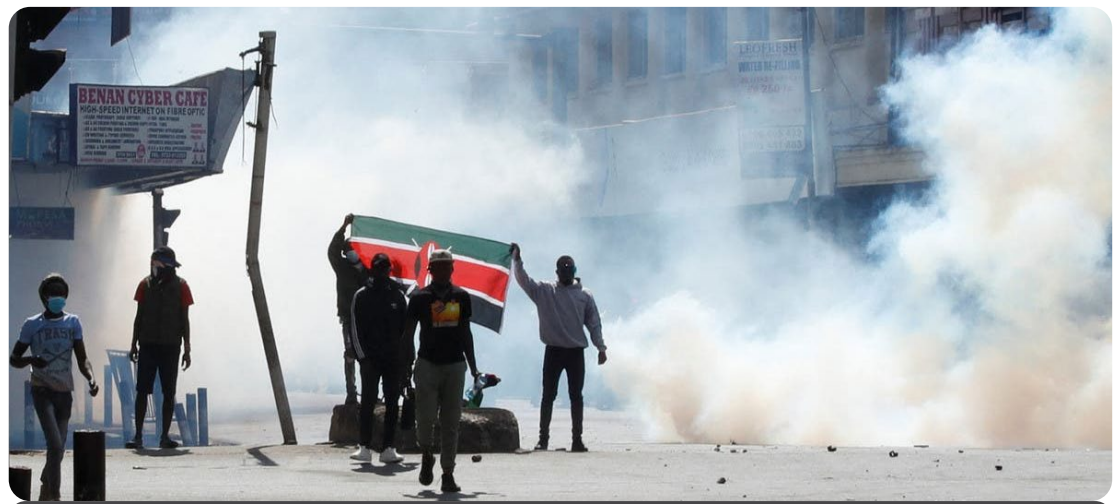
### A Femicide Crisis

Kenya is also grappling with a devastating femicide crisis. The murder of women has reached alarming levels, with 129 women killed between January and March 2025 alone. The previous year saw 579 femicide deaths, an issue that continues to be largely ignored by the authorities. In many cases, police have been either complicit or inactive, particularly in rural areas and informal settlements, where women face heightened risks of violence.

The civil society groups behind the release are calling for urgent reforms in how femicide is handled in Kenya.

«We demand that femicide be included as a distinct offence under the Penal Code,» they stated, urging lawmakers to prioritize the issue.

They are also advocating for



Protests in Kenya have increasingly turned violent. Photo courtesy

better forensic investigations, police training, and the establishment of a special prosecutorial unit dedicated to gender-based violence (GBV) cases. The demand for transparency, with regular reporting on femicide cases, has also been highlighted as a necessary step in addressing the crisis.

### Socio-Economic Collapse

Beyond the violence and repression, Kenya’s socio-economic systems are in freefall. The education sector faces deep systemic failures, with underfunding, outdated infrastructure and curriculum confusion wreaking havoc on the future of Kenya’s youth. Despite court rulings that deemed the current university

funding model unconstitutional, the government continues to push for its implementation.

«We demand a national education support fund for marginalized children,» the organization noted, demanding the need for investment in both the infrastructure and teacher development to ensure that all Kenyan children receive a quality education.

Similarly, the public health system has all but collapsed under the weight of mismanagement and corruption. The shift from the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) to the Social Health Authority (SHA) has left millions of Kenyans without adequate healthcare services. The transition has been marked by exclusion and confusion, with over 75% of Kenyans

believing the SHA to be corrupt and mismanaged.

The civil society groups are demanding a complete overhaul of the SHA system, along with faster disbursements to healthcare providers and a renewed focus on universal healthcare for all Kenyans.

### The Housing Crisis

Another pressing issue noted by the group is the threat to housing security posed by the Business Laws (Amendment) Bill, which proposes to shorten foreclosure timelines. This move risks mass evictions, particularly for low-income families in informal settlements, where court rulings on compensation and relocation have already been violated.

«We demand that the proposed amendments to the Land Act be withdrawn,» the civil society organizations assert, calling for the enforcement of judicial pronouncements on compensation and alternative housing.

The accusations levelled against President William Ruto’s administration paint a picture of a government that is rapidly losing touch with the people it is meant to serve. The growing repression, state violence, femicide, economic collapse, and human rights violations demand urgent attention from both Kenyan citizens and the international community.

The organizations believe that the time for action is now, as the country faces a critical juncture in its history. Without significant change, Kenya’s future looks increasingly bleak.



Civil society groups are calling for urgent reforms on how femicide is handled in Kenya. Photo credit AP.



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# A New Dawn for the Great Lakes: DRC and Rwanda Sign Landmark Declaration for Peace

By Adonis Byemelwa

In Washington, D.C.'s storied Colin L. Powell Treaty Room, history edged closer to a new chapter. On April 25, 2025, amid the polished elegance of American diplomacy's hallowed ground, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio stood alongside the foreign ministers of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), witnessing a moment that many had long hoped for but few dared believe would arrive so decisively: the signing of the Declaration of Principles for Peace in Eastern DRC.

It was more than a ceremony. It was the culmination of months of intense dialogue, a rare pause in the turbulent story of the Great Lakes region — a part of the world where conflict had been more constant than calm for over three decades. Secretary Rubio, in remarks that carried both urgency and quiet optimism, underscored the stakes: after thirty years of conflict, achieving lasting peace and unlocking the region's enormous potential for economic development was not merely desirable — it was essential. His voice carried the weight of countless lives interrupted,



Secretary of State Rubio, alongside Foreign Ministers Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner of the DR Congo and Olivier Nduhungirehe of Rwanda at the signing of the Declaration of Principles. Photo courtesy

communities displaced, and futures deferred.

Yet beyond the symbolism, the event signaled a strategic pivot — one that

recognizes peace as the cornerstone for broader economic integration and prosperity across the Great Lakes region. The ceremony's energy hinted at a genuine commitment not just to talk, but to act.

For the Democratic Republic of Congo, represented by Foreign Minister Wagner, the signing was framed as an act of necessity, not celebration. In poignant words, Wagner stressed that for communities in Goma and Bukavu, «the urgency of this initiative is not theoretical; it is human.»

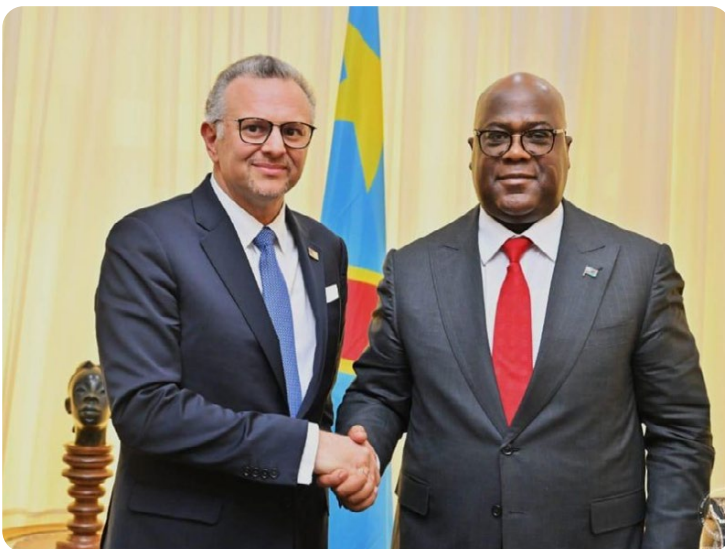
Recalling decades of displacement and insecurity, Wagner rejected any notion of half-measures, emphasizing that true peace must be built on «responsibility, clear commitments, measurable timelines, and consequences for noncompliance.»

The message was unmistakable: empty promises would no longer

suffice. For the millions who have borne the brunt of conflict, only concrete, measurable action will matter.

Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe of Rwanda added a complementary but equally firm tone. Offering thanks to President Donald Trump and Secretary Rubio for creating “real change in the conversation,” Nduhungirehe insisted that addressing the region's deep-rooted challenges required confronting “the real issues” — security first, followed closely by the return of refugees and the construction of new economic value chains.

The Rwandan minister made it clear that while today's declaration opens a path toward a definitive peace agreement, there would be «no shortcuts or quick fixes.» The task ahead demands grit, patience, and



President Donald Trump's Africa Adviser said he had reached agreement on a “path forward” with President Félix Tshisekedi.

relentless diplomacy.

The Declaration of Principles lays out serious commitments. Mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity stands at its core, addressing the bitter territorial grievances that have fueled mistrust for years. The document also pledges to tackle security concerns head-on, promote regional economic integration, facilitate the safe return of displaced persons, support the UN's MONUSCO mission, and draft a final peace agreement that binds both sides to clear obligations.

Senior Advisor Massad Boulos, instrumental in shepherding the talks, underscored the stakes. «These are serious commitments from each side,» he said, noting that Secretary Rubio's presence as a witness underlined the strategic importance the United States attaches to seeing this process succeed.

Beyond the Treaty Room's polished floors and diplomatic formalities, the implications of this agreement are profound. The Great Lakes region, rich in critical minerals and human capital, has long been crippled by instability, repelling investment and perpetuating cycles of poverty.

A credible peace accord would open the floodgates for economic development, infrastructure growth, and the return of millions to their homes. It would also align with what Rubio described as President Trump's "prosperity agenda for the world," where private sector-driven growth, anchored by American firms practicing «good corporate citizenship,» could replace humanitarian aid dependency.

But the Declaration's true test will not be measured in ceremonies or signed papers. It will be measured in the days and months ahead, in villages still haunted by the crack of gunfire, in refugee camps bursting at the seams, and in boardrooms hesitant to invest where uncertainty lingers.

It will be measured by the seriousness with which the parties honor their commitments — and the resolve of the international community, especially the United



President Trump's Senior Advisor, Massad Boulos (left) and President Paul Kagame at Village Urugwiro. Photo courtesy.

States, to hold all sides accountable.

One cannot ignore the historical weight pressing down on these efforts. Previous peace agreements have withered under the relentless pressure of unresolved grievances, mistrust, and the toxic influence of foreign-backed militias.

Wagner's reminder that «peace and development cannot rely only on good intentions» reflected a collective learning curve — hard-earned lessons from broken ceasefires and dashed hopes. This time, sequencing is clear: peace must come first, and only then can development take root. Trust must be rebuilt brick by brick, action by action, with accountability mechanisms that do not bend under political expediency.

The symbolism of the Treaty Room, named after one of America's most storied diplomats, added another layer of meaning. Colin Powell's legacy of coalition-building and pragmatic idealism hung in the air, a silent reminder of the values at stake.

In this context, Secretary

Rubio's emphasis on peace as a prerequisite for prosperity was more than a diplomatic flourish — it was a recognition that sustainable development is impossible without security and governance.

Nduhungerehe's call for a region "free of violent ethnic extremism" and "well-governed" resonates with particular urgency. In a continent where borders drawn by colonial powers often slice through ethnic communities, peace in the Great Lakes is about more than national sovereignty; it is about finding a way to coexist, to build economies not on suspicion and fear, but on trust and interdependence.

His optimism about American investment points to a new chapter — one where the region's minerals fuel not conflict but growth, with local communities finally sharing in the wealth extracted from their soil.

As the applause faded and pens were set down, a cautious hope filled the room. This Declaration is no panacea. The road ahead will be

difficult, with spoilers eager to derail progress and histories of mistrust complicating even the best intentions. Yet for the first time in years, there is a sense that change is not just possible — it is within reach.

The people of eastern Congo, long trapped in a nightmare not of their making, deserve more than fleeting moments of hope. They deserve a durable peace that holds, economic opportunities that endure, and leaders who put the lives of their citizens above the temptations of short-term gain.

Today's Declaration of Principles offers a glimmer of that better future. Whether it will materialize depends not only on signatures and ceremonies but on sustained commitment, unwavering accountability, and the courage to follow through when the cameras are gone. In the Colin L. Powell Treaty Room, history was not rewritten — but perhaps, just perhaps, a new chapter began.





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# Qatar's High-Stakes Gamble: A New Power Broker in the Great Lakes Conflict Mediation

By Adonis Byemelwa

In a region where peace often feels like a mirage, a fresh wind is blowing—this time from the Gulf. In March 2025, Doha became the unlikely stage for a pivotal moment in one of Africa's most intractable conflicts. Under the quiet but strategic watch of Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the presidents of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Félix Tshisekedi) and Rwanda (Paul Kagame) sat down face-to-face, breaking a long, tense silence.

The outcome: a joint call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in eastern Congo—a region ravaged by a brutal resurgence of the M23 rebel group, mass displacement, and deep geopolitical mistrust.

This wasn't just another diplomatic formality. It was a test of intent, backed by a bold new player willing to mediate in a conflict most would rather avoid.

Qatar, better known for its skyscrapers and sports diplomacy, has stepped into the heart of Africa's Great Lakes crisis with a calculated mix of quiet confidence and deep pockets. And in doing so, it's taken on more than just high-level talks. Doha has engaged directly with M23 leadership—an unusually hands-on move that suggests it's not here to play neutral observer but active broker.

What followed was more than symbolic. The momentum from the Doha meeting carried forward to Washington, where the foreign ministers of the DRC and Rwanda signed a Declaration of Principles. With U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio in attendance, the document pledged to respect sovereignty, halt support for armed groups, and accelerate a comprehensive peace agreement. It even nodded toward regional economic integration—an ambitious goal, but one that might turn the politics of peace into



Last month, Qatar cemented its role as a trusted mediator in the conflict between DR Congo and Rwanda. Photo courtesy.

something more sustainable.

The resulting call for an “immediate and unconditional ceasefire” was the headline, but beneath it lay a deeper significance. For a nation like Qatar to bring two bitter rivals to the table at all was, in many respects, a diplomatic victory in itself.

But the optimism didn't last long. Within days of the agreement, M23 rebels seized the mineral-rich town of Walikale in North Kivu, driving home the message that this was no frozen conflict waiting for a signature—it was a war in real time, unfolding amid high-stakes international diplomacy.

Still, Qatar didn't flinch. Instead, it doubled down on its role, pushing forward with direct peace talks between the Congolese government and M23—negotiations that began in earnest this month in Doha.

For those of us who've followed the region for years, the symbolism of Doha hosting these talks cannot be overstated. The Great Lakes region

has long been a geopolitical minefield. The DRC's mineral wealth—including cobalt, copper, tantalum, and gold—makes it a magnet for foreign interest. Yet, peace processes have historically been brokered in more conventional capitals: Addis Ababa, Nairobi, or even Brussels. That the center of gravity is shifting to the Gulf reflects a broader global trend—one where multipolar diplomacy is defining the new world order.

Qatar, blending strategic neutrality with formidable investment muscle, is swiftly stepping into diplomatic voids across the globe. “Qatar may be small in size, but its ambitions are anything but,” noted international analyst Mussa Lugete, speaking from Tanzania in a recent interview with UTV.

“Its neutrality and financial clout give it leverage that traditional mediators often lack.” That leverage matters in the DRC, where previous peace frameworks have crumbled

under the weight of mutual distrust and external meddling.

And the urgency couldn't be clearer. In recent weeks, at least 50 civilians have been killed in eastern Congo as fighting escalates. Hospitals have been shelled. Entire villages have been emptied.

The United Nations maintains that some 4,000 Rwandan troops are embedded with M23—accusations Kigali strenuously denies. Still, the Congolese government has responded by severing diplomatic ties with Rwanda, escalating the rhetoric to match the violence.

“This isn't just a Congolese problem,” a political analyst based in Kigali, Rwanda, emphasized on conditions of anonymity. “It's a regional crisis with global implications—especially given the mineral wealth at stake.”

It's not just diplomacy driving Qatar's footprint in Africa. Its economic investments across the



continent are telling. In Rwanda, Qatar Airways holds a significant stake in RwandAir and is the majority investor in the \$2 billion Bugesera International Airport—a project poised to turn Rwanda into a regional aviation hub. Further south, Qatar Airways also acquired a 25% stake in South Africa's Airlink, widening its operational reach to 15 African nations.

Energy is another frontier. Through the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), Doha has partnered with Italian energy firm Enel to develop renewable projects in sub-Saharan Africa, starting with South Africa. These are not just random financial moves—they're strategic plays, aligning investment with soft power and influence. «These investments are strategic,» he noted. «They're about securing long-term influence and access to critical resources.»

Other analysts agree. «Qatar's model is unique—it couples mediation with money,» said Charles Mangwende, a Zimbabwean political economist based in Nairobi. «This isn't just about peace; it's about shaping the post-conflict economy. The message is clear: If Qatar helps you make peace, it's also ready to help you rebuild.»

Yet, for all its ambition, the risks are tangible. The DRC remains a perilous landscape, both politically and physically. Armed groups operate with impunity. The national army is fragmented. Local governance structures are weak. Economic infrastructure is underdeveloped or outright destroyed in some areas. As Christian Moleka of DRC-based think tank Dypol has pointed out, «Without sustained pressure on all actors,



Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar and DRC President Félix Tshisekedi at the COP26 World Leaders Summit in Glasgow, November 1, 2021. Photo courtesy.

particularly Rwanda, these peace efforts could unravel overnight.»

And even as Qatar tries to act as an honest broker, skepticism lingers. Critics wonder whether Doha's economic interests could compromise its neutrality. After all, investing in conflict zones can easily morph into backing certain factions over others. But so far, Qatar appears to be walking that tightrope carefully—offering just enough incentive to each side to keep them talking, without tipping the scales.

The African Union, for its part, has voiced support for the Doha talks. In a public statement, AU officials lauded the negotiations as a «constructive approach to restoring regional stability and protecting civilian lives.»

That endorsement adds political cover and legitimacy to Qatar's

role. And given the AU's sometimes limited capacity to enforce peace, having a wealthy and proactive partner like Qatar is increasingly seen as a practical advantage.

Still, the clock is ticking. The conflict has already driven millions into neighboring Uganda, Burundi, and South Sudan—further stretching the region's fragile humanitarian systems. And while mineral exports continue, the instability means that much of the wealth never reaches ordinary Congolese. Instead, it fuels more arms, more fighters, and more despair.

So, what comes next? The Doha peace talks offer a window—however narrow—for a political solution. But even the most favorable outcome will be just the beginning. The real work will lie in building institutions,

ensuring accountability, and weaving together the shattered social fabric of eastern Congo.

In that context, Qatar's dual-track approach—investment and mediation—offers a model worth watching. Whether it succeeds will depend on its ability to remain a neutral arbiter while helping to rebuild a broken nation. That's a high-wire act by any measure.

«Qatar's actions could redefine the geopolitical landscape of the Great Lakes region,» concluded Lugete. «Whether it succeeds or not, its bold approach is reshaping the rules of engagement.»

And in a world where old alliances are fading and new ones are being forged in real time, that may be exactly what Africa—and the world—needs.

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# South Sudan in Crisis: Power Struggles, Broken Promises, and a Nation Betrayed

By Adonis Byemelwa

South Sudan officially became the world's newest and youngest nation on July 9, 2011, joining the ranks as the 54th country in Africa. That day marked a moment of immense hope for millions who had long dreamed of freedom, self-determination, and peace. But not long after, that hope began to fade. In 2013, just two years post-independence, the country was plunged into a brutal civil war.

Another wave of violence erupted in 2016, turning that hope into a lingering nightmare. Since then, South Sudan has struggled to stay afloat, held back by continuous unrest, weak public institutions, fragile leadership, and a political scene riddled with mistrust.

Recurring violence, especially at the local level, remains a key obstacle to lasting peace. Political tensions, mismanagement of public resources, and rampant corruption have made things worse.

And while the peace agreement—specifically, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)—signed in September 2018 gave the region a glimmer of hope, implementing its provisions has proven difficult.

A transitional government formed in February 2020 promised stability but soon faced overwhelming challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic, severe flooding, the economic fallout from the conflict in neighboring Sudan, and a failing oil-dependent economy. The transition period was extended to February 2027, yet the road ahead remains uncertain.

The country's heavy reliance on oil exports—largely transported through Sudan—makes it particularly vulnerable. The conflict in Sudan has not only disrupted trade routes but also complicated efforts to rebuild



South Sudan's President Salva Kiir refutes claims of war profiteering amid civil unrest. Photo courtesy.

South Sudan's economy.

Coupled with poor fiscal discipline and lackluster public financial management, the country's capacity to respond to crises—be it climate disasters or market shocks—remains dangerously low.

And these shocks are frequent. South Sudan continues to face the wrath of climate change. Since its independence, the nation has endured relentless natural disasters—droughts in 2011 and 2015 and historic floods

nearly every year from 2014 to 2024.

The latest flooding in 2024 affected over 735,000 people across 38 counties, deepening the humanitarian crisis. With food insecurity rising sharply—around 7.1 million people at risk of hunger during the lean season between April and July 2024—many families are stuck in survival mode. Women and children, as always, bear the heaviest burden.

The return of nearly 800,000 people—refugees, asylum seekers,

and returnees—following the ongoing crisis in Sudan has put additional strain on a country already struggling to feed, shelter, and care for its citizens. South Sudan is a nation in pain—its wounds unhealed, its recovery fragile, and its future unclear.

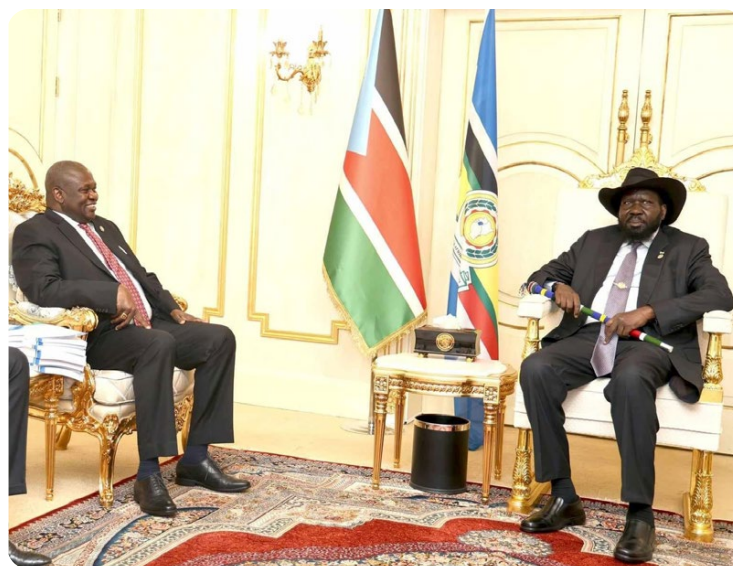
At the heart of the country's ongoing conflict lie two powerful and stubborn rivals: President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar. Their struggle is not just political—it's deeply personal, tribal, and historical.

The fallout between the two in 2013 was less about policy and more about power—who gets it, who keeps it, and who is left behind. What started as a political disagreement between the president and his former deputy quickly spiraled into a deadly ethnic war, pitting Kiir's Dinka community against Machar's Nuer.

Since then, their power struggle has defined every chapter of South Sudan's painful story. The numerous ceasefires and peace deals—often signed with photo ops and smiles—have rarely held for long. Distrust runs deep.

Though the two men came back together under the 2018 peace deal, it's been a rocky reunion. Analysts like Suphian Mbalazi, a Tanzanian who spent years studying in Sudan, notes that «Kiir and Machar's rivalry has become the cornerstone of instability in the region. It's no longer just about them—it's about two visions of a nation that have never truly reconciled.»

Mussa Lugete, a political analyst based in Dar es Salaam, adds, «This is a leadership standoff driven by survival instincts. Neither side wants to give up control, and neither fully trusts the peace process.» Ibrahim Rabi, another Tanzanian expert, echoes the sentiment, noting, «The real tragedy here is that the people of



At the heart of the country's ongoing conflict lie two powerful and stubborn rivals -President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar.

South Sudan are held hostage by this deadlock.”

From across the globe, other voices have weighed in. Dr. Fatima Al-Hassan, a conflict resolution expert from Cairo, argues that “International diplomacy has failed to adequately challenge the entrenched interests of South Sudan’s ruling elite.”

Meanwhile, American analyst Lauren Petty warns, “The more global powers remain divided on South Sudan—China watching the oil, the

U.S. pushing democratic reform—the longer this impasse will last.”

South Sudan’s story is also one of missed opportunities. When Kenyan opposition leader Raila Odinga traveled to Juba, there was hope his influence could help break the gridlock. However, he was denied a chance to meet Kiir while the president was in closed-door consultations.

For many, it was a telling moment—symbolizing not only the

stubbornness of leadership but also the shrinking space for diplomatic mediation. As it stands, the people of South Sudan continue to live in limbo.

Many still reside in displacement camps, education is in shambles, healthcare barely functions, and livelihoods have been washed away—both literally and figuratively. The streets of Juba carry the weight of a nation still searching for peace, caught in the power play of two men

who can’t, or won’t, let go.

The future of South Sudan will not be determined by peace agreements written in ink but by bold decisions, accountability, and healing. It requires leaders who can think beyond their tribes and ambitions—leaders who prioritize the people over power. Until then, the world watches a nation stall at the crossroads, hopeful but uncertain.

# Sudan: Decision Time For Africa And The International Community

By Rebecca Tinsley\*



Sudanese refugees entering South Sudan through the Joda crossing point in November 2023. .Photo credit UNHCR,Ala Kheir.

**S**udan’s rats are silent. After two years’ conflict, Sudanese civilians have eaten the country’s rodent population, such is the level of starvation. To make matters worse, as the West cuts humanitarian aid, the UN estimates 70% of the emergency kitchens feeding besieged communities across Sudan have closed.

April 15th marks two years since the

Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) turned against their former colleagues in the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Both militias, the SAF and RSF, want control of the country’s lucrative gold, gum Arabic and livestock businesses. The fighting has left 150,000 dead and 12 million people (out of a population of 49 million) displaced. The Sudanese group for Defending Human Rights and Freedoms

estimates another 50,000 civilians have disappeared.

Reputable human rights watchdogs accuse both forces of torturing, raping, killing, and bombing civilians with impunity. The militias terrorise the nation’s Black African ethnic group, picking up where they left off in Darfur, Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains years ago.

The UN Population Fund and

Amnesty say sexual violence targeting women and girls is systematic. The NGO SIHA documents such attacks, estimating that the RSF is responsible for 90% of cases. They believe the gang rapes are in the hundreds of thousands. First responders, doctors, nurses and people running soup kitchens are singled out for torture and rape.

The SAF, which claims (without



authority) to be the legitimate government of Sudan, recently recaptured the capital, Khartoum, where the RSF held thousands of civilians in detention centres. Human rights groups report women had been shackled and driven away in pickup trucks, destined for slavery

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, expressed horror at reports of beheadings and summary executions in the streets of Khartoum. Identity-based crime (killing people because they are ethnically Black and African) is rife. The Red Cross believes 70-80% of hospitals are non-operational and subject to drone attacks.

How did it come to this?

In 2019, a popular revolution overthrew the Islamist regime of Omar Bashir, wanted by the International Criminal Court for genocide in Darfur. A technocratic civilian transitional government then tried to create a secular, democratic, pluralist, transparent administration. They began investigating the massive corruption of officials in the Bashir regime, including members of the RSF and SAF. Fearing justice, the RSF and SAF together overthrew the transitional government in 2021. But two years ago, the generals leading the militias turned on each other, vying for control of the nation's resources.

Initially, Sudanese civilians were

largely united in rejecting both the RSF and SAF. They created local emergency response rooms providing medical help and food. Lately, however, regional armed defence groups have been co-opted by the two militias. Analysts fear that the RSF will retreat to Darfur, and the international community – lacking interest or political will – may acquiesce to partitioning the country, leading to more ethnic elimination.

What happens now?

The UK government hosts a conference on April 15th, aimed at ensuring access for humanitarian aid because the militias use hunger as a weapon of war. Germany, France and the EU will be present, but not the two militias. Human rights groups and Sudanese civil society are calling for mechanisms to protect civilians.

Hala Al-Karib of SIHA said of the conference, «It is important to emphasize that humanitarian aid and efforts to protect civilians should not be contingent upon ceasefire agreements. Furthermore, while Sudan faces the largest humanitarian crisis in the world, with famine declared in many areas, it remains the least funded crisis, receiving less than 5% of the support needed for its people.»

Diplomacy has achieved little, and only the optimistic believe either militia is sincere about negotiating a

ceasefire. Both commanders believe they can bomb and kill their way to victory. Meanwhile, there is an urgent need to restore the internet which currently reaches only 30% of the population. Having access to telecommunications would allow civilians to receive money from relatives overseas, to find food and to track military manoeuvres that threaten them.

Moscow, which vetoed a British UN resolution aimed at protecting civilians, supplies arms to both sides in exchange for gold. The SAF has granted Moscow a military base at Port Sudan, a prospect that ought to concern the international community.

Analysts believe Egypt and Saudi Arabia back the SAF since both are keen to prevent civilian-run democracy anywhere in the region. Meanwhile, the SAF is taking the United Arab Emirates to the International Court of Justice, accusing the Gulf kingdom of supplying the RSF with weapons in exchange for gold – a charge denied by the oil-rich, gold-trading nation. The SAF also says Chad and South Sudan facilitate the delivery of arms which fuels the RSF killing machine. Analysts fear the region, already volatile, could tip into a wider war endangering millions more people.

Where are the African solutions to African problems?

Africans have rightly criticised the West's selective morality, elevating human rights when convenient. Yet the silence of African leaders on Sudan is notable. Moreover, Western nations are reluctant to apply sustained pressure to individuals and entities prolonging the conflict. The West launders money for Gulf nationals and sells arms to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Yet, the same Western nations have ratified UN conventions aimed at preventing the gross human rights abuses that continue in Sudan. Do they stand by international law or the law of the jungle?

As the SAF expels the RSF from Khartoum, does the international community ignore a conflict that will send millions of migrants toward Europe? Or does it work together to apply targeted smart sanctions, asset seizures and travel bans on the families of individuals and entities – both the officers directing the killing and their financial advisors in Europe and America – to make the consequences personal? We owe it to the brave civilians of Sudan to offer action rather than pious words of condemnation.

\*Rebecca Tinsley's book about Sudan, *When the Stars Fall to Earth*, is available in English and Arabic on Amazon.

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# Africa's Rising Global Influence

By James Woods\*

One in four people on this planet will be African by 2050. This demographic wave is already breaking, reshaping global markets and geopolitics in ways the world is only beginning to grasp. When the African Union was granted a permanent seat at the G20 last year, joining the ranks of the world's largest economies, it wasn't just a ceremonial nod. It was a stark acknowledgement that Africa's voice is indispensable on the world stage. After decades of being relegated to the margins of international affairs, Africa is stepping confidently into a new role as an agenda-setter, growth engine, and power broker in its own right.

Africa's influence begins with its people. The continent's population has surged tenfold over the past century to over 1.4 billion, and it's on track to reach about 2.5 billion by 2050. In simple terms, more than 25% of the world's people will be African by mid-century, up from just 10% in 1950. This youthful boom contrasts sharply with greying populations in Europe and East Asia. Forty percent of Africans are under 15, and the median age in many countries sits below 20. Meanwhile, societies from Italy to Japan are struggling with shrinking workforces and economic stagnation.

This "chronic youthfulness" is a potential economic engine for Africa and the world. A growing labour force and consumer base can supercharge innovation and consumption if paired with education, jobs, and stability. By 2030, Africa's integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will connect 1.7 billion people with a combined \$6.7 trillion in consumer and business spending. In my experience advising global companies on market entry in Africa, I've seen forward-looking firms recognise that Africa's young entrepreneurs and consumers will drive the next wave of global growth. They are building presence now,

understanding that a quarter of humanity's needs and preferences will soon be shaped in Africa.

Yet harnessing this demographic dividend is not automatic. It demands urgent investment in education, infrastructure and healthcare, areas where Africa still lags and where global partners can make a difference. The upside is enormous, today Africa accounts for just 3% of global GDP despite being 17% of the world's population. The gap between population and economic weight represents untapped potential, a chance to vastly expand the continent's share of global prosperity. The message is clear: empowering Africa's youth is not just Africa's responsibility but the world's smartest investment in our collective future.

## *An Economic Awakening and Opportunity*

For those paying attention, Africa's economic pulse is quickening. Despite global headwinds, the continent remains the second-fastest growing economic region after Asia. In fact, 12 of the world's 20 fastest-growing economies are projected to be African. From the tech startups of Nairobi and Lagos to the bustling

factories of Ethiopia and Rwanda, a new narrative is emerging, one of markets and opportunity, not just minerals and aid.

The scale of Africa's emerging market is impossible to ignore. The AfCFTA's launch is knitting together 54 nations into what could become a \$3+ trillion common market, fostering intra-African trade and industrialisation. Pan-African infrastructure projects, new transport corridors, railways, and digital networks, are slowly bridging the longstanding gap between Africa's economic potential and its reality. Consumer spending is rising alongside a middle class that already rivals the entire U.S. population in size. As a former diplomat now working in EurAsia-African market strategy, I often remind investors that Africa's economies are diverse and evolving today, sectors like finance, telecommunications, and agribusiness are as critical as oil and gas.

Global businesses have noticed. Over the past decade, we've seen a quiet rush of multinationals establishing footholds: automobile plants in West Africa, tech incubators in East Africa, and burgeoning finance hubs in Southern Africa.

Investment isn't pouring in just out of altruism, it's driven by hard metrics of growth and return. Yes, challenges from bureaucracy to power shortages persist, but companies that crack the code stand to win big. Those who cling to outdated stereotypes of Africa as too risky or underdeveloped are increasingly outflanked by bolder competitors (often from Asia or the Middle East) who see what's coming. As one CEO confided to me, "We can't afford not to be in Africa, that's where the customers will be."

Importantly, Africa's economic rise is not just about outsiders tapping a new market, it's about Africans shaping the terms of engagement. Homegrown innovation is blossoming, consider how mobile money platforms from Kenya revolutionised finance, or how Nigeria's Nollywood and Afrobeats music have captured global audiences, creating billion-dollar creative industries. Africa's growth story, in other words, is increasingly being written by Africans and that is attracting partners who respect the local context.

## *Newfound Geopolitical Clout*

Africa's ascent isn't only economic; it's geopolitical. With 55 nations



By 2030, Africa's integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will connect 1.7 billion people with a combined \$6.7 trillion in consumer and business spending

speaking increasingly in unison, Africa has become a power broker in international fora. The clearest illustration came in September 2023, when the African Union secured a permanent seat at the G20, finally giving the continent a voice among the world's elite economies. This move, placing the AU on equal footing with the European Union in the G20, strengthens the voice of the Global South and signals that global governance must adapt to new realities.

Consider the United Nations, African states make up nearly 28% of UN member countries, and their votes have weight. On issues from climate change to global security, African blocs have shown they can sway outcomes when they coordinate. During recent UN climate negotiations, for example, African negotiators were pivotal in pushing through a historic "loss and damage" fund to support vulnerable nations. And in debates over the Ukraine conflict, several African countries charted independent stances, a reminder that Africa's support cannot be taken for granted by any superpower.

Africans are also leading on the global stage like never before. A Nigerian heads the World Trade Organisation, an Ethiopian runs the World Health Organisation, firsts that reflect both personal excellence and Africa's broader push for representation. In peace and security, African-led initiatives are stepping up, regional blocs have mediated conflicts from Sudan to Mali, and African peacekeepers operate in some of the world's toughest missions. When I served as a diplomat, I saw how coalitions of African nations could tip the balance in international negotiations, whether on trade rules or environmental commitments. That clout is only growing as Africa's economic and strategic importance expands.

Crucially, Africa's diplomacy today is about partnership, not patronage. Gone are the days when global powers could dictate terms in



The result of Africa's rising stature is a scramble for influence that extends from Washington to Beijing, Moscow to Ankara.

African capitals with a Cold War-era mentality. Whether it's negotiating investment deals or vaccine supplies, African leaders are asserting terms that benefit their populations and walking away when the terms aren't good enough. This new confidence is resetting relationships long defined by donor-recipient dynamics. As one African head of state recently put it, "We are not anyone's junior partner; we are equal stakeholders in solving global problems." The world is being put on notice: to work with Africa in 2025 means treating Africa with respect and an eye toward mutual gain.

## *The Global Courtship of Africa*

The result of Africa's rising stature is a scramble for influence that extends from Washington to Beijing, Moscow to Ankara. Major powers are courting Africa with an intensity not seen since the post-colonial era, but today, Africa has far greater agency in this courtship. China, notably, has spent the past two decades investing heavily across African nations, building roads and railways, financing mega-projects, and becoming Africa's largest trading partner. Trade between Africa and China hit a record \$254 billion in 2021, roughly four times the US-Africa trade volume. Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative has etched its footprint from Mombasa's ports to Nigeria's freeways, but Africans have learned to negotiate hard on these

deals, aware of the debt pitfalls that some projects carry.

The West has taken notice and is pivoting. The United States convened dozens of African heads of state for a U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, pledging investment and acknowledging that America's engagement had been on the back foot. The European Union is rolling out its "Global Gateway" plan, aiming to mobilise hundreds of billions in sustainable investments to compete (and cooperate) in African development. Even new players like Turkey, India, and the Gulf states are deepening ties, opening military bases, signing trade pacts, investing in agriculture and tech. In this multipolar scramble, African countries are not passive pawns. They are leveraging competition to their advantage, seeking the best deals for infrastructure, security, and market access. As an advisor, I advise clients that successful engagement in Africa now means understanding this competitive landscape, partnerships must be genuine and deliver tangible benefits, or they will be swiftly sidelined by a rival suitor.

This global attention is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it means more choice and agency for African states, a welcome change from being tethered to one sphere of influence. On the other, it risks proxy dynamics if external powers treat Africa as merely the next arena for great-power rivalry. The responsibility lies partly with African leaders to guard their

sovereignty and people's interests, and partly with foreign partners to engage in a way that strengthens Africa's capacity rather than undermines it. So far, the signs are encouraging, African governments have shown they can push back (cancelling or renegotiating unfavourable deals) and also that they can collaborate regionally to present a united front, as seen in the joint African position on climate finance or the push for debt relief during the pandemic.

## *From Aid Narratives to an Investment Mindset*

Underpinning all these shifts is a profound change in narrative. For far too long, discussions of Africa in global media and policy circles revolved around aid, poverty, and instability, real issues, to be sure, but not the full story of a continent brimming with innovation and drive. That old narrative is crumbling. In its place is an understanding that Africa is not a charity case; it's a crucial partner and an emerging leader in addressing shared challenges like climate change, pandemics, and migration.

This isn't to say Africa's challenges have vanished. Many nations still grapple with conflict, the coups in West Africa, the turmoil in the Sahel, the long fight against extremist groups. Economic inequality and unemployment, especially among youth, remain pressing concerns. But the framing of these issues is changing from "How can the world save Africa?" to "How can Africa and the world partner to solve global problems together?" When COVID-19 struck, Africa experienced the stark inequity of vaccine access, prompting countries to start building their own vaccine production capacity. In climate discussions, African nations remind the world that they contribute only ~3% of global emissions but suffer outsized consequences and they are demanding (and beginning to receive) compensation and green investment rather than just sympathy.

As someone who has moved from private sector to diplomacy and



back into the business of advising investors and organisations in Africa, I've observed that perception lagging reality is one of the biggest hurdles to progress. Boardrooms still sometimes see African opportunities as exotic or peripheral. That must change and it is changing, as data and success stories break through old prejudices. The global firms we counsel on reputation and strategy in Africa are learning that sincerity matters, engaging local partners, investing in communities, and respecting cultural nuances are not just feel-good measures but strategic imperatives. Companies that treat Africa as just another extraction site or sales target quickly find themselves facing backlash and failure. Conversely, those that invest in Africa's human capital, through training, local leadership, and social investment, often discover a competitive edge and enduring goodwill.

The narrative shift is also visible in African societies themselves. There's a rising confidence and Pan-African pride among Africa's youth, fuelled by home-grown successes in music, sports, and technology that garner global acclaim. This cultural influence, from Afrobeats topping charts to African tech gurus leading Silicon Valley teams is soft power that strengthens Africa's hand. It changes how the next generation of global leaders, consumers, and citizens perceive the continent. Every time a startup in Ghana secures international funding or a film from Senegal wins an award, the stereotype of "underdeveloped Africa" fades a bit more, replaced by recognition of a continent of creators and leaders.

### And....

What does all this mean for the world? Firstly, it's time to adjust our mental maps. Africa can no longer be an afterthought in global decision-making, whether in business strategy or foreign policy. Governments and CEOs alike must update their playbooks to reflect an Africa that is younger, faster-growing, and more united than at any point in modern history. That means including African



Ngozi Okonjo Iweala from Nigeria heads the WTO.

voices at the table when debating global trade rules, tech governance, or pandemic preparedness. It means crafting policies towards Africa that emphasise investment, trade, and knowledge exchange rather than paternalistic aid packages.

Secondly, the world must invest in Africa's success, not out of charity, but enlightened self-interest. When Africa prospers, the world prospers. A stable, thriving African continent will supply the global economy with new markets, talented labour, and innovation. It will also enhance global security: economic opportunity is the best antidote to extremism and mass migration driven by despair. Supporting Africa's development through fair financing, infrastructure projects, and capacity-building is one of the best bets to ensure global stability in the 21st century. Ignoring Africa's rise, on the other hand, would be a folly of historic proportions, leaving everyone more vulnerable to transnational threats from pandemics to climate shocks.

Finally, African leaders and citizens carry the responsibility to capitalise on this moment. Global influence is not handed over; it is earned and asserted. The African Union's entry into the G20 is a beginning, not a climax. To truly shape the global agenda, Africa will need to deepen unity where it counts, combat corruption

that undermines its credibility, and continue to tell its story to the world boldly and truthfully. The onus is on Africa's champions in government, business, and civil society, to ensure that increased clout translates into positive outcomes on the ground: jobs for the young, clinics and schools for communities, and peace where conflict still smoulders.

The stage is set for an African century, one in which the continent's sheer energy and ingenuity remakes the world. The only question is whether the rest of the world will embrace it or lag behind. In the halls of diplomacy and in corporate boardrooms, the message needs to ring loud and clear: engage with Africa now or miss out on defining the future. For too long, Africa's rise was a story postponed. Now, it's a story unfolding in real time, urgent, unstoppable, and globally consequential. The wise will not just watch this space; they will be part of it. The world's balance of power is tilting, and at its fulcrum stands Africa, no longer on the sidelines, but at the center of our shared tomorrow.

If there's one takeaway, it's this, partnering with Africa is not a favour to the continent, it's an investment in a shared future that the entire world has a stake in. The time to act on that recognition is now, while the opportunities of Africa's rise can

still be seized and the challenges jointly addressed. The train is leaving the station, and it's bound for a future where Africa's influence is a cornerstone of global affairs. Will we get on board?

\*James Woods is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of GlobiQ International, a strategic advisory firm delivering high-level communications, geopolitical intelligence, and bespoke consultancy services across Africa, Europe, the UAE, and the United States.

Previously a senior diplomat, James represented Malawi across Europe, serving in Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Andorra, Monaco, and the European Union. His tenure strengthened key economic and political partnerships.

James holds an Executive MBA from Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, and an MSc from the London School of Economics and Political Science. An Archbishop Desmond Tutu Fellow (African Leadership Institute) and former affiliate of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, James integrates rigorous academic grounding with substantial practical experience. He is also a seasoned entrepreneur, structuring and leading international ventures spanning strategic communications, sports diplomacy, technology innovation, agriculture, energy, and global trade.



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# Power and the Future of a Continent: The High-Stakes Race for the AfDB Presidency

By Adonis Byemelwa

In the humid heart of Abidjan, where West Africa's coastline hums with life, something quieter—but far more consequential—is unfolding. The upcoming May 2025 election for the presidency of the African Development Bank (AfDB) may appear procedural, but beneath the surface, it's a high-stakes geopolitical chess match.

Behind the closed doors of embassies and boardrooms, global heavyweights—the United States, China, Europe, and Russia—are quietly maneuvering. For them, this isn't about governance. It's about influence. Because to lead the AfDB is to hold the purse strings to Africa's future—and everyone wants a hand on the wheel.

Since its founding in 1964, the AfDB has done more than just fund infrastructure and education—it's helped shape the very narrative of African development. But with over \$200 billion in assets, it's not just a development bank; it's a lever of power.

"This institution represents more than capital," says Pierre Gueganic, an international economic consultant based in Dubai. "It's a platform where visions for Africa are either empowered—or compromised."

And that's why the race to replace outgoing President Akinwumi Adesina has become a magnet for international strategizing. Adesina's two terms saw the AfDB soar: a stronger capital base, a rock-solid AAA credit rating, and a deft navigation through global shocks—from the COVID-19 pandemic to climate crises. His shoes are big. The competition to fill them is fierce.

Five candidates are officially in the running: Senegal's Amadou Hott, Zambia's Samuel Munzele Maimbo, Mauritania's Sidi Ould Tah, Chad's Abbas Mahamat Tolli, and South



Africa's Bajabulile Swazi Tshabalala.

Others—like Rabah Arezki, a former chief economist at the bank, and Hassatou Diop N'Sele, its current VP of finance—are still swirling in speculation. But regardless of the final roster, the election isn't just about resumes.

It's about aligning Africa's ambitions with the world's competing interests without losing the plot. "You have to be a diplomat, a visionary, and a realist all at once," says Gueganic. "And above all, you must protect the bank's autonomy."

That's no small feat. The AfDB's unique voting structure requires a dual majority: one from African member countries and another from non-African donors like the U.S., China, Japan, and Europe.

And because votes are tied to financial contributions, the global north holds disproportionate sway. Washington and Brussels typically back candidates who align with their emphasis on transparency and

market-friendly reforms.

Beijing, meanwhile, favors those who are infrastructure-focused and friendly to its Belt and Road ambitions. Russia, less flush with cash, plays the politics card—offering security partnerships and a counterbalance to Western dominance. The result?

Candidates must campaign in two worlds: speaking the language of African integration while nodding to international expectations. One misstep, one overt alignment, and credibility can evaporate.

This makes the coming weeks critical. Diplomacy is happening in whispers—in coffee shops in Addis Ababa, in hotel lobbies in Nairobi, and the quiet side meetings of ECOWAS and SADC summits.

Regional blocs hold weight, not just numerically but symbolically. "Winning ECOWAS or SADC support is essential," notes Gueganic, "but a candidate must avoid appearing like a proxy. The AfDB president must be African in vision and multilateral in

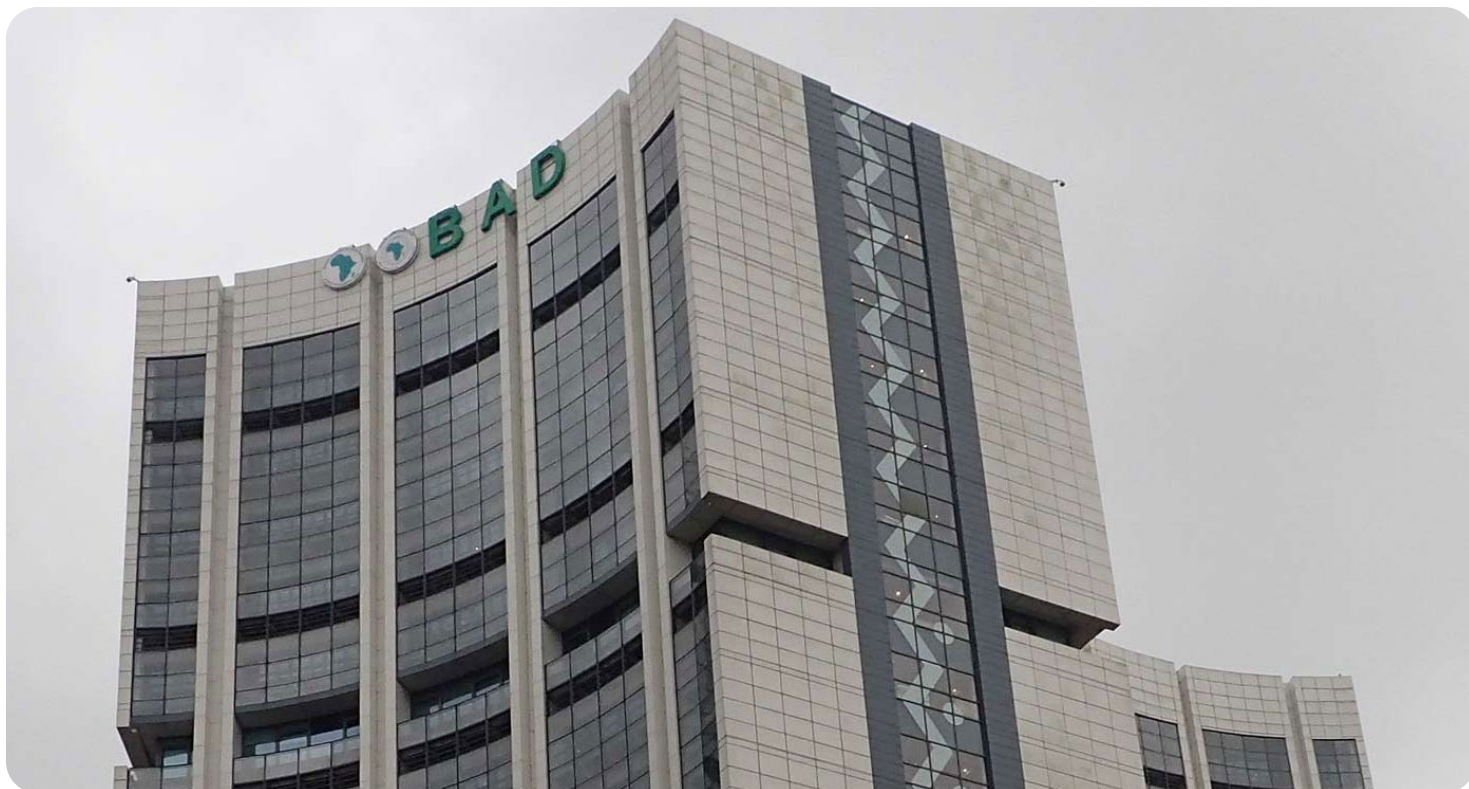
execution."

This is where a commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals becomes more than branding—it's a common language that can unify both African priorities and donor expectations. Infrastructure, clean energy, food security—these are shared concerns. They ground lofty platforms in tangible needs.

Still, this race is not just about institutional ideals—it's deeply human. Adesina's legacy is a reminder of how leadership can restore faith in Africa's ability to manage its own capital and development narrative.

Under his watch, the AfDB launched a \$10 billion COVID-19 response facility and, just this January, issued a \$2 billion sustainable bond, reaffirming global investor confidence. But challenges are mounting.

Currency depreciation, growing debt, and rising youth unemployment loom large. And looming even farther, but just as real, are the reverberations



of global politics. Donald Trump's hints at new tariffs, should he return to the White House, have African trade experts sounding alarms.

"If protectionism surges in the West, intra-African trade will be our only cushion," warns Dr. Jean-Claude Maswana, a Congolese economist based in Tokyo. That puts pressure on the next AfDB president to accelerate the African Continental Free Trade Area—not in speeches, but in customs reforms, rail links, and logistics corridors.

That urgency is reflected in the candidates' pitches. Abbas Mahamat Tolli, with his deep roots in regional central banking, argues that the bank must become "truly pan-African—transparent, accountable, and inclusive."

For many in Francophone Africa, there's a quiet hope that leadership will reflect greater linguistic and regional diversity.

Rabah Arezki, though unofficial, is already calling for "ethical leadership that confronts corruption head-

on," pointing to Senegal's recent political shifts as signs of a broader appetite for reform. In Hassatou Diop N'Sele, if she runs, many see a calm, capable technocrat who knows the bank's inner workings and can offer continuity without stasis.

Meanwhile, Bajabulile Tshabalala of South Africa, currently the bank's senior vice president, brings her own quiet power to the race. Admired for her composure and competence, she represents not just gender balance but institutional memory.

"She's the kind of leader who builds consensus while keeping the trains running," says a former colleague. In a field of policy heavyweights, that practical edge matters. And in a continent where women remain vastly underrepresented in finance, her candidacy carries symbolic weight that extends beyond boardrooms.

But symbolism alone won't shield the bank from scrutiny. During Adesina's last term, Western critiques about accountability resurfaced, culminating in a now-dismissed

allegation of mismanagement. The episode rattled nerves.

But it also underscored a deeper question: Who owns the AfDB? "This isn't just about transparency—it's about agency," says Professor Carlos Lopes, former executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

"African nations must lead Africa's bank. Full stop." That message resonates in capitals from Nairobi to Lagos. And for the next president, the balancing act will be steep: drive reforms that meet international standards without becoming beholden to them.

That's why this election matters far beyond May 29. It will signal to the world whether Africa's premier financial institution can chart its course amid competing external agendas. For those watching closely, this isn't just about loans and ledgers—it's about confidence, sovereignty, and vision. "Africa has the talent, the capital, and the ambition," says Gueganic. "What

we need now is leadership that sees the big picture, but never forgets the people on the ground."

Indeed, from the tech hub of Kigali to the ports of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, the AfDB touches lives—often invisibly but profoundly. It funds the roads traders rely on, the electricity that powers startups, and the water that sustains farming. It's the backbone of Africa's economic dreams.

In a world fracturing along old geopolitical lines, Africa needs an AfDB that's resilient, independent, and unapologetically forward-looking.

So, as the board of governors gathers in Abidjan, behind the formal votes and press statements lies a deeper truth. This isn't just a leadership contest—it's a moment of reckoning. Can Africa steer its course, through its institutions, on its terms? If so, it won't just change the AfDB. It could change the continent's trajectory for decades to come.



# Five Contenders, One Future: The Race for the AfDB Presidency

By Adonis Byemelwa



The contenders have experiences from rich and diverse backgrounds .Photo credit Business Day Nigeria.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) will elect its next president on 29 May 2025, during its Annual Meetings in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, marking the end of Dr Akinwumi Adesina's two-term tenure. Five candidates—from Senegal, Zambia, Mauritania, Chad, and South Africa—are vying for the helm, each offering distinct visions around private-sector mobilisation, regional integration, infrastructure investment, and domestic resource mobilisation. The election will be decided by a double-majority vote of the Bank's 81 governors (50%+1 of total voting power and 50%+1 of regional member votes), and the new president will be sworn in on 1 September 2025. Below, we profile each candidate's background, campaign activities, and manifesto,

and assess what they bring to Africa's premier development finance institution.

## Election Timeline & Process

### Annual Meetings & Key Dates

Annual Meetings: 26–30 May 2025 at the Sofitel Abidjan Hotel Ivoire, where the presidential election is a highlight session.

### Election Day

29 May 2025, as confirmed by the Steering Committee's clearance of five candidatures in February

### Voting Mechanism

81 governors vote under a double-majority rule—the majority of the total vote and the majority of regional members

## Inauguration

Elected president assumes office on 1 September 2025

## The Candidates

### Amadou Hott (Senegal)

Former AfDB Vice-President for Power, Energy, Green Growth & Climate Change; Senegal's former Minister of Economy, Planning & International Cooperation. Guided Senegal through the COVID-19 pandemic and established its sovereign wealth fund (FONSIS) as a model for Africa.

Private-Sector Focus: "Whatever [money] remains for development needs to be amplified – to do more with less," stressing the need to leverage capital markets and mobilise private investment.

- **Multilateral Innovation:** Advocates for equity or hybrid capital for MDBs to "significantly amplify investment, compared to bilateral funding approaches".
- **Agility & Efficiency:** Promises to cut six-month processes to weeks, "executing at speed" through technology and streamlined operations.
- **Campaign Activities:** Engaged stakeholders across Africa on "Room to Run" balance-sheet optimisation and private-sector mobilisation; pitched "Mission 300" with the World Bank to electrify 300 million Africans

### Samuel Munzele Maimbo (Zambia)

Vice-President, Budget, Performance Review & Strategic

Planning at the World Bank; former Chief of Staff to successive World Bank presidents. Officially launched his bid on 31 January 2025 in Lusaka, with backing from SADC and COMESA.

## Campaign Vision & Key Quotes

• **Jobs & Growth:** “Africa stands at a critical juncture. We need to get one billion people to work as quickly as possible by strategically supporting the industries that will improve livelihoods and ignite prosperity...”

• **Trade & Infrastructure:** Pledges to boost Africa’s share of global trade from 3 per cent, unify efforts of 1.4 billion people, and modernise infrastructure and agriculture to accelerate energy access

Maimbo has held meetings across Africa and in France, Japan, Morocco, the UK and the USA to secure votes, underscoring pan-African and global support.

## Sidi Ould Tah (Mauritania)

President of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) since 2015; former Mauritanian Minister of Economy & Finance (2008–2015).

## Campaign Vision & Key Quotes

• **Economic Integration:** “The bank’s mission is to contribute to the economic and social development of the continent. With an emphasis that is always placed on African integration”.

• **SME Financing:** Highlights that only 20 per cent of SMEs access financing, pushing for stronger financial inclusion through simplified, digital tax systems.

• **Bold Infrastructure:** Aims to strengthen infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and innovation; led BADEA to unveil an \$18.375 billion development plan in December 2024

Sidi Ould Tah has garnered endorsements from ECCAS and various observers for his track record in macroeconomic stability and cross-regional partnerships.

## Abbas Mahamat Tolli (Chad)

Governor, Bank of Central African States (BEAC) 2017–2024; Minister of Finance & Budget of Chad (2005–2008). Nominated by Chad’s government on 13 December 2024 and endorsed by ECCAS in March 2024.

## Campaign Vision & Key Quotes

• Emphasises currency stability, financial regulation reforms, and leveraging regional mechanisms to boost credit ratings for African borrowers.

• Advocates modernising internal governance at AfDB, drawing on his BEAC reform experience where reserves were increased and operational losses turned into profits.

Abbas Mahamat Tolli has mobilised support among Central African states, highlighting a unique candidacy from

a region that has never held the AfDB presidency.

## Bajabulile “Swazi” Tshabalala (South Africa)

AfDB Senior Vice-President and former CFO (2018–2024); 30 years in finance, including CEO roles at IDG Group and Barbican Advisory Group. Holds a BSc in Economics (Lawrence University) and an MBA (Wake Forest University). Resigned in March 2025 following Cabinet endorsement to comply with AfDB conflict-of-interest rules

## Campaign Vision & Key Quotes

• **Infrastructure First:** “My vision is to build a financially strong, results-driven AfDB that prioritises infrastructure, expands innovative financing solutions, and strengthens partnerships...”.

• **Hybrid Capital:** Plans to broaden hybrid instruments to diversify funding, leveraging private capital while preserving the Bank’s AAA ratings.

Bajabulile Tshabalala has led internal reforms at AfDB, co-chaired the ADF15 replenishment, and served on boards across major African corporations, underscoring her Pan-African leadership credentials.

## Expert Analysis & Outlook

The 2025 AfDB presidential race epitomises Africa’s shifting development paradigm—from aid dependency to self-reliance, private-sector leadership, and

regional integration. Hott and Maimbo champion private capital mobilisation, Tah stresses economic integration, Tolli brings central banking rigour, and Tshabalala prioritises infrastructure as the growth engine. Their diverse experiences—ranging from sovereign wealth fund creation to multilateral reform—signal that the next AfDB president will need to harmonise bold innovation with institutional efficiency.

As governors prepare to vote on 29 May, key considerations will include candidates’ capacity to:

• **Mobilise Trillions:** Transform AfDB’s balance sheet to meet the continent’s \$400 billion annual infrastructure gap.

• **Drive Pan-African Unity:** Harmonise policies across 54 countries, leveraging the AfDB’s regional presence.

• **Stimulate Private Investment:** Forge public-private partnerships and hybrid financing to de-risk large-scale projects.

• **Enhance Institutional Agility:** Streamline processes to match the fast-paced demands of modern development finance.

Whoever secures the double-majority vote must hit the ground running—agents of change in a world where “the era of aid or free money is gone”. May’s Annual Meetings will set the stage; 1 September 2025 will mark the dawn of new leadership at Africa’s most influential development bank.

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# Africa's Future in Their Hands: The Race to Lead the African Development Bank

By Adonis Byemelwa & Ajong Mbapndah L

In a moment that feels both historic and urgent, five formidable candidates have stepped forward to lead the African Development Bank (AfDB) into a new era—one defined by climate volatility, youth unemployment, digital transformation, and the stubborn persistence of poverty. But these aren't just technocrats armed with spreadsheets and statistics.

Each of them carries a vision grounded in personal experience, national context, and continental hope. Their words, shared during a stirring public conversation, weren't just policy pitches—they were pleas, promises, and in some cases, confessions of the trials Africa must overcome.

What emerged from their dialogue at a conversation with the candidates event at the Brookings Institute in Washington, DC, was not just a contest of personalities, but a clash of priorities—job creation or infrastructure first? Climate or industrialization? Policy consistency or innovation? But there was also unity in diversity: a shared resolve to reduce Africa's dependency, empower its youth, and position the AfDB as a bold catalyst, not a cautious lender.



Each of them carries a vision grounded in personal experience, national context, and continental hope.

## The Urgency of Now

The clock is ticking for Africa. With 70% of its population under the age of 25 and a projected 14 million people entering the job market each year, the need for radical action is not tomorrow's problem—it's today's emergency. Amadou Hott, former Senegalese Minister of Economy, Planning and Cooperation, captured

this urgency with rare clarity:

"Managing the climate crisis is critical, but we cannot pit development against climate. We need grant financing for adaptation, and we must ensure Africans have the energy to grow. Clean cooking, green industrialization—this isn't luxury, it's survival."

Hott's voice rang with the pragmatism of someone who has walked the halls of government and negotiated at the tables of multilateral finance. His North Star? Massive private sector investment to create jobs. "If I had a magic wand," he said, "I'd focus it on attracting investment that creates jobs, especially for youth. We need to scale solutions, not conversations."

But scaling anything in Africa without infrastructure is like building castles in the sand. That's why Bajabulile "Swazi" Tshabalala, the Bank's current Senior Vice President and former South African finance executive, made it plain: "We cannot develop without energy. Our

industries are running on generators. If I could wave a wand, I'd close the infrastructure gap—mobilize \$100 to \$170 billion annually and deliver. Infrastructure is the bridge to inclusive growth, and we must walk it."

Yet for Swazi, this isn't a numbers game. Her voice softened as she spoke of Mozambique's annual typhoons—storms that didn't exist when she was a girl. "Climate change is no longer abstract. Adaptation is harder to sell than mitigation, but it's about resilience. Investing in adaptation is investing in Africa's sustainable development."

In this race, infrastructure and climate are not opposite poles but two ends of the same rope Africa must pull together. That rope, according to Zambia's Samuel Munzele Maimbo, must also bind the continent in policy consistency.

"We keep rebuilding from scratch—every government, every donor change. It's failing our agriculture, failing our integration," Maimbo said



Managing the climate crisis is critical, but we cannot pit development against climate. We need grant financing for adaptation and to ensure Africans have the energy to grow, says Amadou Hott





If I could wave a wand, I'd close the infrastructure gap—mobilize \$100 to \$170 billion annually and deliver. Infrastructure is the bridge to inclusive growth, says Bajabulile "Swazi" Tshabalala

with gentle but firm conviction. His vision? A truck driving from Cape to Cairo without a border post. "It's policy consistency that makes that possible, not just highways."

The Zambian brings a calm thoughtfulness rooted in years of multilateral experience, including time spent rebuilding fragile states like Afghanistan. For him, true transformation lies not only in money but in mindset. "Fragile states need peace processes, not just funding. Every construction project must create jobs. Every investment must build competence. Our youth don't just need jobs—they need purpose."

### Who Will Champion the Private Sector?

While the youth are at the heart of every candidate's vision, the engine that must power their aspirations, they agree, is the private sector. And no one made that case more vividly than Sidi Ould Tah of Mauritania.

"Africa has everything it needs: 17% of the world's people, 23% of uncultivated arable land, and 65% of our population under 25. The challenge is converting our wealth into prosperity," he said, voice rising with conviction. "My priority? Support micro and small enterprises—they're



**SIDI OULD TAH (MAURITANIA)**  
Former President  
Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa

Africa has everything it needs from population, to uncultivated arable land, The challenge is converting our wealth into prosperity—says Sidi Ould Tah

90% of our economy. If we don't support them, we're not serious about development."

Tah's experience running a regional development finance institution gives him rare authority. "I don't speak in abstract. I've multiplied prosperity before—I can do it again. The AfDB must become the catalyst for all financial institutions on the continent."

From Chad, Abbas Mahamat Tolli reinforced that message with a candid critique of the system's inertia. "By 2050, one in four people will be African. Yet we still depend on others for data, for trade, for financing. We

must support innovation and make merit-based decisions that reflect our realities."

His call for transparency in how AfDB funds are used—especially in fragile states—was direct and refreshing. "Dialogue must be key. We must focus on the most vulnerable. And every project must be results-driven, not just process-heavy."

Abbas's vision includes digital public finance, clean energy access, and above all, women's empowerment. "We must shorten the delivery time. Celebrate deals closed, not just deals opened. Youth and women must lead the way."

Indeed, the call for gender inclusivity echoed across the board. "It's absurd," Hott noted, "that women and youth are still sidelined. We must build economic opportunity for them, not tomorrow, today."

Swazi took it further, promising

that in her administration, financial inclusion for women will be structurally embedded. "Our leadership, our financing applications, our decisions—gender inclusion won't be an afterthought. It will be a pillar."

### A Vision Beyond Borders

What each candidate articulated is more than a policy platform. It's a window into the leadership philosophy they would bring to the Bank. Some, like Hott, are engineers of efficiency, focused on speed, scale, and systems.

Others, like Maimbo, offer the wisdom of continuity, calling for trust and policy maturity. Tah speaks as a visionary economist with a deep belief in local entrepreneurship. Abbas sees governance and institutional performance as non-negotiables. But they're united in something rare: optimism grounded in realism.

Their 100-day visions reveal that. A bold leap in domestic resource mobilization—from 15% to 20%. Early action on healthcare systems. A data revolution for African economies. A crackdown on bureaucracy that delays disbursements. A youth council to shape decisions. Strategic use of artificial intelligence in infrastructure planning. Financial products designed with women at the center, not the periphery.

What was perhaps most moving, however, was their humility in closing remarks. "My competitors are poverty and economic downturn—not the



**ABBAS MAHAMAT TOLLI (CHAD)**  
Former Minister of Finance and Budget of Chad

We must support innovation and make merit-based decisions that reflect our realities, says Abbas Mahamat Tolli

colleagues I share this stage with,” said Maimbo with quiet grace.

“We must invest in strategic projects and be responsible stewards of our people’s hopes,” added Abbas. “I will deliver from Day One,” Tah promised, his voice steady with conviction. “This is a generational point,” Swazi reminded. “We must focus on productivity and solutions that work.”

Hott, always the connector, brought it home: “I will unite all candidates to navigate the storm ahead. The winner is Africa—we’re just waiting for the white smoke.”

As the African Development Bank prepares to choose its next president,

it must weigh not only experience and skill, but heart and vision. These six contenders offer no shortage of either. In their words, Africa doesn’t lack leadership. It lacks no brilliance, no urgency, and certainly no resolve. The question now is whether those holding the pen of history are ready to match the moment with courage equal to the stakes.

This isn’t just an election—it’s an inflection point. The next president won’t just inherit a mandate; they’ll inherit the faith of a continent and the pressure of a generation that refuses to be left behind.

The conversation was anything but passive. From the audience came

bold, unfiltered questions—pressing the candidates on everything from corruption to slow project rollouts, the weight of debt, and the gap between polished strategies and lived African realities. One young voice captured the room’s urgency, asking, “How will you ensure Africa doesn’t just survive, but thrives?” A woman entrepreneur followed with a challenge: “Will you fund us as seriously as you fund roads?”

These weren’t questions for applause. They were calls for accountability. A reminder that the next AfDB president must answer not only to policy papers but to people—young, eager, burdened, and

brimming with untapped promise.

The atmosphere wasn’t just charged with ideas—it pulsed with purpose. It became clear: the role awaiting the winner isn’t just about financing infrastructure or shaping strategy. It’s about becoming a bridge between past inertia and future possibility, between lip service and life-changing impact.

Because this election isn’t about who gets the title. It’s about who carries Africa forward—with vision, with urgency, and with the understanding that she cannot, and will not, wait.

# From Aid To Prosperity: Samuel Maimbo’s Bold Vision To Power Africa’s Future

By Ajong Mbapndah L

In a period where Africa stands at the crossroads of profound change, few voices resonate with more clarity and urgency than that of Dr Samuel Munzele Maimbo, Zambia’s candidate for the African Development Bank presidency. In an exclusive conversation with Pan African Visions Managing Editor Ajong Mbapndah L, Maimbo shares not just a campaign pitch, but a lived journey — one rooted in years of leadership, resilience, and unwavering belief in Africa’s boundless potential. With palpable energy, he speaks of a continent ready to shift from cycles of aid to cycles of self-powered growth, driven by trade, digital innovation, and the spirit of its young people. This is not just a candidacy — it’s a movement built on lived experience, deep continental engagement, and a bold vision for Africa’s future, says Dr Samuel Maimbo

*May we know how your campaign for the AfDB has gone so far?*

Dr Samuel Maimbo: It’s been going



Our young people are not waiting. They are innovating, hustling, and creating. Our job is to build the digital highways they can run on, says Dr Samuel Maimbo

very well. The messages that I’ve been sharing with governments on the continent have been resonating. People are looking for three things. First, they want to grow their economies fast. They’ve got young people who are looking for jobs. They’ve got economies that they need to grow. The messages I’ve been sharing about how we grow our economies faster have resonated well.

Secondly, all of them are looking

to strengthen their financial sustainability. They need help raising significantly higher money resources, something I’ve been doing at the World Bank for a while. Thirdly, they are looking for an efficient and effective African Development Bank — An institution that can use its voice, its finances, and its staff, to support their own development agenda.

*If elected, what are some of the*

*core themes that you are going to work on for the AfDB?*

Dr Samuel Maimbo: My primary goal is to get African countries trading with each other. The Continental Free Trade Agreement that we have signed is the largest continental trade agreement that we have. The key for us is not to spend another ten years negotiating its implementation, but to implement it as quickly as possible.

Number two is connectivity on the continent. Infrastructure investments that connect different parts of the continent so that it is easier to travel, it is easier

to trade on the continent. Number three is energy. We must invest in our energy; we connect our energy pools. Africa has huge potential not only to power itself but also to export power.

Number four, not necessarily in that order, is agriculture. Africa has to feed itself more than we currently are doing. Because each time we spend, every year we spend \$50 billion importing food, we are literally taking capital and exporting it. That’s



capital that should be going to eat others' economies so that we can grow collectively.

*You have been crisscrossing the continent, talking to stakeholders, what is the message you are getting from stakeholders and is there any concrete support towards your candidacy?*

Dr Samuel Maimbo: The one thing that is coming out is a sense of urgency. The leaders that I am meeting on the continent are an enlightened group. They know what they want for their people. They are very clear in their visions of growing the economy quickly. They don't need any more lectures from anybody. They are looking for support.

The support that I am finding is from countries who are looking for an institution that is run professionally, that is quick in making decisions, that moves from projects designed to implementation much faster, that aligns its priorities with their own national government priorities and also speaks on behalf of African governments on African-wide issues. That's what they are looking for, and that's the primary base of my support.

*In terms of support from your own government, the Zambian government, how supportive have they been to you?*

Dr Samuel Maimbo: The Zambian government's support has been solid. From the president to the entire cabinet to the government to every Zambian citizen, wherever I have gone, this is no longer Sam's vision. It is a shared vision. But what's even more important for me is not just the Zambian vision.

It is the vision that is coming from the SADC region. I have gone to every SADC region, and the support has been strong. The COMESA countries' support has been strong. I have gone to every part of this continent, North, East, West, South – the resonance, the sound; the drumbeats of



Dr Samuel Maimbo, seen here with PAV's Managing Editor Ajong Mbapndah L., says he will curb Africa's dependence on aid and champion a new era of prosperity with strong focus on intra African trade

change have been beating hard, the drumbeats of economic development and pace.

The one thing that I'm pursuing, and that I will pursue from day one, is to support the transition from an aid-to-debt cycle that we have been in constantly, to one of growth and prosperity. We can power this growth and prosperity cycle with the resources we already have on the continent. What we need is our self-confidence.

What we need is belief in each other, to trade with each other, to connect our infrastructure, to let our young people work together with a digitally enabled growth strategy that is strong. That gives me confidence. Of course, I'm realistic. We have significant challenges on

the continent, but I'm willing and ready to roll up my sleeves and work through them.

*Talking about support, we noticed that SADC has two candidates in the running, are there any fears that your support in the region may be chipped off by the other candidate?*

Dr Samuel Maimbo: SADC has one official candidate. South Africa decided to get into this race after we had completed a competitive process with seven candidates. The other candidates I have worked with acknowledge the legitimacy of that process. I am not worried about losing SADC support on this particular occasion. I have gone around to all of

the heads of state other than South Africa, and their commitment to standing by the SADC decision remains strong.

But I have not taken that support for granted. I have gone back to share my vision. It is that shared sense of purpose about growing our economies, supporting our young people, connecting our economies, and investing in infrastructure. That's the base of my support. It's that base that I'm taking to COMESA. I'm taking beyond the shores of our continent to our non-African shareholders. That's what I'm carrying into the election on May 29.

*A question on the man you're running to replace, Dr Akinwumi Adesina. Anything you'd like to say about the eight years of his leadership?*

Dr Samuel Maimbo: I firmly believe that the leadership of the African Development Bank is a relay race. Every president takes on the mantle, and runs as fast as they can, with a sense of belief in what they want to accomplish. They all face the challenges of their time, and I am confident that when I take on the baton, I will face challenges that are unique to my presidency.

My goal is to make sure that when I hand over to the next president, they will see that I have run a good race, I have done everything I possibly can to support our governments, to support our people, and to support our institution.

*There are five candidates in the race, any last word to the voters out there as to why you are the best man for the job at this point?*

Dr Samuel Maimbo: None of the candidates in this race are my competitors. The only things I'm competing against are poverty, hunger, lack of power, unemployment, and inflation. That's who I am competing with. I will continue that fight until the election, and I will accelerate that fight the day after the election.



SADC chairperson, President Emmerson Mnangagwa and other leaders have endorsed the candidature of Dr Samuel Munzele Maimbo for the AfDB Presidency.



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# Cultivating Africa's Future: Adesina's Enduring Legacy at the AfDB

By Ajong Mbapndah L



Dr Akinwumi Adesina transformed the African Development Bank (AfDB) into a more dynamic and influential institution on the global stage

In an eight-year tenure defined by bold reforms, massive resource mobilization, and a relentless focus on agriculture and industrialization, Akinwumi Adesina transformed the African Development Bank (AfDB) into a more dynamic, influential institution on the global stage. Under his leadership, the Bank launched signature initiatives such as the Feed Africa Strategy and Desert to Power program and championed a recalibration of Africa's GDP to include its vast natural capital, efforts that collectively mobilized billions for development projects.

His tenure also saw unprecedented recognition, from being named "African of the Decade" to receiving Kenya's highest national honour, reflecting widespread acclaim from peers and governments. Yet his presidency was not without controversy, as he weathered allegations of procedural impropriety

and staff dissent, criticisms he has consistently denied but which underscore the complex legacy he leaves behind. This article explores Adesina's top successes, the accolades and criticisms he faced, and the political support that underpinned his rise from Nigerian Agriculture Minister to one of Africa's most prominent development financiers.

## Modernizing the African Development Bank

When Dr. Adesina assumed the AfDB presidency on 1 September 2015, he inherited an institution seen as cautious and risk-averse. He immediately prioritized operational decentralization, bringing decision-making closer to regional offices to improve project turnaround times and responsiveness to national priorities. Under his watch, the Bank's private sector operations doubled, with a sharpened risk appetite that

saw a surge in guarantees and equity investments tailored to catalyze local business growth.

Simultaneously, he strengthened the Bank's balance sheet through "Africa50" and strategic capital increases, ensuring the AfDB could leverage \$1 of its capital to mobilize \$3 from external investors. By the end of his term, the AfDB was widely regarded as a more agile, market-driven institution capable of delivering large-scale projects faster than ever before.

## Signature Initiatives and Top Successes

Among Adesina's most celebrated programs is the Feed Africa Strategy, aimed at making the continent self-sufficient in food production by 2025. This initiative has mobilized over \$20 billion in investments for sustainable agriculture, benefiting millions of smallholder farmers

with improved inputs and storage facilities. Another flagship program, Desert to Power, targets the Sahel region by developing 10 gigawatts of solar power capacity, thereby electrifying more than 250 million people across 11 countries.

In April 2025, Adesina announced the mobilization of \$2.2 billion for agricultural processing zones in 28 Nigerian states, a project designed to reduce post-harvest losses and strengthen value chains. He also championed the Africa Medical Supplies Platform during the COVID-19 pandemic, coordinating bulk procurement of critical goods and lowering prices by up to 40 per cent for member countries. Finally, his push for the inclusion of natural capital in GDP calculations—a campaign adopted by African ministers at G20 meetings—has the potential to unlock more favourable debt ratios and attract long-term financing.

## Awards and Recognition

Dr. Adesina's dynamic leadership earned him a cascade of prestigious awards. In June 2017, he was awarded the World Food Prize, often dubbed the "Nobel Prize for Agriculture"—in recognition of his transformative work in Nigeria and across Africa. That same year, he received the Gene White Lifetime Achievement Award for Child Nutrition and the Borlaug CAST Communication Award for his advocacy on agricultural science.

In 2019, readers of African Leadership Magazine named him "African of the Year," and in late 2024 he was voted the inaugural "African of the Decade" at the All-Africa Business Leaders Awards in Rabat, Morocco. Most recently, in March 2025, Kenya's President William Ruto conferred upon him the Chief of the Order of the Golden Heart, the country's highest national honour, applauding his passion for Kenya's



Adesina's work at the AfDB earned him recognition across the globe.

economic development. He has also been recognized by Nigeria as the Commander of the Order of the Niger and holds multiple honorary degrees from global universities.

## Perception Among African Leaders

Across the continent, heads of state and government ministers lauded Adesina's vision for a self-reliant Africa. At the February 2025 African Union Summit, leaders from over 30 countries paid tribute to his decade-long impact, with UN Secretary-General António Guterres calling for global financial reforms to match the momentum he set at the AfDB. Zimbabwe's President praised his "exceptional leadership" that bridged private sector capital with public policy, noting the spillover benefits for regional integration.

In Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari credited Adesina's policy coherence with attracting over \$5.6 billion in private investments to the agricultural sector during his ministerial tenure, a foundation that bolstered his AfDB credentials. Such endorsements underscored the widespread political support that enabled Adesina to pursue ambitious

reforms.

## Critiques and Controversies

Despite broad praise, Adesina's presidency faced its share of critics. In 2020, a group of anonymous AfDB staff levelled 16 allegations of procedural irregularities against him, prompting an independent integrity investigation—Adesina was ultimately cleared, but the episode exposed tensions around Bank

governance and staff inclusion. Critics also argued that his high-profile global engagements risked diverting attention from grassroots implementation, and some civil society groups questioned the social safeguards on large infrastructure projects.

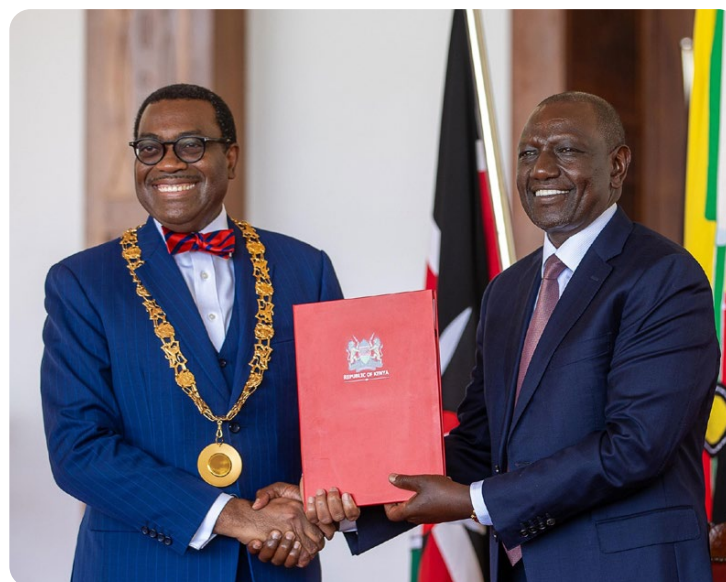
Furthermore, while his push to end opaque resource-backed loans was lauded by many, detractors in borrowing nations feared it could

limit access to urgent financing in the short term. Nevertheless, few disputed the overall positive impact of his tenure, even as discussions continue on strengthening institutional transparency.

## Background and Political Support

Before ascending to the AfDB helm, Akinwumi Adesina served as Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture from 2010 to 2015, where he revolutionized the sector by introducing e-voucher systems for fertilizer subsidies and mobile-based farmer registration, reducing corruption and expanding outreach to over 6 million farmers. His rapid rise owed much to the backing of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, who in 2020 publicly urged African heads of state to defend Adesina amid integrity probes, emphasizing his track record of results. Similarly, President Goodluck Jonathan first nominated him for the AfDB presidency in 2015, and President Buhari's administration provided "incredible support" during his re-election campaign in 2020, underscoring a rare bipartisan consensus on his leadership.

As Akinwumi Adesina prepares to step down in September 2025, he leaves behind an AfDB markedly stronger, more respected, and deeply engaged in Africa's core development challenges. His initiatives in agriculture and energy, efforts to mobilize private capital, and global advocacy for financial reforms have set new benchmarks for continental development. While debates over governance and equity endure, Adesina's legacy is characterized by tangible gains—in livelihoods, infrastructure, and institutional capacity—that will shape African development finance for years to come. His tenure stands as a testament to the impact of visionary leadership backed by strategic political support.



I am proud of the journey we started together ten years ago; I can see its fruits. Kenyans can feel its benefits, said President Ruto in bestowing honours on Adesina



# From Waste to Wealth: How Nigeria's Flare Gas is Powering a Greener, Richer Future

By Adonis Byemelwa

In the shadow of Nigeria's vast oil legacy lies a quieter revolution—one powered not by black gold, but by the gas that once went up in flames. For decades, flare stacks have lit up oilfields across the Niger Delta, burning off what many saw as waste. But today, those flames are being reimagined—not as pollution, but as potential.

Nigeria, holding the largest proven gas reserves in Africa—about 209 trillion cubic feet (TCF)—has long been a paradox. With energy potential that could light up the continent, it's also one of the world's top gas-flaring countries. In 2024 alone, the country flared around 5.5 billion cubic meters (BCM) of gas—4% of global flaring. That's not just a statistic—it's an opportunity lost, an environment harmed, and an economy shortchanged. But the tides are turning.

## From Waste to Wealth: Nigeria's Wake-Up Call

The market value of the flared gas in 2024 is staggering—\$1 billion, or over ₦1.5 trillion, effectively burnt into the sky. But it's not just about money. That same wasted energy could've powered 30 billion kWh of electricity—the equivalent of 12 billion liters of diesel, potentially saving Nigerians ₦16.8 trillion in energy costs.

And then there's the environmental cost. With over 15 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted from this practice, the impact on communities, agriculture, and air quality—especially in oil-rich regions like the Niger Delta—is tangible. Children grow up under skies tinged with smoke. Farmers watch their soil degrade. Flaring isn't just a policy issue—it's a lived experience.

## The Industry Steps In: NEUMAN & ESSER and SPG Steiner Lead the Charge



NEUMAN & ESSER technology is uniquely primed to help Nigeria optimize its gas potential.

NEUMAN & ESSER, a leading reciprocating compressor manufacturer with almost 200 years of experiences, and SPG Steiner, a leading German engineering firm, with decades of technical mastery are coming with solutions. These companies aren't just bringing solutions—they're laying the groundwork for a new gas economy.

NEUMAN & ESSER is developing its market presence with their local partner MILAT Nigeria. The aim is to bring the compression technology as well as hydrogen generation experiences closer to end users. When developing complex solution for flare gas utilization, they work together with SPG Steiner, a world-class expert in modular gas processing, clean combustion systems, and cryogenic storage. Its subsidiary, Prematechnik, has been pioneering advanced combustion systems since

1957, ensuring not only efficiency but environmental compliance.

What truly sets this partnership lead by NEUMAN & ESSER apart is the complex solution of complete flare gas utilization. They are coming with the tailored solution. Based on the project specifics, they can design technology to any kind of end product – being that CNG, LPG, LNG or gas-to-power application. It can also be adapted to utilize stranded gas locally for the same purposes as for the flare gas.

This is particularly relevant for Nigeria, where oilfields are scattered, infrastructure is patchy, and the need for mobile, scalable solutions is critical.

## Policy & Progress: NGFCP and the Road to 2030

Regulatory momentum is finally catching up. In 2022, Nigeria's

upstream regulator, NUPRC, launched the Nigerian Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme (NGFCP). By 2023, 49 flare sites were awarded to 42 companies tasked with capturing and utilizing flare gas using proven, commercial technologies.

This program feeds directly into the World Bank's Zero Routine Flaring by 2030 initiative, aligning Nigeria with a global mission to curb methane emissions and boost energy equity.

NEUMAN & ESSER and SPG Steiner, through their energy-efficient modular systems, are supporting this transformation with total power consumption as low as 2836 kW while integrating gas treatment, liquefaction (LNG, LPG, C5+), compression, storage, and even powerplant integration. The vision is bold: turn flare sites into microenergy hubs, supplying gas, electricity, and even exportable fuels.



## Real Impact on the Ground: Beyond the Technology

It's one thing to talk about technology and another to see its impact in the field. In Port Harcourt and Lagos, MILAT Nigeria Ltd isn't just selling equipment—they're training local engineers, expanding workshops, and scaling field services. The team has already contributed to refinery rehabilitation projects involving multi-stage pumps, reciprocating compressors, and centrifugal systems—modernizing aging infrastructure and ensuring Nigeria's energy backbone can support its gas ambitions.

These aren't abstract achievements. They translate to jobs for local technicians, power for underserved areas, and a cleaner future for communities long burdened by pollution.

The flare gas that once symbolized waste now holds the promise of energy independence, economic diversification, and environmental healing.

## Toward a Sustainable Energy Future

Nigeria stands at a critical crossroads. With a young, growing population, urgent energy needs, and global scrutiny on emissions, the path forward must be both sustainable and strategic. The combination of smart policy, innovative technology, and local capacity building could make Nigeria not just a participant, but a leader in the global energy transition.

As global attention increasingly turns to methane reduction and cleaner fuels, Nigeria's flare gas—if harnessed correctly—could become its most valuable untapped asset. With companies like NEUMAN & ESSER and SPG Steiner driving



Working in partnership with MILAT Nigeria, NEUMAN & ESSER services have excelled in training local engineers, expanding workshops, and scaling field services.

innovation on the ground, and with local partners like MILAT bridging the gap between engineering and community needs, the pieces are finally falling into place. The future of gas in Nigeria isn't up in smoke anymore—it's being redefined, refined, and redistributed. One flare site at a time.

**Jens Wulff, Managing Director  
of NEUMAN & ESSER**

## Deutschland says:

Our vision is very clear, we want to have a positive impact with our solutions at many different levels.

The mission is first of all, reduce toxic and greenhouse gas emissions to improve the environment. Secondly, by making energy and value carriers available, to set the preconditions for in-country value generation. Thirdly, to train people on the maintenance of the equipment. Finally, in the long

run, more and more components of the solution can be sourced locally, and the proven technology can even be exported to other regions with a strong Nigerian Value Chain share.

We do transfer our mission into the reality and actions across Africa. The commitment of us is very clear and I hope the market, customers and business partners can feel this focus of us.

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# Q & A With Jens Wulff On NEA's Growing African Portfolio

By Ajong Mbapndah L

As Africa grapples with the complex balance of challenges and opportunities in its energy sector, the NEUMAN & ESSER GROUP (NEA), has established itself as one of the most dependable partners in helping the continent optimize its potential from an engineering and technological standpoint.

In a Q and A with PAV, Jens Wulff, the Managing Director of the plant engineering company NEUMAN & ESSER DEUTSCHLAND, says the company will not relent on its unique approach of investing in the development of local content, capabilities and knowledge.

With a footprint in some 14 countries and counting, Jens Wulff hopes that there could be more political stability in some countries so NEA could further deepen its contribution to the development of Africa

**Can you shed light on the trainings you have had in Cote d'Ivoire, South Africa, Egypt and others?**

NEUMAN & ESSER GROUP (NEA) strongly believes in the training and continuous know-how transfer to our partners and customers. Because of this, we have several training platforms that we offer.

The trainings you have in mind are those which we did just last year in Africa. Also, here we speak about two different scopes and scenarios. Firstly, we do organize regularly so called "Training on the Road" sessions. These are the events, where we invite several end-users, engineering companies and other business partners for a 1-day training course. We inform about new trends, products and technologies and also combine this with practical examples and applications.

Another event we did was the organization of 2-days training under



NEA strongly believes in the training and continuous know-how transfer to our partners and customers, says Jens Wulff

the organizational umbrella of ARDA (African Refineries and Distributors Association). This training was done in Abidjan, Ivory Coast and participants registered from all over the Africa. We had over 30 participants from around 8 different countries. We discussed the basic designs of reciprocating compressors and their components, but also the proper applications as well as revamping opportunities.

On top of these two types, we regularly conduct trainings in our Training center in Germany and also provide individual trainings directly at our customers' sites. We also see quite an appetite for online training with customers focused on one particular topic, where we go more into the details and focus on customer demands.

**May what impact do you think this trainings can have on the fortunes of the companies you have worked with?**

We provide our customers

not simply with the product. Reciprocating compression is a sophisticated and critical technology. It is very often a key component of the process, and its reliable and efficient operation is crucial for the final output of production. Moreover, the correct operation and maintenance can be a key benefit also to the costs optimization including energy efficiency.

This is why it is very important to make sure that our customers and their technical teams understand not only the way to properly operate and maintain the equipment. It is equally important that they understand the design, as this leads to the awareness of functionality and thus avoids incorrect use.

Moreover, customers are also learning new technologies and solutions during our trainings, and we can look into possible improvements of their equipment. Therefore, many of our customers value our training sessions as a kind of technical

consultancy.

**There are companies out there who need training but scared of the cost, how affordable are the trainings?**

I understand this reservation. We all are living in limited and optimized budgets. However, I believe that the money spent on the training is money well spent as it reflects directly in the way of proper use of the equipment which is a very high investment in itself. And our "Training on the Road" is free of any cost, you need just to sign up and join one of the sessions.

Another alternative is to organize practical focused online training. Usually, it works the way that a customer contacts us and asks if we could prepare such training focused on particular components or solutions. It depends on the complexity, but very often, we provide such training for free. This can be discussed individually.

However, I need to repeat again, there is never lost money, which you would invest to the training of your people. This is my personal belief.

**Beyond the trainings, what other unique opportunities and products does NEA have available to enhance the African Energy sector?**

Our focus and solutions for the Energy sector is determined by our diverse product portfolio. We are experts with almost 200 years' experience producing reciprocating compressors and have recently expanded our product range with electrolyzers for hydrogen generation.

This means we have quite large applications in the traditional Oil & Gas but are also focusing on enabling Energy Transition. We do



continuously develop and improve our products. But thinking about Africa specifically, it comes to my mind to maybe highlight two topics.

We have developed and provided our own solution for the online monitoring of complex processes and applications called XPLORE. Knowing the distances in Africa as well as very often remote applications of our equipment or its high criticality, I believe it is essential to have a good understanding of the performance. You can make your equipment “transparent” with the online monitoring; you can recognize exceptional behavior or wear before any damages or troubles. Moreover, you can also give us access to monitor, and we can provide you with our specialized group of engineers regular reports and monitoring from our side.

The second solution we offer, is the “Flare Gas Utilization” program we have. Partnering with another German company SPG Steiner, we are offering the complete solution of flare gas utilization. We offer technical consultancies to tailor the design of process and technology of utilization of this gas towards LNG, CNG, LPG or just gas-to-power, as per the business plan of our customers. We can design and produce all equipment and install it directly on-site. This we see as a way of converting the flare to the business opportunity.



The growth of intra African projects is a very positive development and essential for the growth of the continent, says Jens Wulff

***In terms of the big energy events across the continent, which are some of the ones that potential clients can catch NEA at?***

These days there are probably too many events across Africa. We are not able to participate in all of them, as much as we would like.

We regularly participate in the ARDA Week and the Africa Energy Week in Cape Town. I recognize those events as the Global Africa drivers.

Last year, we participated in the Global Africa Hydrogen Meeting in Windhoek, and we will return

there this year too. Moreover, as the Mozambique Gas and Energy Summit as well as MSGBC did not happen last year, we will plan to take part in those as well.

***You are one now amongst the most well-traveled and connected energy actors across the continent today. What are some of the fascinating things you see, and what are some areas you would like to see improvements on to get the attention of NEA?***

Thank you very much for complimenting me. Yes, I do travel across Africa as much as I can. I do think that only the continuous market presence gives you a chance to really understand the market and I am very happy that my company – NEUMAN & ESSER shares this belief.

I really appreciate the growth, especially at the gas segment. There are many things happening and more to come. But what makes me really happy to see in Africa is the start of development of “intra-Africa” projects. I see it as essential for the economic growth of the continent. It does not seem right that a big amount of the oil or gas production is mainly for the overseas use and African countries are than importing final products.

What I would appreciate to see more is still a more sustainable development of the downstream segment, being refinery or petrochemical, and also fertilizers production should come soon. This would bring the value added to the continent, create jobs for a larger number of people and this would increase the standard of living.

We are at the beginning of this path, but I can see that things are moving in the right direction and that makes me optimistic about the future.

***Any last word to energy actors and potential partners in Africa on the merits of counting on NEA?***

We have done quite a lot during the last 4 years. We are covering with our local footprint already 14 countries and are generally very active. We have always adapted quickly to change, and challenges and we always aim to develop local capabilities and knowledge.

In the case of the energy sector, as many of us. I am hoping for more political stability in some of the countries that could help to develop the continent of Africa further. Any new developments or projects, not only in the energy sector, cannot be developed nor financed in an instable environment.



NEA does not just sell products but works with customers to ensure that the investment is worthwhile, says Jens Wulff

# PRESS RELEASE



## PETRODIVE Relaunches Saturation Diving Operations in Central Africa with Théo Mavrostomos

**DUBAI, APRIL 23, 2025** – PETRODIVE, a key player in underwater operations, proudly announces the launch of **its saturation diving operations**, marking a major milestone in its expansion strategy.

Following a period of significant technical investments, PETRODIVE is now offering its clients a certified saturation diving system that meets the highest standards of safety and performance. It is also the result of a strategic partnership between PERENCO, DIXSTONE and PETRODIVE, an alliance rooted in mutual trust and operational excellence.

**“This launch reflects our ongoing commitment to providing operational flexibility to our clients. It enables us to respond swiftly to complex needs, deploy teams for extended deep-water missions, and above all, ensure service continuity,”** said Stéphane Troté, Founder and CEO of PETRODIVE.

This relaunch is driven by the strong synergy between the expertise of our French divers and the long-standing dedication of our Central African personnel, who have played a key role for over 20 years.

**“Developing local content remains at the heart of our commitment in Central Africa. It is a cornerstone of our sustainable strategy on the continent,”** added Stéphane Troté.

### Théo Mavrostomos Joins PETRODIVE as Official Ambassador

A global pioneer in saturation diving and the first and only person to reach a depth of 701 meters during COMEX's Hydra X experiment, Théo Mavrostomos joins PETRODIVE as an official ambassador.



**“We are honored to welcome Théo Mavrostomos to our team. He embodies the technical excellence, human discipline, and courage that inspire our vision of the profession. With him by our side, we reaffirm our ambition to push the boundaries of commercial diving,”** said Stéphane Troté.

With a team of highly skilled divers and cutting-edge equipment, PETRODIVE is fully equipped to take on the most demanding technical challenges, particularly in offshore CIRM projects (Construction, Inspection, Repair & Maintenance).



# PRESS RELEASE

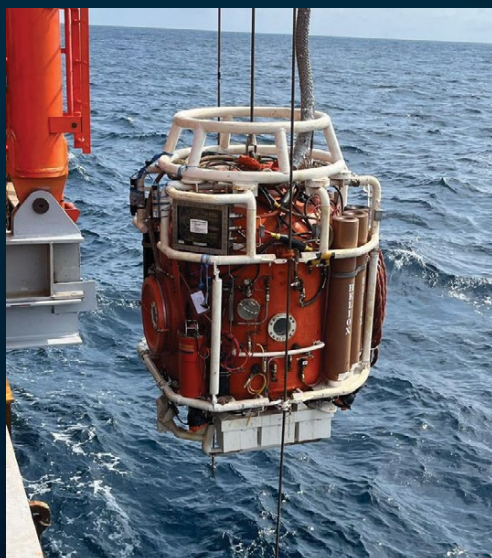


## ABOUT PETRODIVE

PETRODIVE is a multinational company specialized in underwater services for the Maritime and Oil & Gas industries. Headquartered in Dubai, the company operates with international oil and gas companies, primarily in **Central Africa** (Congo, Gabon, Cameroon), **the Caribbean** (Trinidad and Tobago), and **South America**.

With subsidiaries across **Africa**, the **Middle East**, and **the Caribbean**, PETRODIVE stands out for its expertise, technical precision, and ability to operate in the most extreme environments.

**This strategic relaunch marks a bold step forward, reaffirming PETRODIVE's position as a leader in commercial diving.**



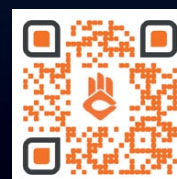
Romain Orlandini, PETRODIVE SAT Technical Manager with Théo Mavrostomos (on the right)



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# Hon. Dewitt B. vonBallmoos: Architect of Liberia's Social Security Transformation

By Adonis Byemelwa

**H**on. Dewitt B. vonBallmoos is not just a name synonymous with Liberia's social security renaissance—he is the architect of its transformation, the steady hand steering NASSCORP from obscurity to distinction.

With a calm authority and a fierce commitment to institutional reform, he has breathed life into what was once a bureaucratic relic, turning it into a modern, efficient, and respected force within Liberia and beyond. His story is one of leadership rooted in deep professional knowledge, guided by vision, and defined by tangible, impactful results.

His presence in Liberia's public service ecosystem has been as transformative as it has been enduring. Over the last three decades, vonBallmoos has carved a legacy that merges financial acuity with social impact.

From his early days in the private sector to the commanding heights of NASSCORP, he has carried with him an unshakeable sense of purpose. This isn't just leadership—it's stewardship of a national mandate.

What distinguishes vonBallmoos is his rare ability to marry theory with practice. Armed with a Master's degree in Economics from Virginia State University and a Bachelor's in Business Administration from the University of Liberia, he blends academic excellence with a hands-on, grounded approach to management.

But degrees alone don't tell the full story. It's the way he has used this knowledge, refined by international certifications and honed through years of on-the-ground leadership, that makes him exceptional.

His career beginnings in the private sector foreshadowed the bold strategist he would become. At Tri-Star Trading Company in Nairobi, he quickly established a track record of boosting returns and securing profitable contracts—a precursor



Hon. Dewitt B. vonBallmoos is not just a name synonymous with Liberia's social security renaissance but also the steady hand steering NASSCORP from obscurity to distinction

to his later ability to optimize large institutional investments.

Later, at Lonestar Telemarketing in Liberia, he executed operational overhauls that increased efficiency and profitability, showing an early flair for organizational turnarounds.

When he stepped into NASSCORP in 2006 as Deputy Director-General, the institution was crying out for modernization.

By the time he was confirmed as Director-General in 2013—after serving as Acting DG from 2012—it was clear that his leadership was more than just competent; it was visionary.

Reappointed in 2017 and again in 2022, vonBallmoos has proven to be not just a leader for the moment, but

one for the long haul.

And what a transformation it has been. Under his watch, NASSCORP's investment portfolio expanded from a modest \$4.7 million in 2006 to a commanding \$50 million, with total assets surging past \$81 million.

These aren't just numbers on a balance sheet—they represent the security and future of thousands of Liberian workers and their families. Through strategic diversification into real estate, equity, and commercial ventures, he has reengineered the institution's financial base to be both resilient and growth-oriented.

But vonBallmoos hasn't confined his vision to the financial side. He has redefined what it means for a social security agency to be truly responsive.

Through the implementation of the amended NASSCORP Act in 2016, coverage was extended to previously excluded government officials, and a modest increase in contributions from employers and employees was secured—smart, sustainable reforms that have strengthened the fund's long-term viability. These moves required not only technical understanding but political savvy and stakeholder trust, all of which he has in abundance.

Then there's the infrastructure story, another pillar of his legacy. VonBallmoos led the development of NASSCORP's state-of-the-art headquarters and oversaw the construction of eight regional offices, bringing services closer to the people they serve. It's not about buildings—it's about access, visibility, and credibility.

The Jahmale Diagnostic Center in Paynesville stands as a powerful example of his forward-thinking approach. Equipped with cutting-edge medical equipment, it fills a vital gap in Liberia's healthcare system and showcases how social security investments can serve broader societal needs.

Even in the housing sector, vonBallmoos has shown bold initiative. Partnering with the National Housing Authority, he championed the development of 250 affordable homes in Jah Tondo Town. These aren't just projects; they're statements. Statements that say social security should touch lives beyond pensions—it should build communities, literally.

Yet, his influence doesn't end at Liberia's borders.

VonBallmoos's international footprint is as compelling as his national impact. As Vice Chairperson of the ISSA Technical Commission on ICT in 2017, and now Chair of the Technical Commission on Investment of Social Security Funds, he has taken



Liberia's voice to global platforms.

There, he has pushed for the adoption of smart technologies and sound investment practices across member states. His work on the Technical Bureau of ISSA is a continuation of his belief that good governance, transparency, and innovation must be the bedrock of all social protection systems—everywhere.

Behind the titles and statistics is a man deeply committed to his country and its people. His leadership is

marked not just by systems built and policies passed, but by the everyday reality that NASSCORP now works for the people it serves. He is accessible, principled, and focused. He listens, recalibrates, and acts. He is not a leader of show, but of substance.

On NASSCORP's 45th anniversary, VonBallmoos's reflections struck a resonant chord. He expressed gratitude to the government, saluted his dedicated staff, and reaffirmed the corporation's commitment to securing the future of Liberian workers. It was

more than a ceremonial address—it was a statement of intent from a leader who sees social security not as a job, but as a mission.

That's the core of it all: Hon. Dewitt B. vonBallmoos is not simply an executive managing a fund. He is a nation-builder using the tools of economics, administration, and vision to weave a safety net that not only catches but uplifts. Through his stewardship, NASSCORP has become a model of how institutions can serve, adapt, and lead in a changing world.

In an era where public trust in institutions is fragile, vonBallmoos stands as a testament to what integrity, competence, and long-term vision can achieve.

He reminds us that effective leadership doesn't always make headlines, but it certainly makes history. And in the story of Liberia's development, his chapter is one of transformation, sustainability, and quiet but profound impact.

## Arnold Nyendwa: Building Africa's Industrial Future—From Zambia to the World

By Adonis Byemelwa

A trailblazer in every sense, Arnold Nyendwa is part of a bold new generation redefining Africa's industrial future. From Zambia's heartland, he is leading one of the most ambitious manufacturing drives on the continent—establishing Africa's largest factories in stove manufacturing, electrical kettles, refrigerators, and stainless-steel cookware. Under his leadership, AFNON isn't just building products; it's building possibilities—creating thousands of jobs, reducing dependency on imports, and breathing new life into regional economies.

Arnold's journey is a powerful reflection of what happens when visionary leadership meets strategic action. In the face of global economic headwinds, he brings sharp insights on how African entrepreneurs can leverage shifting trade dynamics, strengthen locally rooted manufacturing ecosystems, and transform challenges into catalysts for sustainable growth. This feature was conducted by a Pan African Vision Senior Reporter, capturing the essence of a new African industrial era shaped by one of its boldest voices.

*How is the stove factory you opened recently in Zambia*



A trailblazer in every sense, Arnold Nyendwa is part of a bold new generation redefining Africa's industrial future

*doing?*

The stove factory is progressing steadily, fueled by strong internal momentum and growing external support. While delays, particularly slow responses from government ministries like Finance, have posed challenges, they haven't derailed our mission. The African Union has stepped in with critical backing, giving our efforts an extra push. We're

now in the final stretch, and within the next ten months, we expect to be fully operational. It's been a journey marked by resilience, perseverance, and an unshakable commitment to building something transformative.

*Can you walk us through the process of setting up that factory? What motivated you to set up the factory?*

It started with a personal mission—saving my community and correcting a historical wrong where black people didn't own industries. Hardware is tough. It's not like selling soap or sugar; it demands serious investment, approvals, regulations, infrastructure, you name it. My studies in Development Studies and exposure in South Africa taught me how the world works—and how politics often fails to uplift people. Setting up the factory was about giving back, building real industries for real people.

*What is the economic impact that the company is expected to have in Zambia and the COMESA region?*

We're projecting to manufacture a million units per month—12 million stoves a year. That's massive. It'll not only meet COMESA market demands but also push Zambia's energy sustainability goals, particularly SDG 9. We've already created over 10,000 jobs, and it's sparking a genuine economic revolution. It's bigger than stoves—it's about shifting mindsets toward local innovation and trade.

*Capital is a challenge that most young entrepreneurs have. How was this issue resolved for you?*

Capital was a mountain. In the beginning, it felt like we were just

telling stories when we pitched to banks. Here, structures differ from the West—it's harder. No one hands you money, especially when you're 28 like me. We had to hustle hard, build credibility, and eventually, partner with big institutions. Recently, we closed a supply deal with Morocco that opened up the Middle East market. It's about staying patient, even when it feels impossible.

## What are some of the challenges that you faced in your entrepreneurship journey?

Honestly, it's been everything—bureaucracy, age discrimination, capital shortages, political bottlenecks. People don't believe someone my age can build a hardware empire. You lose friends, you lose time, and most of the time, you're on your own. No one gives you money easily; you have to survive, travel, and keep pushing even without immediate rewards. It's a lonely, expensive, but worthwhile path.

## How is the investment climate in Zambia, and what more could the government be doing to produce more success stories like yours?

The investment climate today is concerning. Since the UPND took office in 2021, there's been tighter monetary policies, stiffer regulations, and more hurdles than incentives. We need to create a local investment spirit—not just rely on FDIs that barely scratch the surface. Government needs to listen to local entrepreneurs more, create real financial support systems, and seriously cut bureaucracy. Only then can stories like mine become the norm, not the exception.

## Could you also shed some light on the dry-cleanable pillows you produce and other entrepreneurial ventures of yours?

Absolutely. We developed dry-cleanable pillows back in 2016 during our early trials between Zambia and Cape Town. It was part of setting up the pillars of AFNON. Now, beyond the stoves, we're set to expand into



It has been a journey marked by resilience, perseverance, and an unshakable commitment to building something transformative, says Arnold Nyendwa

electrical kettles, refrigerators, microwaves, and stainless-steel cookware—all proudly made in Zambia. We're building industries, not just products.

## How has the experience been for your vision in the context of the AfCFTA, and any plans to replicate the success elsewhere on the continent?

The AfCFTA is a game-changer. We're already expanding—our Morocco deal opened doors in the Middle East, and we have our sights set on East Africa next—Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda. Talks are ongoing even beyond Africa, looking at North

America too. It's been an incredible journey seeing countries finally open up, and we're ready to keep pushing the African industrial dream.

## The interview is being done at a time of global economic turmoil, issues surrounding aid, tariffs, and so on. What are the challenges and opportunities you see for Africa, and any recommendations to African governments on a way forward?

We're at a crossroads. Right now, Africa is leaking billions importing goods we could easily supply to each other, often at a fraction of the cost. Take fuel: Zambia imports 660

million liters of fuel every year from Saudi Arabia, yet Angola, right next door, could supply it 40% cheaper. It's insanity. Or look at beef: Zambia spends \$500 million importing beef from Brazil, when Namibia produces some of the finest beef in Africa, ready and affordable. Mozambique, on the other hand, shells out \$312 million importing coal from as far away as Australia, even though Zimbabwe, just across the border, could meet that demand domestically and more affordably. And Malawi? It imports \$48 million worth of grain from the West, while Tanzania has surplus grain at much better prices. Even Angola buys \$57 million worth of fish from Argentina, when neighboring countries could easily supply it fresher and cheaper. This is not just inefficiency—it's economic folly. We must urgently build local supply chains, rebuild trust between African nations, and get serious about intra-African trade. Less dependence on aid, more action. Our problem is clear: we debate endlessly but act too little.

## For those who would like to emulate your success, what message or success tips do you have for them?

«First of all, you have to commit yourself fully. It's not enough to just have an idea—you have to put all your energy, time, and effort behind it, even when nobody is watching. You need a clear vision. Define exactly what you want to achieve, set your timelines, and stick to them. When things get tough—and trust me, they will—you must not lose momentum. Networking is another big key. You can't build alone. Find the right people, institutions, and partners who can open doors for you. But don't sit around waiting for perfect conditions or for someone to permit you. Invest your resources, even if it's painful. Sometimes you'll spend your last money on traveling to pursue opportunities, not another job. It's about total commitment. Most importantly, do it for humanity, not just for personal gain.



We're projecting to manufacture a million units per month—12 million stoves a year, says Arnold Nyendwa.





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# Burkina Faso: A Big Win For Human Rights

By Ajong Mbpandah L

The victory is not mind but that of my country Burkina Faso, says Henrietta Da following honors for her at the US Statement as one of the recipients of the 2025 Women in Courage award laureates. The ceremony at the US State Department, attended by First Lady Melania Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio celebrated the ground breaking work of Henrietta Dia and other women across the globe.

The sociologist who has led the National Human Rights Commission in Burkina Faso since 2018, has been a vocal advocate for justice and equality with her work particularly crucial in a country and region facing numerous challenges,

In an exclusive interview with PAV on the sidelines of the award at the State Department, Henrietta Dia shared her reflections on what the award means for her work, the state of human rights in Burkina Faso, and what lies ahead for the Commission.

**Congratulations on your recognition. What does this award mean to you personally and professionally?**

Thank you. This recognition is deeply meaningful to me, not just as an individual, but as someone working within a broader movement. It affirms the value of what we do and inspires me to keep pushing forward.

But for me, it's not about grand gestures or headline-grabbing actions. It's about the simple, human-centered efforts that truly change lives — helping survivors of human rights violations access justice, restoring dignity, and building trust. This award reminds me that even small, tangible actions can have a profound impact.

**Let's turn to your country. How would you describe the current human rights situation in Burkina Faso?**



First Lady Melania Trump and Secretary of State Rubio with award recipient Da, a human rights defender from Burkina Faso. Photo credit Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

The human rights landscape in Burkina Faso is extremely complex right now. We're navigating a climate of deep insecurity, driven largely by terrorism. This has made the protection of human rights more challenging than ever.

The government is understandably focused on fighting terrorism and reclaiming national sovereignty, including economic independence. But in that process, some actions — if not carefully assessed — can have implications for human rights.

Yes, there are real restrictions in place, especially around security. That's not in dispute. But what's also important to understand is that these restrictions are part of a delicate balancing act. The government is trying, within its means, to restore peace. And despite the pressures, we are seeing efforts to train frontline volunteers and military personnel on human rights principles. That gives me hope.

**How would you describe your current working relationship with the government? Do they take your concerns seriously?**

**Commission since 2018 and now lead it. What are some of the key milestones under your leadership?**

We've had to evolve. The National Human Rights Commission has revised its approach, not out of fear, but out of strategy and context. This is not the time for press conferences that alarm the public or trigger international backlash. That only causes defensiveness and can stall progress.

Instead, we've chosen constructive engagement. We meet directly with government officials, armed with technical notes and detailed recommendations. Quiet advocacy — what we call B2B (back-to-back) dialogue — is working. We've seen real changes. When we raise concerns behind closed doors, they listen, reflect, and often adjust their policies or operations. This method also protects human rights defenders and maintains open channels of collaboration.

**You've been part of the**

President:

It's been a journey of transformation. From 2018 to 2023, I served as the Vice President. Then, I was appointed President — and I'm proud to say the Commission has evolved in significant ways.

In 2021, we were given a second term — as the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture. That was a major step. But more critically, we secured our own independent budget, a proper headquarters, and full-time staff. These are not just administrative wins — they're foundational. They show that we are now aligned with the Paris Principles, which govern the independence and effectiveness of national human rights institutions.

On the international stage, we're also active. We participate in global forums, sharing insights and learning from others. That exposure



strengthens our credibility at home.

*How has the U.S., particularly under the Trump administration, influenced or supported your work?*

Our expectations from international partners like the U.S. have always been focused on two things, and they remain especially urgent in the context of terrorism.

First, we ask for enhanced training and support for our security forces, including the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP). Proper training reduces the risk of civilian harm and promotes a rights-respecting approach to counterterrorism.

Second, we urge the U.S. to take strong action against the financing of terrorism. Cutting off the flow of funds to these groups would be a game-changer for us and other countries facing similar threats.



ZABIB MUSA LORO BAKHIT  
SOUTH SUDAN



HENRIETTE DA  
BURKINA FASO

Henriette Ba from Burkina Faso and Zabib Musa Loro Bakhit from South Sudan were the two Africans honored by the State Department.

*After receiving this prestigious award in Washington, what's next for you and the Commission?*

This award isn't just mine — it's for Burkina Faso. It elevates the credibility of our Commission, and by doing so, strengthens our partnership

with the government. They'll see that my advocacy isn't about opposing them — it's about standing up for the people.

We are also working hard to restore our Commission's "A" status. Since 2012, we've been without it. But with the reforms we've made, and now with this international recognition, I'm confident we can regain that accreditation. It's essential not just for legitimacy, but for greater impact — both nationally and globally.

Only this: defending human rights is not always dramatic or visible. Often, it's quiet, persistent, and done in the shadows of institutions. But it matters deeply. And when done right, when rooted in dialogue, understanding, and firm principles, it can transform lives, even in the most difficult contexts.



It is not just my victory but that of my country Burkina Faso, Henriette Ba said in the interview with PAV's Ajong Mbandah L

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# BASKETBALL AFRICA LEAGUE EXPANDS FOOTPRINT IN SEASON 5

## #AFRICAScores

BY NINETEEN31



# DR Congo: Robert Kabakela Mulumba On A Civil Society View To The Crisis

By Badyon Kawanda Bakiman

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), one of the countries of Central Africa, is currently operating in a context of war. The government is endeavoring to take both diplomatic and military action to bring back peace, socialize the population and revitalize institutions. Robert Kabakela Mulumba, Country Coordinator of the Central African Human Rights Defenders Network (REDHAC), Coalition, fielded questions from PAV on a civil society reading of the crisis.

As one of the leaders of civil society, what do you think about the future of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in a context of war?

RKM: The future of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) depends on rebuilding our institutions, and fighting corruption, injustice and impunity. War reveals old fractures; our duty is to respond with new, inclusive and sustainable solutions.

Beyond our ethnic, political, religious or social differences, we must unite around the essential: the sovereignty, dignity and prosperity of our nation. Congo will survive and rise again, because its people are stronger than its wounds.»

Civil society must become a major player in peaceful resistance and transformation. We must amplify the voices of the voiceless, protect human rights, support affected communities and propose concrete alternatives for peace.

As a leader, I measure the weight of my responsibility. I must embody and promote the values of cohesion, human dignity and dialogue. The reconstruction of our country will begin first and foremost in people's hearts, in everyone's ability to reject hatred and division.

**A few days ago, the African Union appointed current Togolese President Faure Gnassingbe as the new mediator**



War reveals old fractures; our duty is to respond with new, inclusive and sustainable solutions says, Robert Kabakela Mulumba

**in the bloody conflict in the east of the country. If you had any advice for this new mediator, what would you tell him?**

RKM: If I had this opportunity, here are a few tips I can share with President Faure Gnassingbé to guide his mediation:

He must adopt an inclusive and impartial approach to his mediation, i.e., he must take into account all the parties involved in the conflict: the Congolese government, armed groups such as the M23, the Rwandan authorities, as well as representatives of civil society and affected local communities. This inclusive approach will promote a deeper understanding of the issues at stake and reinforce the legitimacy of the peace process.

It must ensure that the civilian population in occupied areas in the eastern part of the country has access to humanitarian organizations in order to receive essential aid.

Respect for the national sovereignty

and territorial integrity of the DRC must be a priority. Mediation should ensure that all parties recognize and respect these fundamental principles, a sine qua non for lasting peace.

It is important that mediation aligns and cooperates with ongoing regional peace processes, such as those led by the AU's Southern African Development Community (SADC) and East African Community (EAC), to ensure a coherent and strengthened approach.

In order to obtain the resources needed to implement the peace agreements, the mediation team would need to solicit the support of the international community, and also to exert diplomatic pressure on the recalcitrant parties.

**What do you expect from the government of national unity announced by the President of the Republic?**

RKM: The government of national

unity announced by President Félix Tshisekedi in March 2025 raises both hopes and questions. As a committed citizen, here's what I can reasonably expect from it, taking into account the current context and ongoing political dynamics.

I expect to see this government create a united political front against Rwandan aggression and M23/AFC atrocities in the east of the country. The aim is to mobilize all political forces to defend the territorial integrity of the DRC.

I expect this government of national unity to help reduce internal tensions and foster a more stable political climate, conducive to the implementation of reforms and effective crisis management.

The government of national unity has the potential to strengthen national unity and relaunch essential reforms. However, its success will depend on its ability to genuinely include all political forces, define clear priorities and act transparently and effectively.

**The government plans to sign a contract with the USA for mineral exploitation. What do you think?**

RKM: The draft contract between the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the United States concerning the exploitation of minerals is giving rise to a great deal of reflection. As Congolese leaders, we believe that this well-negotiated contract will enable the diversification of economic partners in the mining sector, which is currently largely dominated by Chinese companies. In this way, the EDC will reduce its dependence on a single player and strengthen its economic sovereignty.

The partnership could include US investment in mining and logistics infrastructure, promoting economic development and local job creation.

The envisaged agreement includes

U.S. security assistance to help the DRC fight armed groups, notably the M23, backed by Rwanda. This could help stabilize the region and protect local populations.

Our fear is that we will lose control over national resources if we grant exclusive access to foreign companies, which will compromise the DRC's sovereignty over its natural resources. It is crucial to ensure that the terms of the agreement safeguard national interests.

For our part, we believe that this potential partnership with the United States offers significant opportunities for the DRC, particularly in terms of economic development and security. However, it is essential to approach these negotiations with caution, ensuring that national interests are at the heart of the agreement, and that the lessons of the past are taken into account to avoid previous pitfalls.

**Over 70% of the Congolese population earn their living from agriculture. What do you think the government can do to improve this sector?**

RKM: To improve this sector, the government needs to invest massively in rural infrastructure, building and maintaining rural roads to facilitate access to markets.

Develop irrigation systems to



The future of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) depends on rebuilding our institutions, and fighting corruption, injustice and impunity, says Kabakela

reduce dependence on rainfall, electrify rural areas to stimulate local agro-industry, provide technical and financial support to small producers, create training programs in modern and sustainable agricultural techniques, supply improved seeds, tools and fertilizer at lower cost.

Set up agricultural banks to grant accessible credit to farmers.

Organize producers into strong cooperatives to better negotiate

prices.

Enhance the value of local products (cassava, corn, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, etc.) by supporting local processing.

Reform land tenure laws to protect small farmers against land grabbing and provide farmers with clear and recognized property titles.

The government must stop seeing agriculture only as a means of subsistence and treat it as a real driver of development. Investing

in agriculture means investing in employment, food security, poverty reduction and social stability in the DRC. This means supporting universities and research centers to develop solutions adapted to local realities (resistant seeds, good farming practices, combating plant diseases, etc.).

### Any last word?

RKM: While thanking you for giving us this opportunity to express our views on the current situation in our country, characterized by aggression on the part of an expansionist neighbor, we would like to renew our solidarity with our compatriots. We conclude by insisting on the fact that agriculture is the backbone of our nation. It is through this sector that the majority of our population finds its livelihood. If we are to truly transform our country, it is imperative that we restore agriculture to its rightful place in our development. By investing in improved infrastructure, offering technical and financial support to farmers, and structuring agricultural sectors, we can not only strengthen the economy, but also offer a better future to our compatriots. A future in which every Congolese, whether farmer or entrepreneur, will find his or her place and prosperity. \_\_\_\_\_

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# Prof. PLO Lumumba in Arusha: Shaking Africa's Soul, Exposing Its Economic Sleepwalk

By Adonis Byemelwa

Arusha didn't just host a guest—it faced a mirror. When Prof. PLO Lumumba stepped onto the stage, the mood shifted. No pleasantries, no polished script—just a bold question: What makes Arusha worth bragging about? Invited by Regional Commissioner Paul Makonda, Lumumba wasn't there to flatter. He came to provoke, to push past the brochures and into the heart of Africa's economic hesitation.

His voice carried the weight of lived experience, calling out not Arusha's beauty, but its untapped power. And on May 3rd, 2025, that message landed not as criticism, but as a challenge: to believe in more—and to act on it.

Makonda spoke of wildlife, of minerals, of world-class beef and breathtaking landscapes. But Lumumba wasn't content with nature's abundance. He wanted to know: What are we doing with it? And more importantly, what are we not doing? In that moment, he told a story, quiet in delivery but thunderous in message, recalling the words of a Lebanese writer: that even great rivers tremble as they approach the ocean, afraid to lose their identity, fearing the vastness of becoming part of something larger. Yet eventually, through surrender, they find strength, not as mere rivers, but as part of a boundless sea. That, Lumumba argued, is what Arusha—and Africa—must become: unafraid to integrate, to evolve, to embrace its destiny not as fragmented regions but as one continental force.

This wasn't just a speech—it was a call to memory, to imagination, and above all, to responsibility. Delivered on May 3rd, 2025, it cut through bureaucracy and pleasantries to ask a brutal question cloaked in love: When will Africa finally believe in itself?

He acknowledged the richness of



God has conspired in your favor, do not waste that grace, Lumumba spoke passionately to Africans from Arusha.

Arusha—its resources, its hospitality, the unique advantage of being the headquarters of the East African Community—but quickly pivoted to a deeper, sharper question: what are we doing with all this?

With the SGR (Standard Gauge Railway) promising to turn Arusha into a dry port hub for the region, he saw opportunity knocking loudly. Yet, he wondered aloud, are we even hearing it?

He didn't just speak, he demanded reflection. He challenged the entire notion of economic passivity wrapped in diplomacy.

His words cut through the comfort of politeness that often blankets African policy spaces. "When ministers meet, they never tell the truth. They're too polite in the cabinet. That must stop." It wasn't a reprimand—it was a mirror held up to a leadership class that too often chooses consensus over courage.

In a moment both witty and

piercing, Prof. Lumumba held up a Coca-Cola bottle served at his Arusha hotel—imported, like the coffee. "Why am I drinking imported Coca-Cola in a land of coffee?" he asked, exasperated. He mocked Africa's addiction to imports—fish from China, maize from Brazil, even toothpicks. "Are there no bamboos in Africa?" The laughter came easy, but so did the sting: a continent rich in resources, yet acting like it owns nothing.

The speech didn't spare the legacy of collapsed industries either. He referenced the once-thriving General Tyre industry in Arusha, which now exists only in memory. While China is making 500-year economic plans, he noted, Africa barely looks five years ahead.

The sense of urgency in his tone was unmistakable. This wasn't just an economic analysis—it was a call to reimagine time itself, to stretch African thinking beyond electoral

cycles and donor conferences.

Lumumba turned the conversation to energy—a pillar of any industrial revolution. He pointed out the embarrassing reality that Vietnam generates more megawatts of electricity than the entire East African Community combined.

How can a region industrialize, he asked, when its factories flicker on and off with unreliable power? His call to action was clear: harness the wind from these mountains, connect universities to real work opportunities, and stop churning out certificate-holding graduates disconnected from the economy.

He spoke passionately about the Maasai—not as a tourism brand, but as a people whose lives must materially benefit from the tourism they represent. This, he stressed, was the heart of inclusive growth. Not just GDP numbers, but real development that moves village to village. "Go to China, go to India—development



starts in the village. Not the city.”

That sense of practical transformation anchored his message. He wasn't glorifying theory—he wanted traction. He urged the growth of cottage industries, rooted in local knowledge, feeding into a regional market that should be seamless, not suffocated by tariff barriers.

Over 35 of them, he said, stand in the way of African trade, as if borders mean more than our shared destinies. “Why do we make it so hard to move onions from Tanzania to Kenya? Why is it easier to get cashews from Vietnam than from Mtwara?”

In a pointed moment that stripped away formalities, Prof. PLO Lumumba exposed the glaring economic paradox facing the East African Community. Despite a population of over 300 million, the GDPs of Kenya (\$113B, 3,000 MW), Tanzania (\$85B, 2,000 MW), Uganda (\$55B, 1,400 MW), Rwanda (\$15B, 300 MW), DRC (\$80B, 2,700 MW), and Somalia (\$8B, <150 MW) collectively trail behind Vietnam, whose GDP surpasses \$430 billion and generates over 76,000 megawatts of electricity.

“We have the people; we have the resources—so what are we doing with that power?” Lumumba asked, visibly frustrated. “How can we talk



Prof. Lumumba leaves a lasting impact, followed by Tanzania's Investment Minister Prof. Kitila Mkumbo and Arusha Regional Commissioner Paul Makonda Photo courtesy

of transformation when we can't even keep the lights on? These numbers are not just statistics—they're a reflection of our failure to act.” His challenge was clear: Africa must stop admiring its potential and start harnessing it.

But it's in energy that the disparity turns damning: while the entire EAC produces under 10,000 megawatts of electricity. Lumumba didn't offer these figures to impress, but to provoke—because for him, it wasn't just about numbers, it was about neglect.

Standing in Arusha, he challenged Africa not to ask whether we have potential, but why we keep squandering it. His frustration echoed with lived experience: conferences are plenty, yet we drink imported coffee in coffee-growing countries, and we dream big while powering small.

Then came the emotional anchor of his message. “We Africans know what is right. But what is the value of knowing what is right if we do not do it?” His delivery wasn't scripted; it was lived. You could hear the

weight of someone who has spoken at countless conferences and watched too few ideas come to life.

He challenged Africa's obsession with foreign goods and foreign validation. “Kenyans fly to Dubai to see animals in zoos, but how many visit Arusha?” His disdain wasn't for travel—it was for the warped psychology of inferiority that leads Africans to trust the imported over the indigenous.

Language, he said, is not just a tool—it's a product. And in Kiswahili, he sees not only a means of communication but an instrument of trade and unity. “Let us commodify Kiswahili. Let it carry our markets, our dreams, our power.”

As his voice rose to a crescendo, he turned back to the present moment. This conference, he warned, must not become another intellectual jamboree. There must be a follow-up. There must be accountability. There must be change. “After Arusha, let Arusha be different. Let Tanzania be different.”

And as he closed, it wasn't with resignation, but with a spark. “God,” he said, “has conspired in your favor. Do not waste that grace.” In that hall, on that day, Prof. Lumumba didn't just address a forum. He summoned a continent. The question now is: who will answer?



Arusha and Africa must become unafraid to integrate, to evolve, to embrace its destiny not as fragmented regions but as one continental force., says Lumumba

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# Edith Kah Walla on Activism, Politics, and the Power of Rights

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

For many, activism is a choice. For Edith Kah Walla, it was a birthright. Edith Kahbang Walla, widely known as Kah Walla, is a Cameroonian politician, entrepreneur, and unwavering human rights defender whose life story is deeply intertwined with activism. Born into a family of civic-minded parents who were part of Cameroon's independence generation, Kah Walla grew up believing that true success was not just personal advancement but national contribution.

Her father, a believer in African solutions to African problems, and her mother, a feminist, imbued in her the values of courage, responsibility, and social justice. That early exposure laid the foundation for a lifelong journey of advocacy that would eventually evolve into political engagement.

As the leader of the Cameroon People's Party (CPP), Kah Walla has become one of the most outspoken political voices in Cameroon. She has withstood arrests, beatings, and intimidation for her work, yet remains undeterred.

Though activism came naturally, politics did not. "My parents warned against political parties—they saw them as violent, dirty," she recalls. "It took me years of personal reckoning to understand that while activism helps a village; only politics can bring change on a national scale."

The politician, entrepreneur, and rights advocate sat down with Pan African Visions for an in-depth conversation about her journey from childhood activism to political leadership, the challenges of standing for justice in a repressive environment, and her unwavering belief in the power of the Cameroonian people.

## Grassroots Impact, National Lessons

Kah Walla's work has always begun at the grassroots level, notably in her neighbourhood of Bali, Douala—a community made up largely of Douala, Ewondo, and Basa peoples. «We trained youth on



As the leader of the Cameroon People's Party (CPP), Kah Walla has become one of the most outspoken political voices in Cameroon

entrepreneurship and worked to keep the neighbourhood clean. We even won the city prize for cleanliness one year,» she says, beaming with pride.

When she entered politics, she did so not in her village of origin, but in Bali, where her day-to-day work had earned her trust and support. "People told me, 'Go to Bali (North West), that's where you're from.' But I said no—these are the people I live and work with. And they elected me."

Through her consulting firm, Kah Walla has contributed to development projects across eight of Cameroon's ten regions—from water catchments in Kumbo to tourism planning in Botmakak. Her message? When citizens are given a transparent process and real participation, "no one asks whether you're Anglophone or Francophone. People unite to solve their problems."

## The Rights Crusade

Kah Walla's humanitarian and advocacy work centres on one unshakable pillar: rights. Whether working with market women, fishermen, or displaced persons from the Anglophone regions, she

emphasizes that «rights are the foundation of a just society.»

She speaks passionately about the years-long work advocating for the rights of citizens in the conflict-ridden South West and North West and regions. "Even when people disagree with my methods—say I'm too aggressive—they respect that I stand for what is right."

And for her, defending rights isn't charity. «It's self-preservation. If your neighbour's rights are violated today, yours are next.» Her fight for rights has extended beyond political borders. "We've defended the rights of people we completely disagree with. Because rights are not about liking someone, they're about building a society where everyone is protected."

## Fighting for Rights is not a Bed of Roses.

«I have a long list,» Walla says calmly. «I've been arrested more times than I can count. I've been water-hosed, beaten, and even kidnapped by my government.» These are not just distant memories. They are scars she carries proudly, testimonies to her unflinching fight

for human rights in Cameroon.

She recounted a moment when one of her grandchildren saw a video of her being water-hosed during a protest. The child asked, "Grandma, is this not you? Why were they throwing all of this water on you?"

Explaining that incident, Walla said it was one of the most defining moments of her political life. "Under that water in 2011, I became fearless. I realized that instead of engaging in dialogue, the government had chosen brute force. And that is the action of the weak."

Beyond family, societal backlash often comes from unexpected places. "People who complain with you about the system will turn on you when you try to change it," she notes. "It's because they've made compromises, and your action challenges that."

Even within her professional circles, she was told her political activism would ruin her business. But she kept going, buoyed by a deeper sense of purpose. «We're all trying to survive in this dysfunctional country. But someone has to stand up.»

Despite the challenges, Kah Walla remains deeply optimistic.

“Cameroonians are capable. I’ve seen it across the country. If you provide the framework—transparency, participation, accountability—people rise.”

## Need for Systemic Change before Elections

Ahead of the October presidential election, Kah Walla called for deep electoral reforms in Cameroon, arguing that without these, the country risks repeating a cycle of illegitimate elections that fail to reflect the will of its people.

The president of the Cameroon People’s Party (CPP) and founder of the citizens’ movement Stand Up for Cameroon challenged the very foundation of the country’s current electoral process, especially its use of biometric registration. “If the system has our biometrics, what is the reason other than fraud?” she asked. “That machine should be able to identify you as a voter and then you go in and vote. Why then are we still voting manually, with ink?”

She highlighted ELECAM’s failure to publish the electoral list, calling it “illegal and unacceptable.” Even more worrying is the appointment of CPDM loyalists to key electoral positions. “How can someone resign from the ruling party one day and be appointed to ELECAM the next? Over 80% of ELECAM members have the same profile. It’s a complete conflict of interest.”

Walla also criticized the contradiction of biometric registration followed by manual voting. “If we register biometrically with fingerprints, why are we still voting manually? It’s a shame.” “I Want to See a Free Cameroon in My Lifetime”

Turning 60 recently, Walla says her hope is not just for future generations, but for herself. “I don’t have many years left. I want to see a free Cameroon in my lifetime.” She believes that the dream is still possible—if citizens rise in numbers, demand their rights, and recognize the true power they hold.

For Kah Walla, the path forward is not simply about choosing a



Kah Walla’s humanitarian and advocacy work centres on one unshakable pillar - rights.

candidate—it is about changing the rules of the game. “We must have a transparent electoral register. We must have a biometric voting system. We must reduce the voting age to 18,” she said, noting the irony that Cameroonians can be conscripted to die for their country at 18 but can only vote at 21. “If you’re mature enough to die for the country, then you’re mature enough to vote for it.”

## The Crackdown on NGOs

Walla is alarmed by the government’s recent crackdown on civil society organizations, calling it “terrible” and “a test run” for worse to come.

“When they came for Reach Out and REDHAC earlier this year, they hadn’t done anything wrong. It was a test—to see if Cameroonians would react. We didn’t respond in large enough numbers, and so the government went further.”

She said the government’s new finance regulations targeting NGOs are illegal and aimed at silencing dissent ahead of the 2025 elections. “NGOs help young people, women, and marginalized communities find their voice. They build schools, create jobs, and offer skills training. Shutting them down is an attack on the fabric of progress.”

For Edith Kah Walla, the battle is bigger than any single party or candidate. “Today, they may come for an NGO. Tomorrow, it’s a political party. If Cameroonians don’t unite across lines to defend rights, we will be squashed one by one.”

She emphasized that all citizens must act—not just speak—in the face of injustice. “It’s not enough to complain in your neighbourhood. We must stand, act, speak out on social media, and support each other across political lines.”



For Kah Walla, the path forward is not simply about choosing a candidate—it is about changing the rules of the game

## Coalition for Reform, Not Candidates

Addressing the frequent calls for a united opposition candidate, Kah Walla emphasized that the opposition’s priority should be a coalition for electoral reform, not for endorsing a single candidate. “There is no point in having a candidate if the election is not minimally fair. We are just going for a stroll,” she said.

She proposed that all opposition parties should unite behind clear and urgent demands—chief among them a two-round presidential election system, which she said would encourage unity and fairness. “This is what almost every country in Africa has today and why not Cameroon?”

She also cautioned against simplifying the idea of political coalitions, revealing that even at the municipal level in 2013, efforts to work together were fraught with ideological and cultural clashes. “We are different political parties. We stand for different things. And most importantly, our militants join us for different reasons,” she explained. “People think it is just ego. It is not.”

## Hope in a Difficult Struggle

Despite the weight of the challenges ahead, Kah Walla remains optimistic. “I am naturally optimistic,” she said with a smile. “We were given a gift called life. My question each day is: What did I do with the circumstances I was given?”

What gives her hope? – The energy and intelligence of Cameroonian youth. “You give a young person a job and a little income, and you see their potential shine,” she said, referencing the enthusiasm of young activists and workers she meets across the country.

Asked to describe herself in one word, Kah Walla didn’t hesitate: Committed. “When you are committed, you go and find the knowledge you need. You act. Action is the only thing that can produce results,” she declared. “Our national fight is a building block. But our ultimate success will be in Africa. For that, we must build countries that work.”



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# A Catholic Priest and the Story of his Protestant Mother

By Rev. Fr. Wilfred Epie Emeh

Growing up in a religiously diverse family where each member has unflinching allegiance to their religious beliefs could be a mixed blessing. I am 21 years a priest, and my mother is 11 years a Catholic. As I look back on the religious dynamics in our family when I was young, I can glean several significant lessons from our story, such as how my mother, a staunch Presbyterian, converted to Catholicism after fifty years of dedicated service to the Presbyterian community. Shortly before my ordination, some of her Catholic friends and my Bishop encouraged her to reflect on the moment's weight and to consider becoming one in faith with her would-be priest-son, but it didn't move her. In hindsight, I should have told them to spare their energy because I knew my mom was a die-hard Presbyterian.

Without a doubt, our upbringing shapes our spiritual and religious worldview. My mom was raised in a profoundly Presbyterian family. Her father was a pastor and mentor, and I would later understand my mom's unalloyed dedication to the Presbyterian denomination. She steadily advanced in the ecclesiastical ranks as she intermittently held several positions of responsibility, such as elder and preacher, chair lady of her congregation, president of Christian Women Fellowship (CWF), and much more.

While my mom's devotion to the Presbyterian faith was indomitable, I grew up Catholic after my father, whose profound affiliation with the Catholic Church was equally unquestionable. This was all the more so because a missionary priest, Rev. Francis Woodman, took him in and raised him after his father died. With encouragement and inspiration from Fr. Woodman, my father enrolled in the Holy Family Seminary in St Joseph's College, Sasse, but later left to pursue a secular career.

My mother demonstrated her

devotion as a Presbyterian faithful in several ways. I deeply admired her yearly Bible studies retreat, after which she would share meaningful biblical lessons with me. The depth and breadth of her memorized verses were astonishing. I loved it whenever she expressed biblical lessons in short songs. Bible studies were central to all the activities of the Presbyterian women's group for which she was president. This was indeed an admirable practice that I wish the Catholic women's group could emulate.

As a teenager, I would never, in my wildest dreams, have imagined a day that my mom would leave the Presbyterian church, particularly given her enormous responsibilities, upbringing, and friendships forged over fifty years. We lived happily, respecting each other's religious views and beliefs and enjoying together what we shared in common. Even when she asked questions about the Catholic faith, I recall her goal was to learn and not find fault. It was for the same purpose when I would ask her about the Presbyterian faith.

I vividly recall when my mom invited me to the Presbyterian church for her Thanksgiving service. I was amazed that the Apostle's Creed we recited was the same as the Catholics'. We profess the creed: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." Aha! This was sufficient justification to launch a tirade of questions about her Christian beliefs. So, as soon as we got home, I asked: Mama, why do you guys profess faith in the Catholic church, yet you don't want to join the church? She responded that "catholic" in the creed meant universal assembly, which differed from the Roman Catholic church. I objected, saying the Roman Catholic Church alone has



Mom is today a devout catholic and a member of the Catholic Womens Association

concerning to my mom that her first son wouldn't bear her grandchildren because of the priestly vow of celibacy. On my part, I was distraught to imagine that my mother would not receive Holy Communion from me should I become a priest. This disturbing awareness caused me to pray, especially after my ordination, that my mom would someday join the Catholic Church.

I was ordained on April 15, 2004, and it deeply troubled me that my mom would not receive the Eucharist from my freshly anointed hands at that momentous event. Since I felt helpless about the situation, I followed Padre Pio's admonition: Pray, hope, don't worry. Indeed, in April of 2013, nine years after my ordination, I received a call from my friend, Fr. Denis Ntang, informing me that he was preparing my mom for reception into the Catholic

Church. It seemed like a dream to me.

When my mom made her decision to convert, she contacted my friend and requested the steps to join the Catholic church. She intended to keep this initial step a secret, but Fr. Ntang's joy was palpable, and he took it upon himself to share the glad tidings with me. My mom later told me she was sure my friend would leak the secret because she marveled at his jubilation. When I next visited my mom, I joked with her, saying, Mama, I hear you want to become a reverend sister. She laughed out loud and said, "I knew your friend would tell you." By God's grace, my mom was received into the church on February 2, 2014. Since I was away for further studies, I could not attend, so I celebrated a Mass for her while the event was taking place at Holy Trinity Parish, Bota, Limbe. Truer words have not been written: "When the time is right, I, the Lord, will make it happen." (Is

the marks of the true church because Christ founded it. It is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, as stated in the Nicene Creed. I emphasized that "Catholic" meant universal, and our church is the universal Christian assembly to which the creed refers. I also explained that we had one visible head, Pope John Paul II, the 264th successor of St. Peter, and the church has been faithful to the apostles' teachings and traditions for over 2000 years. My arguments were futile. Nothing changed, and life continued amicably.

The first time our ecumenical differences struck a chord was when I announced my intention to pursue the priestly vocation. At first, my mom didn't believe me. She presumed I just wanted to have a boarding school experience in high school since my decision meant I had to enroll in the seminary high school. Then, in a typical African custom, it was



60:22)

My mom's conversion to Catholicism was the greatest gift she could give me, ten years into my priestly ministry. What joy I felt the first time she received the Eucharist from my hands, and what a testament to the power of prayer.

### Converts on Fire

Experience has shown that most Catholic converts deeply cherish the Catholic faith. My mom is no exception. The desire for more knowledge, faithful devotion to religious practices, and commitment to the sacramental life are exceptional. My mom attended weekday Mass before her reception and has continued the practice thereafter. She joined the Catholic Women's Association (CWA) and, upon her dedication, took the name Therese after St Therese of Lisieux, which she was very excited about. I recall her telling me that her new name was Comfort-Therese. Since becoming Catholic, her steady devotion to the faith has borne many fruits, and the following are some of her testimonies.

### Eucharistic Healing

I am convinced of my mom's childlike faith and trust in God, like that of her role model, St. Therese of Lisieux, as described in her biography. During one of Mom's visits to the USA, she slid on ice and sustained a fracture on her left leg. A surgery was imminent, but she refused, requesting more time to reflect on it. Upon returning home, she continued to pray fervently for healing. One day during Mass, she poured her heart into asking for healing from Jesus in the Eucharist. She received Holy Communion, and the fracture pain disappeared after Mass. She called me with a lot of excitement to share her story. The Eucharist healed her. I recall her saying she received communion that day with expectant faith.

### Our Lady of the Eucharist and Grace

My mom has suffered from severe glaucoma for most of her life, a hereditary condition, as my



A picture of my mother in her days with the Presbyterian church.

grandfather lost his eyesight from glaucoma in 1976 and remained blind for over three decades. At one point, following an eye examination in the USA, it was apparent that her situation had worsened. I shared my mom's condition with a friend who has a special devotion to Our Lady of the Eucharist and Grace. She graciously agreed to share some anointing oil from the Shrine of Our Lady. My mom gladly received it, prayed, and asked for the Blessed Mother's intercession before applying the oil to her eyes. When she returned to the hospital for her follow-up appointment, the ophthalmologist couldn't believe the significant reduction in her eye pressure.

### Lessons from my Mother's Conversion to Catholicism

Indeed, parents and grandparents would love their families to be united in faith. We would also love

for our children to be married to spouses who share the same religious values, but this is not always the case. Sometimes, our children defect from the faith, while others leave the church for good. As a priest, I would have loved my entire family to be Catholic, but that is not the case, even as I remain eternally grateful for my mom's historic conversion. Given my family's experience, I propose a few ways we can thrive spiritually despite our religious differences.

1. Be respectful and cordial. If we find ourselves in a religiously diverse family, respecting each other's religious beliefs is essential. Avoid being suspicious and making rash judgments against each other, even when you think what the other person is doing is "senseless." None of us can rationalize the spirit of God at work in the church and the lives of individuals. Remember Jesus's admonition to

the disciples when they tried to stop someone from casting out demons in his name. He said anyone who is not against us is for us. (Mk 9:38-40) We are not enemies if we strive daily to promote the values of the Kingdom. Always be cordial and charitable, no matter how passionate one feels about challenging another's religious practice.

2. Focus on the good. Our differences in belief systems aside, there is so much goodness in each person and other Christian churches and religious belief systems. We can focus on a common prayer and scripture reading in a Christian pluralistic environment. By our baptism, we are brothers and sisters. In his Good Shepherd sermon, Jesus says other sheep do not belong to this flock, but they also hear his voice because, in the end, there will be one flock and one shepherd. (Jn 10:6)

3. Avoid a self-righteous attitude. There is substantial evidence from Scripture and tradition that the Catholic church is the first Christian church founded by Christ. At Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians. (Acts 11:26) According to early Christian writings by St. Ignatius of Antioch, the third Bishop of Antioch who lived from AD 35 to 107, the Catholic church is the universal Christian assembly founded by Christ with Peter as the first Pope: "You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church." (Matt 16:18) This does not make the Catholic holier or better than their Christian counterpart. We must shun all forms of spiritual arrogance when speaking about our faith; instead, let us share our hope in Christ with those who may disagree with us with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15)

4. Dialogue. Suppose parents who are devout Christians find out that a child has defected from the faith, especially from the traditional church, to a modern-day mega church. In that case, we must approach the situation cautiously, given that our adult children are responsible for their choices. If they are open to dialogue,

Speak with them and share your faith experience. You can also recommend some Catholic resources that might help them understand the richness of our faith. But every time a parent approached me to speak about a child who had left the church while in college, I would always remind them of the need to build a solid Christian foundation during their formative years. When we train the child in how he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Pr 22:6)

5. Pray for one another. I resorted to praying for my mom's conversion. I realized that I could not share the Eucharist with her. We should never underestimate the power of prayer if we seek the conversion of



L to R Fr Fomukong, Mom and Fr Ndang following her embrace of the Catholic faith.

family members. Sometimes, these conversions occur after we are dead and gone, so our prayers are never in vain if we seek God's will. St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine of Hippo, prayed for over 30 years to convert her son, who eventually became a Bishop and a doctor of the church. She also prayed for the conversion of her husband. While we pray, we should also love as Christ loved. Our way of life, inspired by Christ's teaching, is the most powerful witness to our neighbors. Pope Paul VI stated, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they witness."

## UAE & Africa: A \$7.2B Blueprint Reimagining the Future of Global Trade

By Adonis Byemelwa

At the heart of Abu Dhabi, in the elegant halls of Qasr Al Bahr, something more than diplomacy unfolded. It was a signal to the world. When HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan welcomed President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo, the handshake they exchanged wasn't just a gesture — it was a bold step toward reshaping the global trade landscape from the Global South outward.

Their agreement, a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), sets an ambitious yet grounded target: \$7.2 billion in bilateral trade, with 99.5% of Emirati products gaining tariff-free access to Congo's market. But the real story goes far beyond trade figures.

This is about laying down tracks for the future — in clean energy, agriculture, logistics, digital infrastructure, and climate tech.

"The growth projections for Africa are amazing," noted Aftab Ahmad, a strategic finance expert. "It's exciting to see the UAE's involvement in such a dynamic market." That sense of energy, of watching potential blossom into progress, echoes through nearly



The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), sets an ambitious target of \$7.2 billion in bilateral trade, with 99.5% of Emirati products gaining tariff-free access to Congo's market

every response to this initiative.

And it's not hard to see why. Africa's momentum right now is electric. A projected GDP of \$16.12 trillion by 2050. A booming population on pace to hit 2.5 billion,

where nearly 70% are under 30 — not just a demographic trend, but a wave of entrepreneurial energy and innovation ready to be unleashed. It's the kind of generational shift that economists theorize about, but people

on the ground are living.

As one Africa-focused investor put it: "This is the right response in a world drowning in 'seemingly' bad news. It is impressive to see how quickly the UAE has emerged as one



of Africa's most trusted partners."

This CEPA taps into that pulse. It speaks to the lived experience of African economies — rapidly urbanizing, rich in human capital, and increasingly interconnected. With 1.1 billion Africans of working age by 2035, the continent is poised to host the world's largest labor force. This isn't potential on the horizon. It's potential in motion.

What Africa holds in abundance, the world increasingly needs: 30% of global mineral reserves. 60% of uncultivated arable land. 12% of oil reserves. And 10% of the world's renewable freshwater. But this is no longer just about extraction — it's about collaboration. Shared prosperity. Forward-thinking investment. The UAE's approach embraces that nuance.

In 2023 alone, the UAE racked up AED 276 billion (around \$75.2 billion) in non-oil trade with Africa, marking a 16.2% year-on-year growth. It's not just about capital flowing into ports or markets — it's about long-term alignment. With over 40 bilateral investment treaties across the continent, the UAE is laying foundations that are meant to last.

It's also walking the talk. DP World operates in 12 African countries,



A sense of energy, of watching potential blossom into progress, echoes through nearly every response to this initiative.

anchoring logistics infrastructure where it's needed most. Masdar, Abu Dhabi's renewable energy arm, is involved in clean energy projects across 15 nations. ADQ is driving investments in agriculture and food security across Sub-Saharan Africa — a bet not just on economic returns but on resilience.

"The way you emphasize collaboration and long-term impact shows a deep understanding of

how these initiatives can reshape industries and communities," commented one tech and policy strategist. "This is vision and fusion for Africa," another added.

Congo, meanwhile, is far from a passive partner in this story. It's one of Sub-Saharan Africa's top oil producers. It sits atop critical mineral reserves like copper, cobalt, and iron ore — key components of the world's green transition.

And its vast forest cover, making up 65% of its land, plays a vital role in global carbon storage, especially in the Cuvette Centrale peatlands — an ecological treasure with over 30 billion tonnes of stored carbon.

Its central location makes Congo a natural hub, sharing borders with five countries and playing a strategic role in regional trade and energy corridors. This isn't just about what Congo has. It's about where Congo is going — and who's walking with it.

In every way, this partnership aligns with a broader mission: the UAE's Net Zero 2050 commitment, Africa's Agenda 2063, and global goals for decent work, sustainable innovation, climate action, and global cooperation.

What's unfolding isn't just policy — it's poetry. A new corridor is forming, one that connects African resources, Gulf capital, and Asian demand, with climate consciousness as its compass.

Africa isn't rising quietly anymore. It's rising boldly. With the UAE as a trusted partner, it's not just shaping its future — it's helping to reshape the architecture of global trade.

As one observer aptly put it: "Africa is not just a market. It's a movement. And the UAE isn't just investing — it's listening." And that might be the most powerful trade policy of all.



A new corridor is forming, one that connects African resources, Gulf capital, and Asian demand, with climate consciousness as its compass





# Legacy Is Not Built by Accident, It is Structured

By Keseena Chengadu\*



Keseena Chengadu, CEO of Órama Corporate Services.

**W**ealth is rising across Africa. From the glass towers of Johannesburg to the entrepreneurial corridors of Lagos, private fortunes are being built at unprecedented rates. But there's a critical difference between wealth and legacy—and it lies in one word: structure.

According to the 2024 Africa Wealth Report:

**Johannesburg** remains Africa's wealthiest city, with over 12,300 millionaires, 25 centi-millionaires, and 2 billionaires.

**Cape Town** is home to 7,400 millionaires, with increasing global appeal among investors and high-end families.

**Lagos**, Nigeria's commercial powerhouse, counts 4,200 millionaires, many of them new-generation entrepreneurs and legacy family businesses.

**Mauritius**, once known mostly for luxury holidays, now hosts 5,100 millionaires—and is projected to see 95% growth in its millionaire population over the next decade.

This rising tide of African wealth is no longer just a story of numbers—it's a call for structure.

**From Corporate Structuring to Private Legacy Planning**

Before co-founding Órama, I spent years advising companies on tax optimization, compliance, and international structuring—helping them expand while remaining efficient and protected.

But as I worked closely with founders, a deeper question kept coming up:

*How do I protect what I'm building—not just for now, but for my family later?*

That's where Órama was born.

We don't just help founders build empires. We help them preserve and pass on those empires, through smart, personalized structures that adapt to an ever-changing world.

*When It's Too Late to Fix What Wasn't Structured*

One of our clients recently came to us after the loss of a partner whose business account was in Dubai. Years later, they are still struggling to access those funds for the rightful successors. Every shift in the children age, regulations and banking policy has made the process more difficult—and emotionally draining.

Had a trust or foundation been put in place from the beginning, this situation could have been entirely

avoided.

This is why we always advise our clients: Start with a trust.

It's simple, powerful, and one of the most effective ways to prepare for the future. Depending on the setup, foundations also offer compelling advantages, especially when managing both family and philanthropic goals.

*What We Do at Órama*

At Órama, we help families, founders, and investors build structures that last.

Whether you are operating in South Africa, Nigeria, Mauritius—or across all three—we offer discreet, strategic guidance in:

**Family Office & Private Wealth Structuring**

- Trust & Foundation Setup
- Succession Planning & Governance
- Asset Holding Structures
- UHNWI Lifestyle & Estate Planning

**International Tax Strategy**

- Cross-Border Tax Optimization
- CRS, FATCA, and Substance Compliance
- Dual Residence & Repatriation Planning

**Corporate & Fund Structuring**

- Global Business Companies (GBCs)
- Authorised Companies (ACs)
- Investment Funds & Holdings
- Cross-Border Banking & Board Management

**Relocation & Advisory Services**

- Residency by Investment
- Legal Coordination Across Jurisdictions
- Business Expansion Support

*Why Mauritius? Why Now?*

Mauritius has emerged as a key jurisdiction for international wealth and business structuring—thanks to:

- No capital gains tax
- No exchange controls
- A stable banking environment
- Strong compliance and a respected financial system
- Access to over 40 tax treaties

Whether your wealth is based in Johannesburg, earned in Lagos, or invested globally, Mauritius offers a stable base for growth, preservation, and protection.

Órama leverages this platform not as a loophole—but as a launchpad for sustainable, intergenerational wealth.

## Led by Experience. Driven by Integrity.

As a co-founder with a background in legal, finance, and energy sectors, I've worked with high-level stakeholders across Africa and internationally. That experience taught me something essential:

No matter how complex the structure, the best outcomes come from human clarity, ethical alignment, and long-term thinking.

That's what we bring to every client conversation—whether they run a listed company or a family business quietly growing across borders.

Africa's Wealth Is Expanding. Make Sure Yours Is Enduring.

Whether you're a South African family exploring succession options, a Nigerian founder preparing for global expansion, or an investor seeking clarity and



The rising tide of African wealth is no longer just a story of numbers—it's a call for structure, says Keseena Chengadu

control—

Órama is here to help you structure your next chapter.

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Serving South Africa, Nigeria, and African families worldwide  
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\*Keseena Chengadu is CEO of Órama Corporate Services

# Tariff Truce: Zimbabwe at 45 Courts Trump for Economic Lifeline

By Samuel Ouma

Zimbabwe marked its 45th year of independence on April 18, 2025, in Gokwe, Midlands Province, with President Emmerson Mnangagwa leading a military parade and extolling the nation's "liberation and post-independence efforts to develop and modernize Zimbabwe". Yet economic headwinds persist: annual inflation in U.S. dollar terms accelerated to 14.6 per cent in January 2025, up from 12.1 per cent in December 2024, as food and housing costs soared amid lingering drought effects.

In a high-stakes diplomatic gambit, Mnangagwa announced on April 12 that Zimbabwe would suspend all tariffs on U.S. imports, becoming the first country to do so in direct response to President Donald Trump's 18 per cent levy on Zimbabwean exports to the United States. Simultaneously, he has reached out to Trump's inner circle and key Republican lawmakers to press for the repeal of U.S. sanctions under the Zimbabwe



We remain united in building a prosperous Zimbabwe through devolution and inclusive development, says President Mnangagwa

Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA) of 2001. This article examines Zimbabwe's journey at 45, Mnangagwa's U.S. overture, the reactions of domestic and international stakeholders, and the potential implications for Harare's economic and diplomatic future.

### Zimbabwe at 45: Achievements and Challenges

Despite political stability since the 2017 transition, Zimbabwe's economy remains fragile. After contracting



by an estimated 3 per cent in 2024 due to El Niño-induced droughts, the government projects growth to rebound to 6 per cent in 2025—driven by a 12.8 per cent recovery in agriculture and a 5.6 per cent uptick in mining, according to Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube. The central bank has maintained a policy rate of 35 per cent to anchor inflation expectations, even as consumer prices jumped 10.5 per cent month-on-month in local currency terms in January 2025. Unemployment remains above 60 per cent, and the new ZiG gold-backed currency, launched in April 2024, has suffered a 75 per cent decline against the dollar on unregulated markets, underscoring the challenge of restoring monetary credibility.

Since succeeding Robert Mugabe, Mnangagwa has courted both Western investors and regional allies, positioning Zimbabwe as “open for business”. He oversaw the controversial 2020 compensation deal for displaced white farmers disbursing \$3.1 million of a \$311 million claim this month—to signal a commitment to property rights and debt resolution. Domestically, however, the ruling ZANU-PF party faces criticism over crackdowns on civil liberties and slow progress on electoral reforms, a tension laid bare in sparse attendance at Mnangagwa’s own rally in October 2024, where he likened sanctions’ effects to a “cancer” on the economy: “Enough is enough, remove them now!”

On health and education, government data show a modest reduction in HIV prevalence to 11.3 per cent in 2024 and primary school enrollment edging up to 92 per cent, yet service delivery remains uneven, particularly in rural provinces. Poverty rates hover near 70 per cent, with half of Zimbabweans lacking reliable electricity, a gap Mnangagwa’s administration partly attributes to power plant failures compounded by recent droughts.

### Mnangagwa’s U.S. Overture

Since 2001, ZDERA has restricted U.S. assistance and imposed selective sanctions on Zimbabwean



Since succeeding Robert Mugabe, Mnangagwa has courted both Western investors and regional allies, positioning Zimbabwe as “open for business”

individuals and entities, aiming to pressure Harare over land reforms and human rights concerns. Although the Biden administration formally terminated the broad Zimbabwe sanctions program in March 2024, it concurrently imposed targeted Global Magnitsky sanctions on 11 officials—Mnangagwa among them—for alleged corruption and abuses, signaling continued barriers to financial aid and private investment.

### The Tariff Suspension

On April 12, 2025, Mnangagwa took the unprecedented step of ordering the suspension of all import tariffs on U.S. goods—a measure designed to underscore Zimbabwe’s commitment to “equitable trade and enhanced bilateral cooperation,” according to his post on X (formerly Twitter). Al Jazeera noted that Zimbabwe became the first country to lift tariffs in direct response to Trump’s recent 18 per cent duty on Zimbabwean exports, a tit-for-tat that analysts say reflects Harare’s desperation for market access. Economist Prosper Chitambaro hailed the move as “a sign of goodwill that could unlock U.S. private sector financing long denied to Zimbabwe” although he cautioned that tariffs alone cannot

offset macroeconomic imbalance.

### Courting Trump and GOP Support

In parallel, Mnangagwa’s envoys have engaged U.S. Republican lawmakers in Washington and at the recent World Bank spring meetings to advocate for ZDERA’s full repeal. He has reportedly sought direct dialogue with former President Trump’s inner circle, betting that a Republican-led Congress and potential Trump reelection could favour Zimbabwe’s case, a strategy confirmed by regional diplomatic sources cited in The Africa Report: “Mnangagwa offers zero tariffs and glowing praise, hoping for relief from American sanctions”.

### Reactions and Counter-Reactions

While business groups applauded the tariff suspension, civil society and opposition figures condemned it as a superficial gesture that failed to address structural failures. “Suspending tariffs on imported cars won’t fill empty hospital wards or repair broken roads,” said activist Tendai Biti of the Citizens Coalition for Change. Rural farmers, meanwhile, worry that cheaper U.S. goods could undercut local producers

still reeling from drought.

Some U.S. lawmakers have expressed cautious optimism. Senator Lindsey Graham noted, “Zimbabwe’s willingness to open its markets is welcome, but it must be matched by political reforms”. Conversely, key Democrats warn against tying sanction relief to partisan politics: “We should not let a donor’s internal politics dictate foreign policy towards Zimbabwe,” argued Rep. Gregory Meeks in a Congressional hearing.

### Regional and Global Analysts

Experts caution that Zimbabwe’s tariff—and sanction—strategy is a double-edged sword. Dr. Aisha Mabena of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes warns, “Courting Trump risks alienating other Western partners and could cement Zimbabwe’s image as a political pawn rather than a reforming state”. Meanwhile, China and Russia have filled investment gaps, with Moscow recently hosting Mnangagwa at a defence expo where he lauded Russia as a “constant ally”.

### Implications for Zimbabwe’s Future

If sanctions are fully lifted and U.S. investors return, Zimbabwe could see

\$1–2 billion in new direct investment over two years, according to World Bank analysts. However, debt levels remain high, public debt reached 120 per cent of GDP in 2024, and structural reforms will be needed to convert market access into inclusive growth.

### Diplomatic Realignment

Mnangagwa's U.S. overture may herald a broader pivot back to the West, potentially reducing Zimbabwe's reliance on China and Russia. Yet the long-term success of this realignment hinges on demonstrable progress in governance,



On April 12, 2025, President Mnangagwa seen here with Ambassador Tremont took the unprecedented step of ordering the suspension of all import tariffs on U.S. goods

accountability, and human rights.

As Zimbabwe reflects on 45 years of independence, Mnangagwa's tariff truce and courting of the Trump network represent a bold but risky gambit to break out of economic isolation. The suspension of U.S. import tariffs and efforts to secure ZDERA repeal have drawn both applause and skepticism, highlighting the delicate balance between political expediency and genuine reform. Whether this diplomatic gamble delivers the promised economic lifeline or deepens Zimbabwe's dependence on geopolitical shifts remains to be seen.

## Ghana At 68 : Reflect, Review And Reset-Moving Forward As A Nation

By Charles Prempeh\*

Ghana is 68 years! On the eve of and soon after the country's independence, the idea of "We, the people of Ghana (then the Gold Coast)" was constructed against the Othering of Europeans as the cause of our challenges. Thus, postcolonial Ghana and its constituted citizens emerged as an imagined construct. Kwame Nkrumah, the country's first president, significantly succeeded in anchoring Ghana's imagined united front on the fortunes of economic prosperity. This largely explained his mantra, "Seek yet first the political kingdom and all else shall be added unto you." Nkrumah's communist/Marxist approach of inverting (counter-hegemonic—Antonio Gramsci) Jesus' saying, recorded in Matthew 6:33, was part of his harvesting of both religious vision and symbolic nationalism to advance a nation of "One people, one destiny."

Consequently, soon after independence on 6 March 1957, Nkrumah embarked on several projects, aimed at providing a counter-narrative to unsettle Hamitic hypothesis (outsourcing Africa's ingenuity to external influence) and the colonizers inscription of



Kwame Nkrumah giving his independence speech on March 6, 1957 in Accra, Ghana. Photo courtesy

cognitive and physical inferiority on Africans. With the initial support of his compatriots, Nkrumah initiated several infrastructural projects, including building many secondary schools across the country to provide education to Ghanaian children, Akosombo to provide energy and the Tema motorway for transportation.

To philosophically consolidate Ghana's physical needs philosophically, Nkrumah reconstituted Ghanaian citizenship along ideological lines. He formed the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement in 1960 and established the Kwame Nkrumah Institute of Economics and Political Science

or Winneba Ideological Institute Nkrumah Ideological Institute (1961). These were intentionally designed towards re-socializing Ghanaians towards a philosophical construction of citizenship. Through this, Nkrumah had envisioned that the multidimensional loyalty of Ghanaians, sprawling across family,



faith, and friends, would significantly tilt towards the imagined state. Meanwhile, because faith, family and friends are pre-political, Nkrumah had an immense task convincing Ghanaians to re-order their loyalties.

Similarly, because Nkrumah's philosophical construction of ideological citizenship came on the back of an economy that was beginning to take a nosedive turn, the rebuff from Ghanaians was swift and entrenched. This means that since political independence did not necessarily yield the exaggerated expectations of economic freedom, several Ghanaians were beginning to reidentify strongly with the above mentioned pre-political institutions. Nkrumah realized that the stakes were high. How could he tolerate a nation that was relapsing into ethnic and religious sectionalism? How could he tolerate individuals whose political dissenting philosophies appears to align with an imagined West more than an imagined Ghana/Africa?

Reportedly, his trepidation was crystallized by reported threats on his

life. The reported threats on his life escalated the political temperature to a level of desegregating the nascent postcolonial state. Nkrumah had to recuperate some of the strategies the colonial administrators leveraged to foster coerced cohesion. He intensified the politicization of citizenship; deporting or forcing into exile political and religious figures who disagreed with him. His regime also passed law to de jure declare Ghana a one-party state by 1964.

With freedom being ontologically human, several Ghanaians could not tolerate Nkrumah's creeping intolerance, the outcome of which sustained dissention against his regime. On 24 February 1966, a coalition of the security forces with reported support from the United States of America, toppled Nkrumah's government. Since then, Ghana's quest for development has implied a need for the political class to cultivate adaptive leadership skills (reasoning through with Ghanaians—speaking to the rock—instead of, strong-handedness—hitting them with a rock). It goes without saying

that Ghanaians would hardly tolerate any political figure who attempts to interfere with pre-political institutions, particularly faith and family. The political class, therefore, have a duty to choreograph Ghana's sovereignty around what constitutes Ghanaians. Meanwhile, way of recapitulation, what constitutes Ghanaianism is holding faith and family as sacrosanct.

Unfortunately, it appears that 68 years into our independence, as a country we have not learned the didactic lessons derived from our histories. Since Nkrumah's overthrow, nearly all the heads of state of the country, be it military or civilian, whose regime had significant impact, have all fallen and risen on how they interface with pre-political institutions. K.A. Busia's major challenge, also leading to the collapse of his government, when his Alien Compliance Order of 1969, rather divided families and people of faith. His successor, General I.K. Acheampong's attempt at harmonizing the military and civilian rulership which would have blurred

the boundaries between faith and family constituted his own Achilles heel. J.J. Rawlings' interference with family and faith through his passage of the Intestate Succession Law of 1985 (PNDCL 111) and the Religious Bodies (Registration) Law of 1989 (PNDCL 221) became the cul de sac of an otherwise cordial nexus between religion and politics for nation-building.

Most recently, Ghana's Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo became a political casualty, leading his party into a decisive defeat in the December 2024 elections because of his oscillated position on a Bill overwhelmingly passed in the country's Parliament in 2024 to protect the frontiers of Ghanaian family values. To be sure, all these leaders had (or may have had) good intentions, even when they strayed into areas beyond the reach of the state. But the fact that they did not hold the fortress of Ghana's sovereignty, based on the social contract of non-interference with pre-constitutional institutions, their fall into the political abyss was non-negotiable.

In all of these, Ghana has recorded immense achievements since 1957. Specifically, in the area of politics, we have pilgrimed through difficult and complicated political pathways, all of which have culminated in our fledgling democracy constituting a model for the rest of Africa. Nevertheless, 68 years of independence, we still cannot gloss over the squalid and poor living conditions that have saddled a section of the country's population. We must certainly worry about the surging indiscipline in our secondary schools. We must focus re-setting our country on rebuilding the moral fortress of our country.

To reset Ghana, therefore, must involve measures that conterminously align with a decided positionality on the part of the political elite to curate the nation's sovereignty towards consensual democracy. It was not for



President John Mahama is now saddled with the heavy responsibility of moving Ghana forward. Photo courtesy.

frivolous reason that on the eve of the millennium, indexed by ideological globalism, some of the country's voluble philosophers identified consensual democracy as a key ingredient to holding the fortresses of Ghana's liberal democracy together. These sagacious philosophers, included Professors Kwame Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu (who in addition to William E. Abraham constituted what is known as Legon Philosophical School Thought). Having Gyekye and Wiredu preceded us in eternity, it is imperative that as we reset Ghana, we recuperate their ideas to surge forward as a nation.

The fecundity of consensual democracy must be constituted on a firm foundation. This firm foundation is the family. It is trite knowledge that the family is the basic (subsidiarity) unit of constituting society. Hence, it is aptly stated that the family is the vanguard against all forms of deviance, including oppositional ones. This means precisely that, "charity begins at home." The opposite when the family is destroyed is that, "Vice begins from the home."

In the terms of the fault lines in our education system, we had a recent Minister of Education whose extreme American-oriented libertarianism appeared to have disempowered teachers at the expense of pupils. So, after all the much-vaunted Free Secondary School Education and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) initiatives, we largely have free uneducated (but schooled) secondary school pupils whose behaviors betrays how we have strayed from reflecting through our developmental trajectories. What shall it profit a political figure who provides free schooling to children



President John Mahama recently paid a courtesy visit to his predecessor Akufo Addo in another sign of Ghana's vibrant democracy

only to have these children insulting him and eventually voting against his party?

To reset Ghana, therefore, calls for reflecting, indeed. Thinking or loving wisdom (philosophy) as the base of nation-building is difficult. After all, cognitive exercise and cerebral exertion discourages kneejerk answers. This also means that if we are to prioritize the why answers over the how, we need to review what we have done wrong. We cannot palliate our conscience by accentuating blame culture. We cannot continue to blame colonialism and its legacies of ideological globalism. We have to exercise our moral agency and rational capacity (agentic rationality) by reconstituting our multiple cultural and religious heritage to advance the re-setting of our country.

Applying wisdom as the anchor of public governance must find expression in our spatial planning.

Currently, Ghana has had increasing cases of non-communicable diseases, which is significantly caused by lifestyle and sedentary culture. It is unbecoming for a nation that is experiencing lifestyle-related crisis to continue to construct roads without pedestrian walkways, bicycle lanes, and guardrails. Meanwhile, a modicum of application of wits would bring out the fact that several Ghanaians go to work before sunrise and close after sunset. Impliedly, if roads were properly laid out, chances are that several of these Ghanaian workers would either would either walk and/or cycle. There is no need to refrain the health benefits of this in pushing back the debilitating impact of non-communicable diseases.

Similarly, the political class must be intentional in ensuring that, as Nkrumah said in his 1963 in his The African Genius address, THE GOWN MUST COME TO TOWN. From the

basic to the tertiary levels, the state must ensure that what is studied and researched about align seamlessly with the ethical and ontological aspirations of Ghanaians. We must be decisive in making sure that all the subjects, from Anthropology to Zoology, reaffirm the centrality and ubiquitous relevance of the derivative values embedded in pre-political institutions, specifically faith, family, and friends for nation building.

To conclude, as we look forward to resetting Ghana, we must indeed, reflect to review all the banalities we have allowed in our schools and ultimately public governance. We must invest in building families, for with strong families, we can be assured of building public governance on cherished virtues.

\*Charles Prempeh, PhD, Research Fellow, Centre for Cultural and African Studies, KNUST, Ghana

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# Kilimanjaro Climbs to New Heights: Tanzania's Iconic Peak Set to Break Tourism Revenue Records

By Adonis Byemelwa

**K**ilimanjaro — There's an undeniable magic in standing beneath the towering shadow of Africa's highest peak, where the alpine wind whispers through ancient glaciers and the sun kisses the slopes with golden warmth. Kilimanjaro is more than a mountain—it's a living emblem of wonder, resilience, and Tanzania's timeless allure.

That enchantment is now reflected not only in the awe-struck faces of climbers but also in the numbers—Kilimanjaro National Park is on track to break its revenue record this financial year.

By the end of June, the park is expected to bring in a historic Sh100 billion (over \$38 million), thanks in large part to a wave of successful international marketing campaigns that have rippled across the globe. From July last year to February, Kilimanjaro had already earned Sh92 billion (over \$35 million), just a step away from the summit of its financial goal.

This leap in success comes after a steep descent during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic when tourist



Accomplished and experienced harpist Siobhan Brady performs for 25 minutes on Mount Kilimanjaro's summit, Tanzania. Photo courtesy

arrivals plummeted from 54,000 to 49,000. But like the mountain itself, Tanzania's tourism industry has shown remarkable resilience.

In the 2022/23 and 2023/24 fiscal years, the numbers climbed again—53,000 and 63,000 tourists reached the peak, respectively. In just the first eight months of this financial

year, over 55,000 had already scaled the heights of Africa's highest point.

Kilimanjaro is more than a geographical marvel—it's a living museum of the planet's ecosystems, from dense rainforests and savannah to deserts and arctic glaciers. Few places offer such a breathtaking panorama of Earth's diversity in one

vertical stretch.

It's this richness that draws climbers from every corner of the world, and Tanzania has leaned into this allure with fresh energy.

According to Angela Nyaki, Senior Assistant Conservation Commissioner at Tanzania National Parks (Tanapa), the turning point came with the release of *Tanzania: The Royal Tour*, a film where President Samia Suluhu Hassan herself becomes the country's most passionate guide.

Released on April 18, 2022, in the U.S.—Tanzania's top market—the documentary unveiled the heart of the country and, crucially, pinpointed Kilimanjaro as its true home, correcting widespread geographical misconceptions.

Nyaki credits the film's success not only with raising international awareness but also with igniting a surge in domestic pride and interest. "I wish other editions of *Tanzania: The Royal Tour* were produced and promoted further and further and further," she reflects, the repetition emphasizing her hope for its continued influence.

Tour guides like Benedict Mato are among the many locals whose lives have changed as a result. "I can now comfortably pay school fees for my children," he shares, attributing his improved income to the rise in tourist numbers sparked by the film.

His colleague, Rogati Mtui, adds that it has inspired leaders to champion tourism in their regions, giving rise to an extraordinary boom in local visitors—many of whom once spent leisure time at pubs or shopping malls but now choose to explore their national treasures.

Mtui is especially moved by how the film has broadened the reach of Tanzania's tourism beyond its traditional markets. "I now meet tourists from places like the UAE,



Tanzania National Parks' Senior Assistant Conservation Commissioner Angela Nyaki says the Kilimanjaro National Park is currently constructing an accommodation facility at Horombo. Photo courtesy.



Indonesia, China—even persons with disabilities are making the climb,” he says. For him, it’s clear: this renewed visibility is reshaping the tourism landscape, making it more inclusive and far-reaching.

The park itself is evolving in response. To meet the growing demand, Tanapa is currently constructing a new accommodation facility at Horombo Hut, situated at a staggering 12,204 feet along the Marangu Route. Plans are also in motion to add high-end lodging options at the Kibo and Mandara huts, catering to travelers with greater spending power.

In a bold move blending tradition with technology, Kilimanjaro is getting connected—literally. With the support of Tanzania Telecommunications Corporation Limited, internet service is being expanded across the mountain, allowing climbers to livestream their ascent. The Marangu Route is



The mountain boasts an assembly of all the ecosystems present on earth, including rain forests, bushes, Savannah, desert, and glaciers dubbed an arctic of the globe. Photo courtesy

already online, and other routes such as Machame, Lemosho, Shira, and Rongai are next in line.

It’s not just about comfort and connectivity, though. Safety is a cornerstone of the park’s strategy moving forward. Two helicopter firms are now operating to provide emergency rescue services, ensuring peace of mind for adventurers aiming

high.

Meanwhile, Tanapa isn’t afraid to get creative. From mountain marathons to parachuting adventures, new experiences are being introduced to make every visit to Kilimanjaro unforgettable. Water will soon be pumped to the mountain’s desert zones, bringing life and greenery to its arid stretches, adding even more

variety to its already astounding display of ecosystems.

A veteran tourism reporter based in Arusha, Patty Magubira, says, “All of this has been made possible not only by infrastructure and policy but by the human stories—the people who walk these trails, guide these journeys, and breathe new life into old legends. As the world continues to discover the unmatched magic of Kilimanjaro, Tanzania stands ready—not just with open arms but with a renewed spirit, a powerful narrative, and a mountain that keeps drawing the world’s gaze higher.”

It’s not just a destination—it’s a call to something greater. Kilimanjaro stirs the soul, challenges the body, and uplifts the spirit. Now, with every step taken on its slopes, Tanzania tells a story of resilience, pride, and purpose—one that echoes from the summit to the world.

## BAL 2025: 156 Players, 28 Countries, One African Stage

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

The Basketball Africa League (BAL) continues to grow in leaps and bounds, marking a historic milestone in the 2025 season. With a record 156 players hailing from 28 countries taking part in this year’s competition, the BAL reaffirmed its status as a premier basketball showcase on the continent—and one with an increasingly international footprint.

The Kalahari Conference, which was held from April 5 to 13, brought together 52 players from nine different nations for a week of high-stakes basketball action, skill, and cultural celebration. For the first time in the league’s five-year history, BAL games were hosted in Morocco, signalling the North African nation’s debut as a tournament venue and underlining the league’s pan-African vision.

Since its inception in 2021 through a partnership between the



Al Ittihad concluded the BAL Kalahari Conference undefeated.

International Basketball Federation (FIBA) and the NBA, the BAL has become more than just a sports competition. It is now a symbol of talent development and international

collaboration. This season’s numbers speak volumes.

The presence of 156 players from 28 countries is the most diverse player pool the league has ever seen.

From West Africa to Southern Africa, from North Africa to the diaspora, players brought their unique styles, backgrounds, and cultures to the courts. The league not only provides

a platform for homegrown talent to shine but also attracts players from beyond.

## *Al Ittihad, Rivers Hoopers shine at Kalahari Conference*

The Kalahari Conference, one of the three conferences in the BAL regular season, featured some of the fiercest matchups and brightest stars. Nigeria's Rivers Hoopers defeated Mali's Stade Malien 79-59 and Egypt's Al Ittihad beat Morocco's FUS Rabat 98-74 as the Kalahari Conference concluded in Rabat.

Rivers Hoopers ended the Kalahari Conference with four wins and two losses, behind only the conference leaders Al Ittihad (6-0), and advance to the 2025 Basketball Africa League (BAL) Playoffs and Finals in South Africa.

Five Ittihad players scored in double digits, led by Abdelhady Metwaly with 19 points. Anas Mahmoud recorded 10 points and seven rebounds, and Ittihad remain undefeated in the BAL this season.

With two wins and four losses, FUS Rabat finished third in the Kalahari Conference and will be looking closely at what happens in Cairo and Kigali when the conference play continues.

After the Sahara Conference



Rivers Hoopers ended the Kalahari Conference with four wins and two losses, behind only the conference leaders Al Ittihad

(April 26 - May 4 in Dakar) and Nile Conference (May 17-25 in Kigali) are complete, a round of seeding games will take place in Pretoria to determine the final seeding order for the knockout games. Ittihad have put themselves in pole position for a smooth playoff run, while Rivers Hoopers were given a harsh reminder that for all their consistency and grit, they are still not quite a championship team.

«We need to be better if we are

going to compete in South Africa. It's quite frustrating... Al Ittihad were fantastic tonight, just as they were in the first game against us. They moved the ball well... I see the amount of work that we have to put in,» Odaudu said in the post-match press conference.

## *Morocco Steps Into the Spotlight*

Morocco's debut as a BAL host marked a significant milestone for both the country and the league. The

games were played at the Prince Moulay Abdellah Sports Complex in Rabat, Morocco, drawing thousands of fans and showcasing the country's capacity to host international sporting events.

For Moroccan players and fans alike, it was a moment of pride. The energy in the arena was electric, with vibrant drumming, chants, and dances accompanying every match.

More than 28,000 fans attended the games at Prince Moulay Abdellah Sports Complex in Rabat between April 5 and April 13, which also marked the BAL's first games in Morocco.

In addition to the conference play, the league also held ancillary and community outreach events, including a BAL4Her workshop, a unified game with Special Olympics, Her Time To Play clinic for 100 girls, and more.

Halftime entertainment featured Moroccan musicians ElGrandeToto, Lazaro, Vargas, Khtek, Tagne and Stormy. Two-time NBA All-Star Joakim Noah, 2015 NBA champion Festus Ezeli, and two-time WNBA All-Star Chiney Ogwumike. The league's decision to include Morocco as a host was strategic — reflecting not only the country's infrastructure and fan base but also its role as a gateway between Africa and Europe.

With the Kalahari Conference now wrapped up in Marrakesh, attention is now shifting to the next phases of the BAL season, including the Sahara and Nile Conferences and ultimately the playoffs at the Sunbet Arena in Pretoria, South Africa from June 1st to June 14th, 2025. But the impression left by the Kalahari Conference will linger.

The expansion into Morocco and the record-breaking international participation sends a clear message that the BAL is no longer just Africa's league — it's a league for the world, built in Africa. The legacy of the Kalahari Conference in Morocco will serve as a reminder that sport is one of the continent's most powerful tools for integration, development, and inspiration.



Morocco's debut as a BAL host marked a significant milestone for both the country and the league.





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