AUSTRALIA AFRICA UNIVERSITIES NETWORK

ELAAD
Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy
A flagship program of the AAUN

DEEPENING AUSTRALIA-AFRICA RELATIONS TO 2040

Policy Report and Recommendations from the Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy (ELAAD) Program



1 September 2026

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Judith Neilson Foundation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the ELAAD program conveners, A/Prof. David Mickler (Curtin University), Prof. Christopher Isike (University of Pretoria), Hon. Prof. Matthew Neuhaus (Australian National University), and A/Prof. Patrick Maluki (University of Nairobi), along with the ELAAD Program Ambassadors, Fridah Njoki and Peter Mbuva, and the ELAAD Program Administrator, Ruvi Goredema, for their tireless efforts in developing and delivering this excellent program under the auspices of the AAUN.

To the fellows who dedicated their valuable time and expertise to participating in the six-month program—including the conception, drafting, and refining of this document—congratulations. We extend special recognition to the five fellows who reviewed and brought the document to the finish line (names and affiliations below).

Above all, we express our profound gratitude to the Judith Neilson Foundation (JNF) for their generous financial support that brought the ELAAD fellows together at the AAUN Forum at Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, South Africa, from 8-11 June 2026. This marked the inaugural in-person gathering of the ELAAD fellows, providing an invaluable opportunity to build enduring peer networks, foster cross-cultural diplomatic dialogue, and institutionalise relationships beyond the virtual classroom.

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Disclaimer

This policy report reflects the collective ideas of the ELAAD fellows, based on months of research, discussions, and debates. The views, ideas, and recommendations in the report do not necessarily represent the positions of individual fellows, the AAUN, its member universities, or the governments for which some fellows work.

FOREWORD

As Co-Chair of the Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN) and Co-Convener of the Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy (ELAAD) Program, it is my privilege to introduce this landmark policy report, *Deepening Australia-Africa Relations to 2040*.

We stand at a historic juncture in international relations. The global landscape is undergoing profound structural shifts, characterised by geopolitical realignments, rapid technological transformation, climate vulnerability, and a renewed search for sustainable development models. In this dynamic environment, the relationship between Australia and the 54 sovereign nations of the African continent represents a vital frontier of strategic opportunity, mutual learning, and shared prosperity.

For the last 15 years, the AAUN has championed the principle of equitable partnership. Founded on the belief that complex global challenges—from food security and public health to energy transition and governance—cannot be solved in isolation, our network of 29 leading universities across Australia and Africa has demonstrated the transformative power of academic diplomacy and co-created research.

The ELAAD Program embodies the next evolution of this mission. By bringing together early-career diplomats, postgraduate students, researchers, policy practitioners, civil society, and industry leaders, ELAAD invests directly in the human capital that will structure Australia-Africa engagement over the coming decades. The recommendations contained in this report are not abstract academic exercises; they are pragmatic, evidence-based, and forward-looking proposals crafted by the very leaders who will be tasked with implementing them.

Looking ahead to 2040, the imperative for Australia and African nations to deepen engagement is clear. Africa's demographic vitality, burgeoning middle class, rapid urbanisation, and key role in the global green energy transition make it an indispensable global player. Concurrently, Australia's technological innovation, world-class educational institutions, sustainable mining governance, and agricultural resilience offer key synergies for African development priorities as articulated in the African Union's *Agenda 2063*.

To realise this potential, we must move beyond transactional interactions and build institutionalised, multi-sectoral partnerships. This report provides a clear blueprint to achieve that vision across education, economic integration, and multilateral diplomacy.

On behalf of the AAUN and my co-conveners, I express my deepest gratitude to our fellows, partner universities, and supporters—especially the Judith Neilson Foundation—for making this initiative possible. I commend this report to policymakers, university leaders, industry partners, and diplomats across both continents as a roadmap for our collective future.



A/Prof David Mickler
ELAAD Founder & Co-Convenor
AAUN Co-Chair (Australia)
Curtin University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy report reflects the collective insights, rigorous research, and strategic vision of the second cohort of the Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy (ELAAD) Program. Convened under the auspices of the Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN), ELAAD brings together a dynamic generation of early-career diplomats and postgraduate students from across Australia and the African continent. Developed through virtual seminars, policy dialogues, collaborative research groups, and an in-person workshop at Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, South Africa, this document presents actionable, evidence-based recommendations designed to guide Australia-Africa engagement through 2040.

The report arrives during a period of global volatility and transformation. As the international community grapples with climate crises, economic uncertainty, supply chain vulnerabilities, and geopolitical fragmentation, small and middle powers are presented with both the necessity and the opportunity to shape a more equitable, rules-based international order. Africa is central to this global future: home to the world's youngest population, the world's largest contiguous free trade area (the AfCFTA), and critical mineral reserves essential for the global net-zero transition. Australia, with its comparative strengths in sustainable agriculture, mineral economics, high-quality education, and environmental stewardship, is uniquely positioned to be a preferred, long-term partner for African nations.

Despite these natural synergies, historical engagement between Australia and African nations has often lacked sustained institutional depth, marked by a modest diplomatic footprint, low bilateral trade and investment volumes outside extractives, and persistent informational and administrative barriers. This report addresses these systemic gaps directly. The report proposes three strategic pillars for deepening Australia–Africa relations as summarised in the illustration below and elaborated in the subsequent sections of this report.

The three strategic pillars for deepening Australia–Africa relations

Education and research partnerships

- AAUN to facilitate the establishment of African and Australian Studies degrees and centres amongst AAUN members.
- Expand more campuses of Australian universities across Africa.
- Offer more scholarships and fellowships, including through AAUN, for emerging leaders and encourage work pathways.

Investment and economic cooperation

- Negotiate tax and trade agreements between Australia and African countries, and the AfCFTA.
- Re-establish an International Mining Centre in Perth with a focus on value addition in Africa and Australia.
- Expand training partnerships and research collaborations in mining regulation, ESG and green industrialisation pathways.

Diplomatic and bilateral engagement

- Australia and willing African countries increase collaboration on multilateral reforms, particularly in peace-building, climate negotiations and cyber diplomacy.
- African foreign ministers to be invited to the annual Australia-Africa Week in Perth.
- The African Union to establish a mission in Canberra and begin senior officials' talks with Australia.

AUSTRALIA-AFRICA RELATIONS

The international system is experiencing a profound structural realignment. As global power dynamics shift toward multipolarity, middle-power diplomacy and strategic coalitions are increasingly critical in safeguarding rules-based international governance, fostering economic stability, and driving global climate action. Within this context, the relationship between Australia and the continent of Africa represents an underutilised partnership with immense potential.

Africa is defined by demographic dynamism and rapid economic transformation. Home to 1.5 billion people today, the continent's population is projected to reach 2.4 billion by 2050, accounting for more than half of all global population growth during this period. Over 60% of Africa's population is under the age of 25. This youth demographic represents an unprecedented catalyst for workforce innovation, consumer market expansion, and digital adoption. Simultaneously, the implementation of the AfCFTA—encompassing 55 nations and a combined GDP exceeding USD 3.4 trillion—is creating the world's largest single market, restructuring regional supply chains, and driving industrialisation.

Concurrently, Africa is a key component of the global critical minerals landscape. Possessing vast reserves of lithium, cobalt, nickel, manganese, platinum-group metals, and rare earth elements, African nations are crucial to the global transition toward renewable energy and decarbonisation.





(Source: Australia Awards Africa website)

Furthermore, the continent holds a formidable 54-vote bloc in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), making African diplomatic alignment vital for multilateral consensus-building on peace, security, climate governance, and international law.

Australia's historic engagement with Africa has been anchored primarily in private-sector mining investments, development assistance, and high-level educational exchanges. Australia brings world-leading expertise in dryland agriculture, sustainable mining technology and governance (METS), renewable energy integration, and tertiary education.

However, institutional ties have historically suffered from cyclical policy interest, modest diplomatic footprints, and limited public literacy regarding modern African realities.

To bridge these gaps, institutional platforms such as the AAUN and its flagship initiative, the ELAAD Program, have emerged to connect and sustain knowledge partnerships, build human capacity, drive collaborative research, and generate innovative policy guidance.

ABOUT THE AAUN



AAUN'S VISION

The AAUN, established in 2012, is the flagship network of 29 universities from across Australia and the African continent that collaborate through equal partnership on research, capacity-building and academic diplomacy.

The network facilitates quality collaborative research and policy advocacy to address common and comparative challenges facing science and societies, builds knowledge and research capacity in people and institutions, and pursues academic diplomacy and science communication through engagement with key stakeholders to support the deepening of Australia-Africa literacy and cooperative relations.

Key programs include the AAUN Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF) research seed grants, the AAUN Early Career Researchers (ECR) Group, the Annual AAUN John Hearn-Cheryl de la Rey ECR Prize, the AAUN Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy (ELAAD) Program, the Annual AAUN John Hearn Memorial Lecture, and the annual high-level AAUN Forum.



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SECRETARY (AUSTRALIA)

MS RUVI GOREDEMA
Curtin University

SECRETARY (AFRICA)

DR SUSSY MUNIALO
University of Nairobi



Our Strategic Objectives

1. To serve as the flagship platform promoting equitable, innovative and impactful university partnerships between the continents of Australia and Africa.

2. To facilitate quality collaborative research and policy advocacy to address common and comparative challenges facing science and societies across Australia and Africa.

3. To build knowledge and research capacity in people and institutions across Australia and Africa, including the next generation of scholars.

4. To utilise academic diplomacy and science communication through engagement with key stakeholders in academia, government, industry, and communities to support the deepening of Australia-Africa literacy and cooperative relations.

5. To maintain network sustainability through demonstrating value and impact, securing external support and partnerships, a managed evolution of membership, and practicing collegial, inclusive, active and transparent leadership and governance.



Priority Collaborative Research Themes

Our research is pursued through building and supporting collaborative teams to address five research clusters of mutual priority

- Environment, climate, resources, and energy
- Equality, security, and governance
- Public health and human wellbeing
- Sustainable food, water, and ocean systems
- Artificial intelligence and digital futures



Jamaccadda Cahuud Amoud University
Australian National University
Bahir Dar University
Charles Sturt University
Curtin University
ECU Edith Cowan University
Walter Sisulu
Makerere University
Mekelle University
MU Murdoch University
Namibia University of Science and Technology
Nelson Mandela University
RMIT University
Tshwane University of Technology
University of Botswana
University of Cape Town
University of Ghana
University of Mauritius
University of Mpumalanga
University of Nairobi
The University of Newcastle Australia
UNSW Sydney
Universiteit van Pretoria University of Pretoria Yunibesithi ya Pretoria
The University Of Queensland Australia
University of Rwanda
The University of Western Australia
Western Sydney University

ABOUT THE AAUN ELAAD PROGRAM

ELAAD is a new Fellowship program aimed at enhancing professional development and networking among diplomats and academics in their early years, convened virtually by four AAUN member universities on behalf of the AAUN: University of Nairobi, Curtin University, University of Pretoria, and Australian National University. From guest speeches to networking opportunities, policy dialogues, and tailor-made career development activities, the ELAAD program aims to shape the next generation of diplomats and academics who will cement the relationship between Australia and the African continent.

Aims of the ELAAD program

i. Create a diverse cohort and ongoing network of emerging leaders in Australia-Africa diplomatic relations from among postgraduate university students and junior diplomats across Australia and the African continent;

ii. Provide an opportunity for this cohort to develop expert knowledge and professional skills in Australia-Africa relations through a customised and facilitated annual online program engaging with leading scholars and experts, journalists, senior diplomats and other policy practitioners; and

iii. Draw on the collective knowledge, expertise and ideas of this cohort to generate innovative policy ideas and meaningful socio-cultural exchanges for enhancing international relations between the African continent and Australia, including developing collaborative solutions to global challenges.

ELAAD Program Evolution

1. Cohort 1 (2022-23 Pilot): Launched at the Australian National University (ANU) in October 2022, and convened by Curtin University on behalf of AAUN, the pilot program brought together 36 inaugural fellows from across Australia and 12 African nations.

2. Cohort 2 (2025–26): Launched in July 2025 at the University of Nairobi, the second program featured 39 fellows from across governments and member universities.

3. In-Person Workshop (June 2026): The cohort 2 fellows, supported by the Judith Neilson Foundation, convened at Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, South Africa, for intensive policy drafting, culminating in this document.



Cohort 2 ELAAD fellows at a workshop at Nelson Mandela University in June 2026

Structure of the ELAAD 2025-26 Program

Over the six months starting 17 October 2025, the ELAAD fellows met every fortnight for two hours virtually, for an interactive seminar (normally a panel of three expert academic or policy practitioner speakers), followed by a Q&A segment. A list of the speakers, their topics, and dates, as well as the ELAAD convenor profiles, will be highlighted in the subsequent sections of this report.

Overall, 12 sessions were conducted over the six months, categorised into five themes: introduction, knowledge, skills, shared global challenges, and conclusion. A summary of the cohort's program schedule is as follows.



SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION



MAIN SPEAKER| A/PROF DAVID MICKLER

01

INTRODUCTIONS

Each ELAAD Fellowprovided a 1-minute self-introduction of themselves (What country they are from, where they currently live, current study program and/or professional role, their motivation for joining the program, and one unique thing about themselves.

02

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

The course co-convenors were introduced, and the program's background, objectives, and format were outlined.

03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

Fellows were asked to provide thoughts on what skills they consider relevant for a successful diplomatic career, the significance of collective pan-African diplomacy and Australia's approach to Africa and vice versa.

They were provided with Gareth Evans's tips for a successful diplomatic career, Tighisti Amare's 'continental unity' article, and Diane Stone's tips for training the next generation of diplomats.

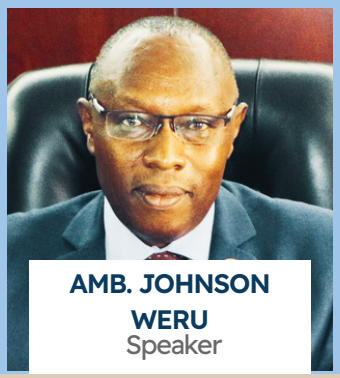
SESSION 2: UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY AFRICA



A/PROF PATRICK MALUKI
Moderator



AMB. PROF. MARIA NZOMO
Speaker



AMB. JOHNSON WERU
Speaker



PROF. MACHARIA MUNENE
Speaker

01

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

Prof. Patrick Maluki (University of Nairobi) moderated this session, introduced the topic, speakers, and their biographies, before giving each speaker time to deliver their presentations.

02

EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS

The session featured three distinguished speakers, with a good mix of backgrounds (academic and diplomatic), each sharing important information on the topic. Amb. Prof. Maria Nzomo is a Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, University of Nairobi, and Amb. Johnson Weru, CBS, is the Secretary Trade Partnership, Ministry of East African Community (EAC), the ASALs and Regional Integration, while Prof. Macharia Munene is a specialist in Diplomacy, Geopolitics and Foreign Relations at the HORN Institute. The main question posed to the speakers was: What are the 3 key thematic areas that define contemporary Africa?

03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

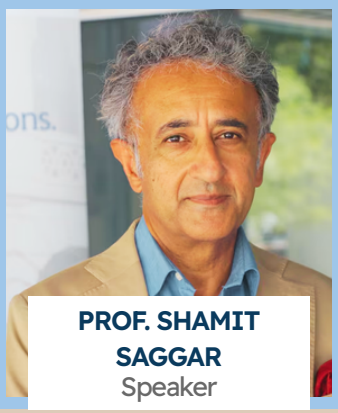
Three questions were posed for the fellows to share thoughts on: how history informs African contemporary international relations; the effect of regional integration and economic development of African states; and the impact of great power geopolitical contestations on African international relations.

Fellows read Assam Francis's article on African solutions to African problems; Roger Fon et al (2025) on the AfCFTA; and Sonny Iroche's piece on Africa and the AI revolution.

SESSION 3: UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIA



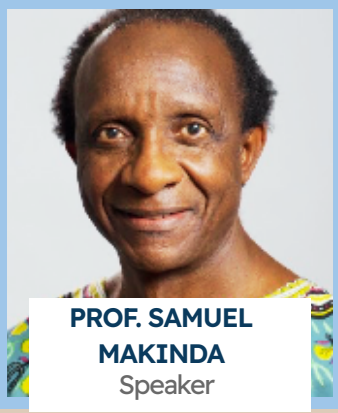
A/PROF DAVID MICKLER
Moderator



PROF. SHAMIT SAGGAR
Speaker



PROF. FARIDA FOZDAR
Speaker



PROF. SAMUEL MAKINDA
Speaker

01

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

Associate Professor David Mickler (Curtin University) moderated this session, introduced the topic, the speakers, and their biographies, and then gave each speaker time to deliver their presentation. The key question posed to the speakers was: What are the key dynamics we need to know about contemporary Australia?

02

EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS

David introduced the speakers for the day: Prof. Rarida Fozdar (FASSA, Dean of Global Futures, Faculty of Humanities, Curtin University), Professor Shamit Saggar (CBE FAcSS, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success, Curtin University), and Emeritus Professor Samuel Makinda (EBS, College of Law, Arts and Social Sciences, Murdoch University). The speakers were then each given about 15 minutes to make a presentation on the topic before the floor was opened to the Fellows for Q and A, in which fellows had a chance to directly ask them.

03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

Three questions were posed for the fellows to share thoughts on: how Australia's "national identity" can be defined; Australia's "place in the world"; and the major policy reforms needed for Australia's future development

The three short materials the Fellows were given were: Stan Grant's (2015) 'racism' speech; Hon. Dr Anne Aly MP's op-ed on multiculturalism; and PM Anthony Albanese's UNGA 80th Session address.

SESSION 4: AUSTRALIA-AFRICA BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL RELATIONS



A/PROF DAVID MICKLER
Moderator



H.E. DR PETER HUNTER
Speaker



H.E. DR WILSON KOGO
Speaker



HON. PROF. MATTHEW NEUHAUS
Speaker

01

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

Associate Professor David Mickler (Curtin University) still moderated this interesting session, introduced the topic, the speakers, and their biographies, and then gave each speaker time to deliver their presentation.

02

EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS

Each of the expert guest speakers: Hon. Professor Matthew Neuhaus, College of Law, Australian National University; Australian Ambassador to Ethiopia and the African Union, H.E. Dr Peter Hunter; and H.E. Dr Wilson Kogo, High Commissioner of Kenya to Australia) were given 10-15 minutes to respond to the question of the key dynamics worth knowing about Australia-Africa relations, and this was then followed by a Q and A session, in which the fellows were allowed to engage directly with the speakers.

03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

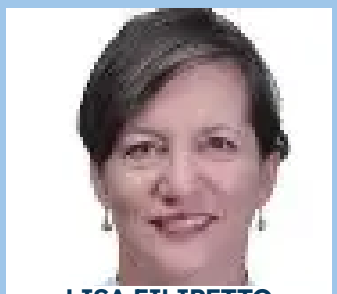
Fellows were asked how they would characterise historical relations between Australia and Africa; the main constraints to that relationship; and what opportunities exist for impactful cooperation between Australia and African countries in multilateral fora.

The pre-readings were Yu-Shan Wu's and Maxi Schoeman's 2022 *The Conversation* article; Hon. Tim Watts MP's *The Strategist* article; and Prof. Matthew Neuhaus's *Lowy Interpreter* article.

SESSION 5: DIPLOMATIC CRAFT AND CAREERS



A/PROF DAVID MICKLER
Moderator



LISA FILIPETTO AM
Speaker



H.E. TSELANE MOKUENA
Speaker



HON. PROF. MATTHEW NEUHAUS
Speaker

01

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

Associate Professor David Mickler (Curtin University) moderated this session, introduced the day's topic, the speakers, and their biographies, and then gave each speaker time to deliver their presentation.

02

EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS

This session featured senior diplomats (H.E. Tselane Mokuena, South African Ambassador to Jordan; Lisa Filipetto AM, former Australian Head of Mission in Kenya, Ethiopia and Cambodia, Permanent Representative to the African Union, Assistant Secretary General and Head of Mission UN Support Office Somalia; and Hon Prof Matthew Neuhaus, Australian National University. Former Australian Head of Mission in Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Netherlands.), sharing insights into successful diplomatic tradecraft and personal career journeys. Each of the speakers was given time to talk about their diplomatic experiences and provide tips for emerging diplomats.

03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

To spark a conversation, the fellows were given three guiding questions: what essential characteristics and skills are needed to navigate professional challenges and forge successful diplomatic careers; differences and similarities between Australian and African diplomatic cultures; and what innovative diplomatic strategies could Australia and African countries deploy to advance cooperation between our continents.

The fellows read: Yolokazi Mfuto's role of women in foreign service piece; Danny Bradlow's piece on South Africa's G20 presidency; and Lachlan Strahan's piece on Australia's diplomatic culture.

SESSION 6: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC AND DIGITAL DIPLOMACY









01

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

Professor Christopher Isike (University of Pretoria) led this session, introduced the panellists, and invited them to each spend 10-15 minutes talking about intercultural communication, public and digital diplomacy.

02

EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS

The speakers (Prof. Chika Anyanwu, Professor of Digital Media, Head, UNSW Canberra School of Professional Studies, Australia; H.E. Leilani Bin-Juda PSM, Australian High Commissioner to Nigeria; Ms Mathapelo Monaisa, Director: Internal Communications, Social Media and Public Diplomacy, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, South Africa) shared their thoughts and experiences, as well as tips for effective intercultural communication in their professional journeys, each spending about 10-15 minutes.

03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

Fellows were asked to reflect on why intercultural communication is such a valuable professional skill today; how innovations in digital technology are impacting traditional modes of diplomacy, and what public diplomacy strategies could be utilised to more effectively advance knowledge and build 'soft power' in Australia-Africa relations.
Pre-readings were from UNESCO, Bob Wekesa, and Alison Carroll.

SESSION 7: POLICY RESEARCH, ANALYSIS AND WRITING









01

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

Professor Christopher Isike (University of Pretoria) still led this session, on policy writing, in which the speakers shared best practices in research, analysis, and writing policy papers.

02

EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS

The experts (Prof. John Phillimore, Executive Director, John Curtin Institute of Public Policy, Curtin University, Australia; Ambassador Oleksandr Scherba, Ambassador of Ukraine to South Africa; and Dr Derek R. Slagle, Director, UA Little Rock School of Public Affairs, University of Arkansas, USA), who presented a good mix of academics and diplomats, shared tips for writing policy briefs.

03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

During the conversation with the experts and fellows, we asked, among other things, about the most effective ways to communicate policy research and recommendations to different audiences, and how academics and policymakers can collaborate to influence foreign policy-making processes, and the opportunities 'science diplomacy' brings in the Australia-Africa relations. Fellows read the IDRC tips for policy briefing, the Australian Government's tips for academics engaging with policy makers, Anthony Idowu Ajayi et al. (2021), policy writing tips and Naledi Pandor's 'science diplomacy' piece.

SESSION 8: EVOLVING GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS



A/PROF DAVID MICKLER
Moderator



DR HASSAN KHANNENJE
Speaker



PROF BINA D'COSTA
Speaker



HON. PROF MATTHEW NEUHAUS
Speaker

01

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

This session was for the experts to share their thoughts on the evolving global geopolitical landscape and to spark discussions about the place of Australia and Africa within it. Associate Professor David Mickler (Curtin University) moderated the session and gave each speaker about 15 minutes to share their insights before opening the floor for discussion with the fellows.

02

EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS

The experts (Hon. Professor Matthew Neuhaus, Australian National University; Professor Bina D'Costa, Department of International Relations, Australian National University, Canberra; and Dr Hassan Khannenje, Director, The Horn International Institute for Strategic Studies, Nairobi) delivered their speeches on the emerging global geopolitical dynamics: a shift in power from the 'global West' to the 'South' and the increasingly multilateral nature of the international regime.

03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

For the conversation segment, the fellows were presented with questions on how Australia and Africa should respond to the global power shift, the diplomatic strategies for small and medium powers to navigate the current global regime environment, and opportunities for Australia and Africa to collaborate to pursue mutual interests amidst evolving global geopolitical dynamics. Fellows read several short pieces prior to the session: Mark Carney's Davos address, Carlos Lopes' piece on opportunities for African countries, and Christopher Burke's article on the Quad alliance and lessons for Africa.

SESSION 9: CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES



A/PROF DAVID MICKLER
Moderator



H.E. SAROJINI SEENEEVASSEN
Speaker



PROF MAANO RAMUTSINDELA
Speaker



ASSOC. PROF KATHRYN STURMAN
Speaker

01

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

This session was moderated by Associate Professor David Mickler (Curtin University), who introduced the speakers and the day's theme: "Shared Global Challenges: Climate Change & Natural Resources."

02

EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS

The experts (H.E. Sarojini Seeneevassen, High Commissioner of Mauritius to Australia; Professor Maano Ramutsindela, Future Africa Research Chair in Sustainability Transformations, University of Cape Town/University of Pretoria, South Africa; and Associate Professor Kathryn Sturman, Principal Research Fellow, Sustainable Minerals Institute, University of Queensland, Australia) were each given about 15 minutes to share their thoughts on key dynamics in the shared global challenge of climate change and natural resources between Australia, Africa, and the world.

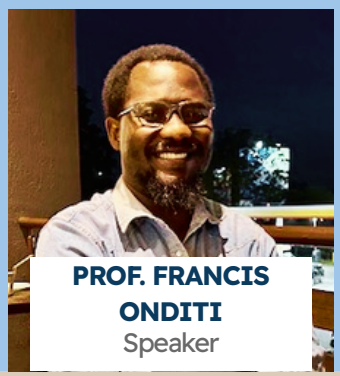
03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

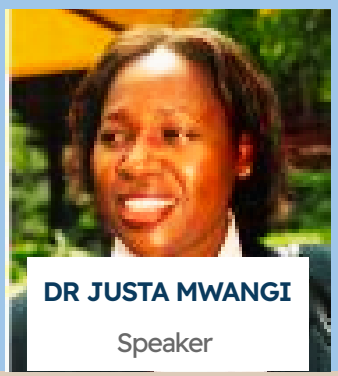
Fellows discussed shared climate change and energy transition challenges between Australia and African countries, including natural resource management and diplomatic strategies for cooperation during international negotiations. Pre-readings included articles on Africa's climate ambition (Kgaugela Mkumbeni and Dhesigen Naidoo), global policy lessons for Africa's energy transition (Zainab Usman), and Australia's mineral diplomacy in Africa (Christopher Burke).

SESSION 10: ECONOMIC AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT









01

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

Professor Patrick Maluki from the University of Nairobi facilitated this engaging session, where experts offered their insights on economic and human development challenges and opportunities for both Australia and Africa.

02

EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS

Experts (H.E. Kate Chamley, High Commissioner of Australia to Mauritius; Professor Francis Onditi, Senior Research Fellow, Qatar-South Africa Centre for Peace and Intercultural Understanding, University of Johannesburg, South Africa; Dr Justa Mwangi, Global South Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Sussex, UK) were allotted approximately 15 minutes each to discuss their insights on crucial dynamics within the Shared Global Challenges: Economic and Human Development between Australia, Africa, and the world, along with the challenges and opportunities for collaboration.

03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

The discussion focused on shared interests and challenges between Australia and Africa concerning economic and human development, as well as opportunities for bilateral trade. It also explored diplomatic strategies for enhancing cooperation during global negotiations. The pre-reading included insights from Ribio Nzeza Bunketi Buse on culture's role in global improvement, Chidi Anselm Odinkalu on Africa's trade blocs, and the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade regarding the Australia-Africa Development Partnership Plan 2025-30.

SESSION 11: HUMAN AND TRANSNATIONAL SECURITY



PROF CHRISTOPHER ISIKE
Moderator



H.E. JENNY DA RIN
Speaker



H.E. JOSÉ COSTA PEREIRA
Speaker



DR MARY MANGAI
Speaker

01

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

Professor Christopher Isike from the University of Pretoria led this engaging session, during which experts shared their insights on the critical dynamics surrounding the shared global challenge of human and transnational security.

02

EXPERT GUEST SPEAKERS

For this session, H.E. Jenny Da Rin (High Commissioner of Australia to Kenya), H.E. José Costa Pereira (Ambassador of Portugal to Lituânia, Estônia, & Latvia; former Ambassador to South Africa & Lesotho and Special Representative to the Sahel), and Dr Mary Mangai (Senior Lecturer, School of Public Management and Administration at the University of Pretoria) were hosted. They were given around 15 minutes each to share their insights on the topic before the floor was opened for fellows to ask questions and interact with the experts.

03

DISCUSSION AND READINGS

The fellows explored, among other issues, human security, its distinction from traditional state-centric security, and its potential precedence in global policymaking. They discussed contemporary security threats such as climate change, pandemics, cybercrime, terrorism, and human trafficking, highlighting their interconnectedness. They also focused on the mutual interests of Australia and African countries in addressing human and transnational security threats, and where resources and cooperation should be directed. Pre-readings included contributions from Stephen Buchanan-Clarke, Albert Palazzo, and Kate O'Shaughnessy.

SESSION 12: DEEPENING AUSTRALIA-AFRICA COOPERATION

In the closing session of the fellowship, Professor David Mickler welcomed Mr. Nigel Stanier, the Assistant Secretary (Head) of the Africa Branch at the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in Canberra.

He spoke on significant aspects of Australia-Africa relations. Nigel offered insights into DFAT's operations in Africa and its future prospects.

Following his presentation, the fellows had the opportunity to pose questions directly to the speaker.

David, along with the co-conveners of the program, shared their concluding thoughts and outlined the path forward, particularly in anticipation of the AAUN forum hosted by Nelson Mandela in South Africa.



A/PROF DAVID MICKLER
Moderator



MR NIGEL STANIER
Speaker



THE ELAAD FELLOWS



Derrick Buzigi

Student, International Trade Law - University of Rwanda



Lingiwe Martha Mamombe

Student, MA International Relations - University of Queensland



Ainomugisha Matthew

Student, International Relations and Diplomatic Studies - Makerere University



Wafae Moussaid

First Secretary - Embassy of Morocco, Canberra



Faraimunashe Nkomo

Research and Events Officer - Australian Embassy, Harare



Faith Mulwanda

Student, Bachelor of Laboratory Medicine - Curtin University



Almajeed Bakare

Politcal/Economic Officer - Australian High Commission, Abuja



Victo Nalule

Student, Master of Sustainable Development - Murdoch University



John Youhanes Magok

Department of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals - African Union Commission - Ethiopia



Nomathemba Ndlovu

Student, Master of Engineering - University of New South Wales



Joel Odota

PhD Candidate, International Relations - Curtin University



Ayantu Tamiru Ayana

Second Secretary - Embassy of Ethiopia, Canberra



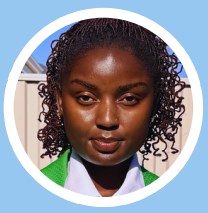
Sthembile Ngubo

Student, Masters in New Testament Studies - University of Pretoria



Marshet Yalalem Asmamaw

Student, Peace and Conflict Studies - Bahir Dar University



Goldine Achudi

Student, Master of Social Work (International) - Edith Cowan University



Anza Phidana

Student, Masters in Commerce - Tshwane University of Technology



Bongani Gift Baloyi

Student, Master of Philosophy in Information - Nelson Mandela Un iversity



Rahel Maegal Berhe

Student, MA Peace and Conflict - Mekelle University



Rola Elkamash

Public Affairs Officer - Australian Embassy, Cairo



Samar Ezzat

First Secretary - Embassy of Egypt, Canberra

THE ELAAD FELLOWS



Asmaa Azehaf

Political and Protocol Officer - Australian Embassy, Rabat



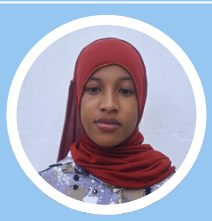
Evans Kipchumba Kipyatich

Finance Attaché - Kenya High Commission, Canberra



Dr Janet Kiguru

Regional Political and Economic Manager - Australian High Commission, Nairobi



Fatoumata Gano

Student, MA International Relations - Université Cheikh Anta Diop



Gabriel Tshekiso

Student, Master of Arts in Politics and International Relations - University of Botswana



Anita Tshwati

Student, Master of Arts in Psychology - Walter Sisulu University



Martha Taremwa

Student, Master of Science in Global Biosecurity and Infectious Disease Management - Makerere University



Keshini Vencatasamy

Student, MA Regional Integration - University of Mauritius



Oliver Twyford-Allen

Second Secretary - Australian Embassy, Harare



Tristan O'Brien

Second Secretary (Political) & Consul - Australian High Commission, Mauritius



Joan Chepkurui Langat

Student, International Studies - University of Nairobi



Gershon Edmond Mozaka

Student, MA International Relations and Diplomacy - University of Ghana



Chamilah Bibi Rughony

Second Secretary - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius

ELAAD

Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy

A flagship program of the AAUN



MS RUVI GOREDEMA

ELAAD Program Administrator



FRIDAH NJOKI

ELAAD PROGRAM AMBASSADOR



PETER MBUVA

ELAAD PROGRAM AMBASSADOR

THE ELAAD PROGRAM CONVENORS



A/PROF DAVID MICKLER

CONVENOR, CURTIN UNIVERSITY

Associate Professor David Mickler is the Director (Global) of the John Curtin Institute of Public Policy and Dean Global Africa in the Office of the DVC.

At the AAUN, David is a Board Member and Co-Chair (Australia), founder of the ELAAD program.

In 2023, he founded the Centre of Australia-Africa Relations, the first of its kind in Australia, based at Curtin University.

David's background is in Political Science, and his research sits at the intersection of International Relations and African Studies. He is particularly interested in Africa's international relations, including issues of diplomacy, human security and governance, the role of the African Union in regional integration, and contemporary Australia-Africa relations, including African diasporas in Australia.



PROF CHRISTOPHER ISIKE

CONVENOR, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Prof Christopher Afoke Isike is the the Head of the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria. Christopher is also Director of the African Centre for the Study of the United States. He serves as President of the African Association of Political Science and previously as Vice President of the International Political Science Association.

His research focuses on African soft power, US-Africa relations, women's issues in politics, and state formation, among others. He employs critical pedagogy in teaching, emphasising student engagement and reflexive learning. Prof. Isike has over 60 publications in respected journals and is the Editor-in-Chief of Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies.



HON. PROF MATTHEW NEUHAUS

CONVENOR, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (ANU)

Matthew Neuhaus has been an Honorary Professor of International Law at ANU College of Law since November 2022. He served as the Australian Ambassador to the Netherlands from August 2018 to October 2022 and represented Australia at various international legal bodies. Neuhaus's previous roles include Ambassador to Zimbabwe and High Commissioner to Nigeria, alongside senior positions in DFAT and PMC. He directed the Political Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat from 2002-2008. Neuhaus has extensive experience in various global postings and holds degrees from the University of Sydney and the University of Cambridge, with additional training at Harvard Kennedy School.



A/PROF PATRICK MALUKI

CONVENOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Prof Patrick Maluki EBS has a PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies and multiple degrees in International Studies, Mass Communication, and Education. He is the Director of the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies at the University of Nairobi and the National Defence College. Additionally, he trains at the Kenya School of Government and serves as chairman of the Diplomacy Scholars Association of Kenya, and editor of the Africa Journal of International Studies.

TESTIMONIALS FROM THE FELLOWS

★★★★★

I will use knowledge and experience from ELAAD to build networks and partnerships anchored in Australia-Africa relations

Academic diplomacy as shown through ELAAD has high potential to positively influence policy advocacy to both Australian and African governments

Very unique opportunity because Australia-Africa relations are not given enough attention due to the distance and foreign policy priorities

ELAAD strengthens my ability to engage in policy advocacy by enhancing my understanding of governance, diplomacy, and evidence-based policymaking



The Policy Context: Comparative Assets and Strategic Imperatives

Rather than traditional donor-recipient dynamics, a modern Australia-Africa strategy must leverage mutual comparative advantages while taking into account the strategic priorities of both regions. Fortunately, Australia's and Africa's comparative advantages are highly complementary, and there is plentiful overlap of strategic priorities.

Mutual comparative advantages between Australia and Africa

Africa	Australia
Demographic Dividend	World-class Higher Education
Single Market (AfCFTA) ~US$3.4T GDP	Dryland Agri-Tech and Food Systems
Critical Minerals and Energy Transition	Mining Governance, ESG and METS
54 votes at the UN	Advanced Renewable Energy and Tech
Agenda 2063 Continental Blueprint	Stable Middle-Power Diplomacy

Africa's strengths lie in its combined size, geography and demography. Its population is expected to reach over 2.5 billion by 2050. Anchored by this rapidly growing demographic dividend, the continent possesses the world's youngest workforce, ready to power domestic industries and global economic supply chains. The realisation of the AfCFTA unifies 54 nations into a single market representing USD 3.4 trillion in combined GDP, creating immense economies of scale for cross-border trade and investment.

Africa's mineral wealth means it will play a significant role in both the global energy transition and AI revolution. The continent is estimated to hold at least 30 per cent of global critical minerals reserves needed for renewable and emerging technologies.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo accounts for 70 per cent of global cobalt production; South Africa, Gabon and Ghana collectively comprise 60 per cent of that of manganese; and Zimbabwe, the DRC and Mali hold significant lithium deposits, to name a few.

Finally, on the global stage, Africa's 54 voting voices - over a quarter of UN members - make it a decisive bloc in shaping global governance and international reform.

Australia's comparative advantages are complementary, providing numerous opportunities to deepen Australia-Africa engagement. First, Australia holds deep experience in mineral sector development, from extraction through to mining equipment, technology and services (METS). Australia exports more than AU$350 billion in minerals and energy annually, and Australian mining companies are some of the largest in the world (Department of Industry, Science and Resources, Australian Government 2025). Australia's mining expertise is a natural partner to Africa's mineral wealth.

Second, Australia's agricultural expertise is a platform for further collaboration with Africa's sizable agricultural sector. Australian agriculture is worth over AU$100 billion annually, with more than 50,000 increasingly specialised farms (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australian Government 2026). CSIRO and ACIAR engage in world-leading agricultural research and development, particularly in dryland agri-tech and climate-resilient food systems. Opportunities for Australian-African agricultural collaboration are many.

Third, Australia is a top education provider globally, with world-class universities and vocational training institutions. In the year to May 2026, over 680,000 international students were enrolled in Australia. However, 57 per cent of those came from just five (non-African) countries (Department of Education, Australian Government, 2026). There is a significant opportunity to deepen linkages between Australia's education providers and Africa's growing youth population (see Mickler and Isike, 2026).

The African Imperative and Agenda 2063

The African Union's *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* sets out seven core aspirations for continental transformation, focusing on inclusive economic growth, political integration, good governance, peace and security, and a strong global standing (see below). Key initiatives such as the AfCFTA, the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), Africa Mining Vision (AMV), Africa's Green Minerals Strategy (AGMS), African Union Commodity Strategy (AUCS), and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) require robust international partnerships in technology transfer, capacity building, and capital investment.



01 A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

02 An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance

03 An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law

04 A peaceful and secure Africa

05 An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics

06 An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children

07 Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner 07

The Australian Strategy and Regional Development Partnership Plan

Australia's foreign policy seeks market diversification, resilient supply chains, and enhanced multilateral cooperation. Its engagement with Africa is underpinned by the Australia - Africa (Regional) Development Partnership Plan 2025–2030 (DPP) published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). It articulates three core objectives:

01. CLIMATE

Increasing climate resilience and food security (supported by the AUD 76.4 million Africa-Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture managed by ACIAR).

02. EDUCATION & HEALTH

Supporting education and health outcomes (driven by Australia Awards and health sector partnerships).

03. EQUITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION

1. Supporting gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) (underpinned by Australia's International Gender Equality Strategy, placing gender equality at the heart of Australia's international engagement).





Systemic Challenges & Structural Gaps

Despite clear alignment in strategic priorities, several structural barriers continue to hinder Australia-Africa relations:

1. Limited Diplomatic Footprint: Australia maintains only nine diplomatic posts across the 54 nations of Africa (Abuja, Accra, Addis Ababa, Cairo, Harare, Port Louis, Nairobi, Pretoria, and Rabat. In contrast, peer middle powers such as Canada, Türkiye, and Brazil maintain between 20 and 40 missions. Similarly, only 16 African nations maintain resident diplomatic missions in Canberra.
2. Information Deficits: African literacy amongst the Australian public and institutional investors remains limited, hindered by historical narratives that raise risk aversion in addition to Australia's fifty-year focus on Asia-Pacific engagement.
3. Administrative and visa friction: Difficult visa processes for African scholars, business leaders, and diplomats entering Australia severely restrict mobility, academic exchange, and trade negotiation.
4. Underutilised Trade Frameworks: Bilateral trade remains undiversified, dominated by raw extractives, without comprehensive trade agreements or double taxation treaties with major African economies.

Empirical Baseline: Trade, Investment, and Development Flows

According to DFAT and Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data (2024–2026), bilateral economic engagement presents a foundation for substantial expansion:

Indicator	Value (AUD)
Two-way goods and services trade	$12.7 Billion (2024)
Australian Exports to Africa	$6.6 Billion (Aluminium, Wheat, METS)
Australian Imports from Africa	$6.1 Billion (Gold, Oil, Fertilizer)
Total Australian Investments in Africa	$20.9 Billion (Primarily Mining)
South African Investments in Australia	$10.1 Billion (28th largest investor)
ACIAR Climate Agriculture Partnership	$76.4 Million (2024-2030)
Australia Awards Africa Budget	Approx. $12.0 Million / year
Direct Aid Program (DAP) Africa	Approx. $4.2 Million / year

Australia's two-way goods and services trade with Africa, at AU$12.7 billion, accounts for only 1 per cent of Australia's total international trade, despite the size, depth and diversity of African markets. While traditional Australian and African goods exports - notably agriculture and raw commodities - are similar in profile, there are a plethora of opportunities to diversify and broaden both goods and services trade.

CORE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This report presents nine policy recommendations structured under three strategic pillars. Each recommendation incorporates rationale, specific action steps, lead and supporting actors, implementation timelines, and target outcomes.

Pillar 1: Education and Research Partnerships

A primary barrier to deeper engagement is a mutual knowledge deficit. Australian policymakers and corporate executives often lack a nuanced understanding of the African political economy, legal systems, and cultural dynamics. Conversely, African academic curriculum rarely examines Australian expertise in dryland agriculture, mining law, or Indo-Pacific diplomacy. Establishing dedicated, accredited academic centres and degree programs within AAUN institutions creates a permanent institutional foundation for cross-regional expertise.

1.1: Facilitate the Establishment of African and Australian Studies Degrees and Research Centres among AAUN Members

PILLAR 1: RECOMMENDATION 1.1 MATRIX	
RATIONALE	Addressing literacy deficits in Australia regarding Africa and enhancing Australian literacy in African academic institutions to promote informed policymaking and commercial connections.
LEAD ACTORS	AAUN Board and Member Universities.
TIMELINE	Short- to Medium-Term (2026–2029).
EXPECTED OUTCOMES	5 Joint Study Centres operational; 10 accredited dual/joint degree modules launched; 1,000+ students enrolled by 2030.



Concrete Action Steps

- **Curriculum Co-Design**: Form an AAUN Joint Curriculum Taskforce to develop standardized undergraduate and postgraduate units in Contemporary African Studies (for Australian institutions) and Australian & Indo-Pacific Studies (for African institutions).

- **Centre Establishment:** Secure seed funding via university advancement offices and philanthropic partners to establish two flagship physical/virtual research hubs: an Australian Centre for African Studies in Perth and an African Centre for Australian & Indo-Pacific Partnerships in Nairobi.

- **Faculty Exchange Program:** Implement a faculty mobility scheme allowing academics to co-teach modules via hybrid digital platforms and short-term residential sabbaticals.

1.2 Expand Australian University Campus Presence and Offshore Learning Hubs across Africa

With 60% of Africa's population under 25, local higher education infrastructure faces severe capacity constraints. While the demand for Australian tertiary qualifications is high, financial barriers and visa processing hurdles prevent many qualified African students from traveling to Australia. Building on successful models such as Curtin University's campus in Mauritius, expanding offshore campuses and transnational education (TNE) hubs directly inside key African growth nodes (e.g., Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria) delivers Australian education sustainably.



PILLAR 1: RECOMMENDATION 1.2 MATRIX	
RATIONALE	Meet soaring African demand for high-quality tertiary education locally, bypassing prohibitive visa and travel costs while building long-term institutional presence.
LEAD ACTORS	Australian Department of Education, Universities Australia, AAUN Australian Members, Host African Higher Ed Authorities.
TIMELINE	Medium to Long Term (2027–2032)
EXPECTED OUTCOMES	2 new branch campuses; 5 micro-hubs; 5,000+ African students enrolled in accredited Australian-standard programs by 2035

Concrete Action Steps

- Feasibility Study & Regulatory Alignment: Conduct a comprehensive market and legal assessment across East and West Africa to align Australian qualifications frameworks with national accreditation boards in target host nations.

- Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Development: Partner with local African private sector property developers, telecom providers, and host universities to co-locate digital learning hubs and branch campuses.

- Blended Delivery Models: Deploy flexible, technology-enabled degree programs combining online coursework with face-to-face instruction by visiting Australian and local faculty.

Human capital mobility builds long-term diplomatic and economic ties. Current scholarship allocations, while impactful, do not fully meet the demand for specialized technical skills in green mineral extraction, dryland agri-tech, and international law. Furthermore, stringent visa restrictions often force African graduates to leave Australia immediately upon completing their degrees, preventing them from gaining practical industry experience in Australian firms that could later drive cross-border trade.

1.3: Offer Targeted Scholarships, Early-Career Fellowships, and Post-Study Work Mobility Pathways

PILLAR 1: RECOMMENDATION 1.3 MATRIX	
RATIONALE	Deepen professional and academic networks by incentivising top African talent to train in Australia and apply skills in joint commercial and research ventures
LEAD ACTORS	DFAT (Australia Awards), Department of Home Affairs, AAUN, Private Sector Sponsors (Mining/Agribusiness)
TIMELINE	Immediate and Ongoing (2026–2028)
EXPECTED OUTCOMES	50% increase in STEM/Mining Australia Awards; 30 annual AAUN ECR Fellowships; creation of a 2-year post-study work visa tier.

Concrete Action Steps

- Restructure Australia Awards: Align scholarship allocations directly with key growth sectors identified in the DFAT Development Partnership Plan (climate-responsive agriculture, METS, ESG governance, public health).
- Institutionalise ELAAD & ECR Fellowships: Establish an enduring endowment pool—co-funded by government and corporate partners—to grant 30 annual research fellowships for early-career scholars and diplomats.
- Targeted Work Visa Stream: Introduce a tailored Australia-Africa Knowledge Exchange Visa stream offering 12–24 months of post-study practical work rights for African master's and PhD graduates in critical skill sectors.





Pillar 2: Investment, Trade, and Green Industrialisation

Australian corporate expansion into Africa is restricted by the lack of double taxation agreements (DTAs) and bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with key economic growth engines (e.g., Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana). Without transparent tax structures, Australian businesses face severe commercial risk. Furthermore, as intra-African tariff barriers decline under the AfCFTA, Australia must establish formal institutional relations with the AfCFTA Secretariat to ensure Australian exporters and service providers can utilize regional value chains efficiently.

2.1: Negotiate Bilateral Tax and Trade Agreements and Establish Formal Engagement with the AfCFTA Secretariat

PILLAR 2: RECOMMENDATION 2.1 MATRIX	
RATIONALE	Eliminate double taxation barriers, reduce commercial risk, and align Australian trade policy with the emerging AfCFTA single market framework
LEAD ACTORS	Australian Department of the Treasury, DFAT, Austrade, AfCFTA Secretariat (Accra), African Trade/Finance Ministries
TIMELINE	Medium Term (2027–2031)
EXPECTED OUTCOMES	3 new Double Taxation Agreements (DTAs); 1 formal MoU between Australia and AfCFTA Secretariat; 20% growth in non-extractive trade

Concrete Action Steps

- DTA Prioritisation: Treasury and DFAT to prioritise negotiating Double Taxation Agreements with top trade partners, starting with Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria.
- AfCFTA Cooperation MoU: Sign a Memorandum of Understanding between DFAT/Austrade and the AfCFTA Secretariat focusing on technical assistance in customs digitisation, trade facilitation, and standards harmonisation.
- Trade Mission Institutionalisation: Establish an annual Austrade-AfCFTA Business Forum rotating between Perth/Sydney and major African commercial capitals (e.g., Johannesburg, Nairobi, Lagos).



CORE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Australian companies have invested more than AU$60 billion in Africa's mining sector, with over 150 ASX-listed companies operating across the continent. However, African governments are increasingly demanding local value addition, mineral beneficiation, and in-country processing rather than raw material export. Re-establishing a modernised International Mining Centre in Perth—bringing together peak industry bodies, academia, and African regulators—will leverage Australia's expertise in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) compliance and position Australia as the partner of choice for sustainable, ethical mineral processing.

2.2: Re-establish the International Mining Centre in Perth with a Focus on Local Value Addition and Beneficiation

PILLAR 2: RECOMMENDATION 2.2 MATRIX	
RATIONALE	Transition Australia-Africa mining ties from raw extraction to collaborative, high-value local processing, battery minerals, and sustainable technology sharing.
LEAD ACTORS	WA State Government, Australia Federal Department of Industry, Science & Resources, Curtin University (WASM), African Union Commission (Department of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals), the African Union Minerals Development Centre (AMDC), Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC), the African Minerals and Geosciences Centre (AMGC)
TIMELINE	Short to Medium Term (2026–2029)
EXPECTED OUTCOMES	Re-establishment of the International Mining Centre in Perth; 10 joint critical mineral value-addition research initiatives

Raw Material Extraction (Legacy Model)

└——> Primary Processing Overseas ——> Limited Local Economic Value

Collaborative Green Industrialisation (2040 Vision)

└——> In-Country Beneficiation + ESG Tech Transfer + Local Workforce Upskilling



Concrete Action Steps

- Facility Launch & Funding: Co-fund the establishment of the centre in Perth utilising contributions from the Western Australian State Government, Federal METS grants, and industry partners.
- Local Beneficiation Frameworks: Develop joint research streams between the WA School of Mines (WASM), the African Union Commission, and the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC) to design economically viable, clean-energy mineral processing facilities within African nations.
- Regulatory Capacity Building: Run executive training programs for African mining ministry officials on royalty design, environmental rehabilitation, and community benefit agreements.

The transition to a low-carbon global economy requires strict adherence to ESG standards. Australia possesses mature systems for environmental impact auditing, native title negotiation, and land reclamation. Expanding collaborative research initiatives—such as the AUD 76.4 million Africa-Australia Partnership for Climate Responsive Agriculture managed by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the Digital Earth Africa satellite initiative—ensures that resource extraction and agriculture drive green industrialization without degrading local ecosystems.

2.3: Expand Research Collaborations and Training Partnerships in Mining Governance, ESG, and Green Industrialisation Pathways

PILLAR 2: RECOMMENDATION 2.3 MATRIX	
RATIONALE	Build long-term institutional resilience by assisting African partners to implement world-class ESG standards, transparent governance, and decarbonized industrial growth
LEAD ACTORS	ACIAR, Geoscience Australia, Digital Earth Africa, AAUN, African Union Commission, African Regional Economic Communities (SADC, ECOWAS, EAC)
TIMELINE	Immediate and Ongoing (2026–2030)
EXPECTED OUTCOMES	Expansion of ACIAR climate agriculture program ($76.4M); full African operational ownership of Digital Earth Africa



Concrete Action Steps

- Scale ACIAR climate programs: Expand ACIAR's research partnerships beyond East and Southern Africa into West, Central, and North Africa, focusing on dryland crop resistance and sustainable soil management.
- Digital Earth Africa Transition: Fully transition operational management of the Digital Earth Africa platform to African institutions while maintaining long-term technical backstopping from Geoscience Australia.
- ESG Certification Academy: Establish a joint AAUN-Industry ESG Academy to train and certify African auditors and corporate compliance officers in sustainable mining and agricultural supply chains.



Pillar 3: Diplomatic and Multilateral Engagement

The effectiveness of the multilateral system depends on constructive engagement between middle powers and regional blocs. African nations command 54 votes in the United Nations General Assembly, representing a crucial voting bloc on issues ranging from maritime law to cyber security. Australia and African partners share a strong interest in reformed, effective multilateral institutions that prevent conflict, support equitable climate adaptation finance, and uphold sovereignty.

3.1: Increase Collaboration on Multilateral Reforms, Peacebuilding, Climate Negotiations, and Cyber Diplomacy

PILLAR 3: RECOMMENDATION 3.1 MATRIX	
RATIONALE	Amplify middle-power influence in international fora by aligning Australian and African diplomatic positions on global rules, climate finance, security, and digital governance
LEAD ACTORS	DFAT, African Union Commission (AUC), Commonwealth Secretariat, UN Missions (New York, Geneva, Nairobi)
TIMELINE	Ongoing to 2040
EXPECTED OUTCOMES	Joint diplomatic voting alignments on UNGA resolutions; 2 policy dialogues on cyber security and climate law

Concrete Action Steps

- UNGA Dialogue Mechanism: Institutionalise bi-annual consultations between the Australian Permanent Representative to the UN and the African Group of Ambassadors in New York prior to major UNGA sessions.
- Joint Working Group on Cyber Governance: Form a joint Australia-Africa expert committee to develop shared standards on cybersecurity, critical technology governance, and digital crime prevention.
- UN Security Council Reform and Alignment: Support the Common African Position on UNSC reform (Ezulwini Consensus) while fostering open diplomatic channels regarding middle-power representation.





High-level political visibility is vital for driving bureaucratic momentum and public interest. While Australia frequently engages in ministerial dialogues with partners in Europe, Asia, and the Americas, high-level ministerial engagement with African counterparts has historically been reactive rather than systemic and regular. Establishing an institutionalized, annual Australia-Africa Ministerial Dialogue—held alongside an expanded Australia-Africa Week—will create a predictable platform for senior political leaders to sign agreements, address trade bottlenecks, and set strategic agendas.

3.2: Establish an Annual Australia-Africa Ministerial Dialogue and Invite African Foreign Ministers to Australia-Africa Week

PILLAR 3: RECOMMENDATION 3.2 MATRIX	
RATIONALE	Elevate diplomatic engagement from ad-hoc interactions to a high-level, predictable political framework that drives trade and strategic commitments
LEAD ACTORS	Australian Foreign Minister, Trade Minister, African Foreign Ministers, DFAT Africa Branch, AAUN Steering Committee
TIMELINE	Short-term implementation (First Dialogue in 2027)
EXPECTED OUTCOMES	Formalisation of an annual Ministerial Dialogue; attendance by 10+ African Foreign Ministers annually at Australia-Africa Week

Concrete Action Steps

- Ministerial dialogue launch: Host the inaugural 2+2 (Foreign Affairs & Trade) Ministerial Dialogue in Perth in 2027, inviting key African partner ministers.
- Expand Africa Week infrastructure: Expand the traditional Africa Down Under mining conference into a broader, multi-sectoral Australia-Africa Week incorporating education, agriculture, tech, and cultural diplomacy.
- Bi-national Commissions: Establish formal bilateral joint commissions with key anchor nations (South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia).



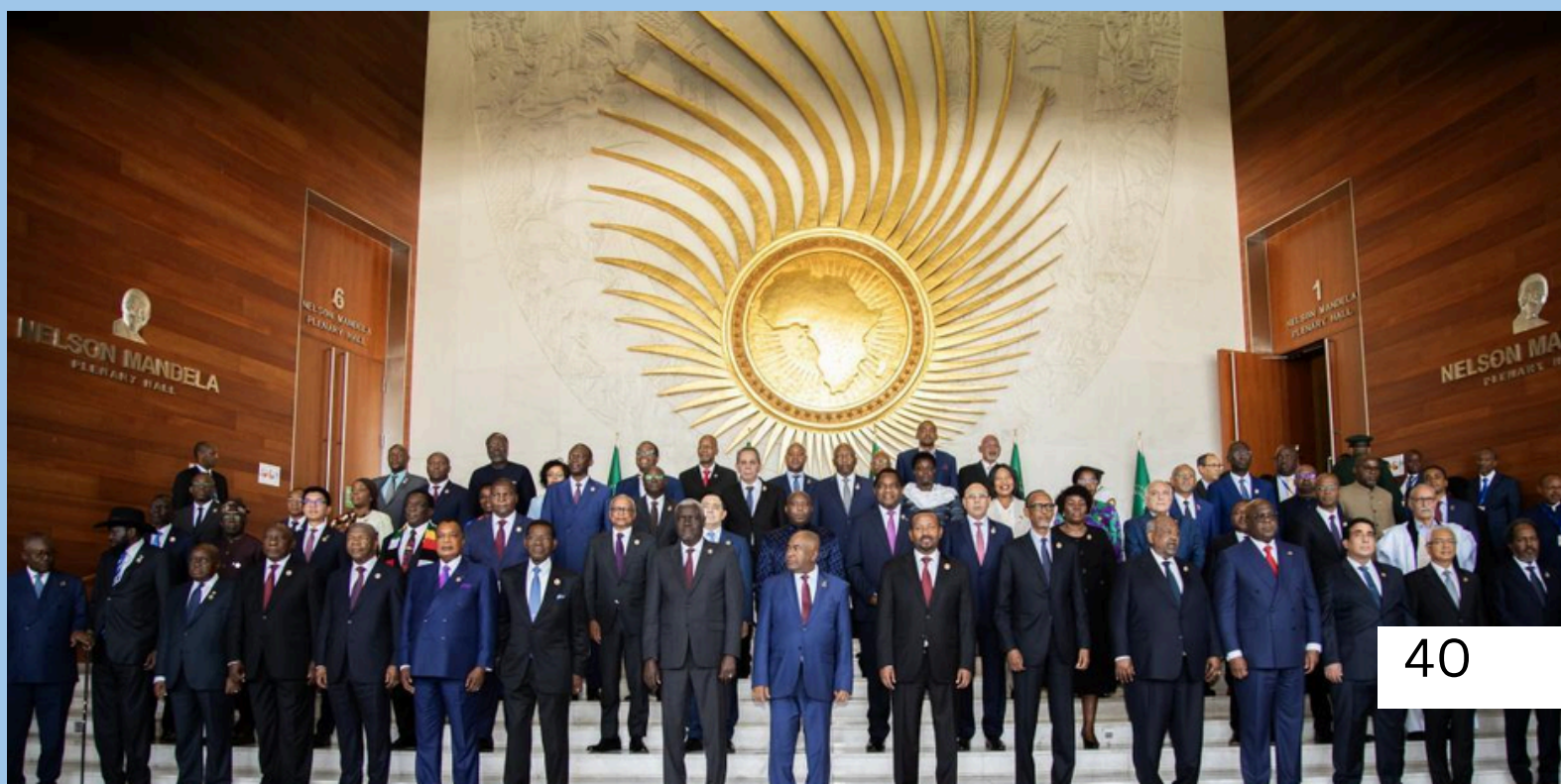
While Australia maintains an Ambassador to the African Union resident in Addis Ababa, the African Union does not currently maintain a diplomatic mission in Canberra. Diplomatic communication is currently dispersed across the 16 resident African high commissions and embassies. An official African Union Delegation in Canberra would serve as a centralised hub for continental trade, peace and security dialogues, and academic exchanges, significantly reducing diplomatic friction and enhancing institutional efficiency.

3.3: Encourage the African Union to Establish a Diplomatic Mission in Canberra and Initiate Senior Officials' Talks

PILLAR 3: RECOMMENDATION 3.3 MATRIX	
RATIONALE	Anchor continental diplomatic ties directly in Canberra, facilitating direct, efficient engagement with the African Union Commission
LEAD ACTORS	African Union Commission, DFAT, Diplomatic Corps in Canberra, Australian Embassy in Addis Ababa
TIMELINE	Medium term (2027–2030)
EXPECTED OUTCOMES	Opening of an AU Representation Office in Canberra; annual DFAT-AUC Senior Officials' Talks institutionalised

Concrete Action Steps

- Formal request and incentives package: DFAT to extend a formal invitation to the African Union Commission to establish a mission in Canberra, offering reciprocal administrative and logistical support.
- Senior Officials' Talks (SOTs): Institutionalise annual Senior Officials' Talks between DFAT Deputy Secretaries and AUC Commissioners, alternating between Canberra and Addis Ababa.
- AU Secretariat Liaison Officer: Fund an Australian Technical Advisor secondment position inside the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa to support trade, mining investment and education collaboration.



IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP & GOVERNANCE

To ensure recommendations move smoothly from concept to execution, implementation is structured across three phased horizons:

01

FOUNDATIONS (2026–2028)

- Restructure Australia Awards and establish the ELAAD permanent fellowship endowment
- Re-establish the International Mining Centre in Perth
- Host inaugural Australia-Africa Ministerial Dialogue and expanded Africa Week
- Initiate Double Taxation Agreement (DTA) negotiations with the priority African countries.

02

EXPANSION (2028–2033)

- Launch two joint Australian/African Studies Research Centres within AAUN.
- Establish two Australian university offshore hubs in Africa.
- Sign a formal Technical Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding with AfCFTA.*
- Establish an African Union Diplomatic Mission in Canberra.

03

CONSOLIDATION (2033–2040)

- Achieve 20% growth in non-extractive two-way trade.
- Transition Digital Earth Africa to 100% African operational independence.
- Fully operationalise five offshore university campuses/hubs.
- Review and update the Australia-Africa Strategic Framework for 2040+.

04

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL) FRAMEWORK

To maintain accountability, the implementation of this policy report will be overseen by a joint AAUN-ELAAD Implementation Steering Committee, meeting biannually. Progress will be measured against the following key performance indicators (see next page for indicators).

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL) FRAMEWORK

Indicator	Baseline (2026)	Target (2040)
Australian Diplomatic Posts in Africa	9 posts	14 posts
Resident African Missions in Canberra	16 missions	22 missions
Two-Way Goods & Services Trade	AUD 12.7 Billion	AUD 25.0 Billion
Non-Extractive Trade Share	~15%	35%
AAUN Joint Degree / Research Modules	2 modules	15 modules
Australian Offshore Higher Ed Hubs in Africa	1 campus (Mauritius)	6 campuses
Double Taxation Agreements (DTAs)	1 (South Africa)	5 Agreements

CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

The relationship between Australia and the nations of Africa stands at an unprecedented threshold of opportunity. By transitioning from historical, single-sector engagements to a multi-pillar partnership built on equal collaboration, shared innovation and institutional depth, Australia and African nations can unlock vast economic, academic, and diplomatic potential.

The recommendations presented in this report, crafted by the emerging generation of diplomats, scholars, and policy leaders within the ELAAD Programme, provide a clear roadmap to 2040. Achieving this vision will require sustained political will, private-sector investment, and dedicated academic leadership.

The AAUN and the fellows of the ELAAD Program remain firmly committed to driving this vital work forward—building a prosperous, resilient, and interconnected future for both regions.



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