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Angola - João Lourenço's
Big Year

**Zoom On Africa's
Female Presidents**

South Africa - Mr.
Ramaphosa Goes To
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Mozambique -
Chapo's Winning Start

Africa Mourns Ngũgĩ
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A Sisterhood In Power For Samia Hassan And Nandi Ndaitwah

By Ajong Mbapndah L

A most eventful month of May it was in Africa. While the election of a new President at the AfDB, to the drama filled visit of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to Washington, DC, were some of the most talked about, the visit of Namibia's President Nandi Ndaitwah to Tanzania generated considerable excitement as well. The images of Africa's two female Presidents meeting in Tanzania were iconic and generated quite some excitement across the continent and beyond. Nandi Ndaitwah of Namibia on a visit to Tanzania led by Samia Suluhu Hassan. For a continent of 54 countries, it may be easy for some to ask what the big deal was with having two female Presidents.

Well, looking at where the continent is coming from, it is a big deal and a sign of palpable progress on gender-related political roles. In 2006 when Sirleaf Johnson of Liberia made history by becoming the first female elected President in Africa, the continent was caught up in euphoria. It took another six years to see another female President in Joyce Banda of Malawi who served as President to complete the term of office of late President Bingu wa Mutharika, from 2012 to 2014. The presidential bid she mounted to get her own term was unsuccessful. Catherine Samba Panza also had a brief spell as Transitional President of Central Africa from 2014 to 2016

That the continent has two sitting Presidents, a female Vice President in Namibia, a female Prime Minister in DR Congo, and more occupying top positions across the continent is an unmistakable sign on the strides Africa is making. For President Samia who got to power in 2021 following the death of President Magufuli, it is time for Tanzanians to decide if she deserves a full term of her own or not with elections coming up later this year.

In Namibia, President Nandi



Ajong Mbapndah L, Managing Editor

Ndaitwah created history as well with her election as the country's first female President. Beyond the glamour and feel-good moment that the visit to Tanzania generated, both female leaders have made a strong case on the merits of more female leadership across the continent.

Coming to power at a tricky time for Tanzania during the covid crisis, Samia Suluhu Hassan, the peripheral and little heard or talked about Vice President stepped up to leadership. From infrastructure development to health care, political reforms, meeting with opposition leaders and allowing exiled leaders to return home, Samia astutely moved out of the Magufuli shadows with calculated speed.

Beyond the matriarchal calm is a no-nonsense woman ready to play the bare-knuckle politics that has been the near exclusive domain of male politicians and leaders. Ahead of the 2025 elections, opposition challengers like Lindu Tissu are in jail and there are issues of press freedom. Yet on the international scene, Samia has cultivated a sleek image of herself across Africa and the globe. Samia has matured politically, she is battle tested, resolute in her vision, and seems ready to show Tanzania, Africa, and the world that beyond the circumstances that initially favoured her rise to power, she is worthy and deserving of leading Tanzania.

My election to the presidency was not because I am a woman. It

was because I had a vision and something to offer, President Nandi Ndaitwah told students in Tanzania. Upon taking office, Nandi Ndaitwah wasted no time in making her presence felt. The government was sharply trimmed and made leaner to boast efficiency. She equally made sure that a significant number of top positions were given to females.

In a continent where political leadership is still largely male dominated, both Sami Hassan and Nandi Ndaitwah have imposed respect. They are not just capable of doing what male leaders can do, but there are indicators that they can do better.

"We have come so far, but we're not yet where we need to be and for that to happen, we need young people—especially young women—to step forward," the Namibian President said in Tanzania. "Do not ask for permission to lead," she said. "Prepare yourself and take your place. The continent needs you," she said in challenging young people to step up the fight.

The fight for more female representation is one that has been embraced in a more structured way by former President Sirleaf Ellen Johnson of Liberia through the Amujae Leadership Forum. This initiative of the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Presidential Center for Women and Development has become a premier platform for equipping African women with the tools and networks needed to ascend to the highest levels of public leadership.

For the former President of Liberia and Nobel Peace Laureate, women leaders need to reject limiting assumptions and lead with bold conviction. Addressing the fourth cohort of Amujae Leaders -emerging African women trailblazers in politics and public service in Marrakech recently, Sirleaf challenged them to stay grounded in their purpose and organize for impact.

In medicine, energy, engineering, diplomacy, corporate, academia and other fields, African women are

increasingly stepping up in powering the continent forward. Samia and Nandi Ndaitwah could serve as inspiration for more women to take on political leadership across the continent. With the abysmal results from male dominated leaderships across several African countries, it may be time for female candidates to get a closer look.

Across the Atlantic, leading the charge to continue forging ties and sustaining bigger business ties between the USA and Africa is Florie Liser, President and CEO of the Corporate Council on Africa. Despite the ambiguities from the Tariff regime of President Donald Trump to the feud with South Africa, and the recent travel ban slammed on some seven African countries, Florie Liser has remained unperturbed in her mission.

"While policy shifts may occur, the fundamentals remain clear: Africa is a critical trade and investment partner, with a young, growing population and a rapidly transforming economy. U.S. companies see the opportunity, and many are committed to long-term engagement, Florie Liser says."

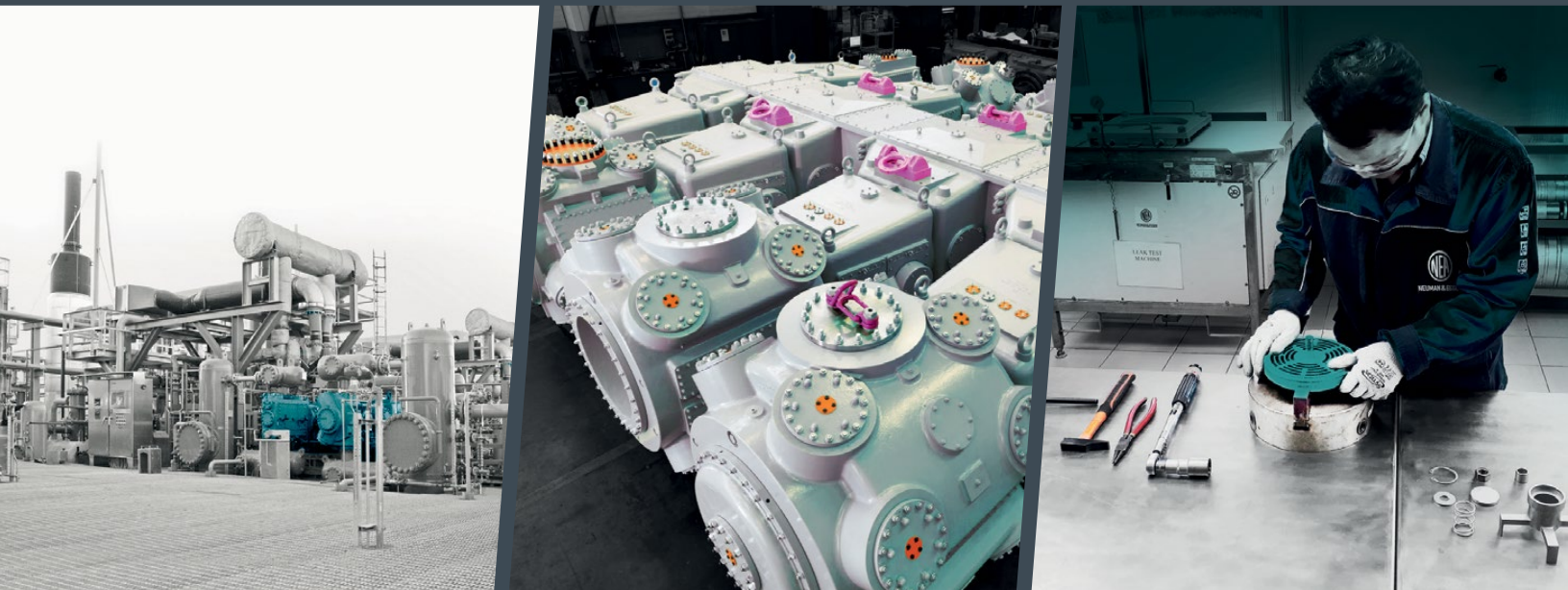
A palpable result of Florie Liser's leadership is the upcoming US-Africa Business Summit in Luanda, Angola. "We expect robust U.S. government participation at the highest levels, as they recognize that this Summit is not just an event — it's a platform to drive real deals, deepen partnerships, and shape the future of U.S.-Africa business relations, says Florie Liser in an exclusive interview.

Complementing this gender rich issue of PAV magazine are stories on the recent visit of President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa to the USA, the emergence of Angola as a strategic power house in Africa under President Joao Lourenco, the return of relative calm to Mozambique, the endorsement of President Tinubu by the ruling APC for the 2027 elections, tributes to Ngugi wa Thiongo, the ongoing season 5 of the Basketball African League and more. Happy reading!!!



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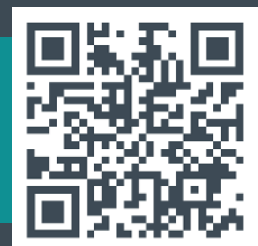


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Kenya :Ruto-Gachagua Feud Deepens

By Samuel Ouma

The once-formidable alliance between President William Ruto and his former deputy Rigathi Gachagua has unravelled into a bitter and public feud, culminating in political drama, arrests, and allegations of state intimidation.

Following Gachagua's impeachment, their relationship has turned from comradeship to confrontation, reshaping the political landscape as the country heads towards the 2027 general elections.

Gachagua, once seen as Ruto's loyal right-hand man and key mobilizer in the Mount Kenya region, has now emerged as one of the president's fiercest critics. His impeachment, which many believe was politically orchestrated by Ruto's allies in Parliament, marked the turning point in a relationship that had long been simmering with tension. The former deputy president has since accused Ruto of betrayal, centralization of power, and deviating from the promises made during their 2022 campaign.

The most definitive sign of Gachagua's new political direction came with the recent formation of the Democratic Citizens Party (DCP) — a vehicle many believe he will use to challenge Ruto's authority and possibly mount a presidential bid in



Friends turn foes -President William Ruto and his former Deputy Rigathi Gachagua in happy times before the feud with severe political consequences. Photo courtesy

2027 or support another opposition candidate which majority of Kenyans believe will be the former Interior Cabinet Secretary Dr. Fred Matiang'i. Formed on May 15, we are witnessing some political leaders switching loyalty from the ruling party, United Democratic Alliance (UDA) to the new outfit, UDA.

Since the launching of the party, Gachagua has consistently launched a scathing attack on President Ruto, declaring that he would serve only

one term in office.

"We walked with him through hardship. We gave everything for this victory. But what did we get in return? Arrogance, nepotism, and broken promises. Let him hear me loud and clear — he will be a one-term president. Kenyans are awake now," said Angry Gachagua

The fallout has not only played out in speeches and party politics but has also spilled into alleged crackdowns on leaders allied to Gachagua or

critical of the government.

One such incident was the recent arrest of Trans Nzoia Governor George Nitembeya, a vocal critic of President Ruto. Nitembeya, who has repeatedly spoken against the centralization of power and the government's handling of the economy, was taken into custody by anti-corruption officers under unclear circumstances over alleged graft cases. However, his supporters claim the charges are fabricated and aimed at silencing dissent.

"The arrest of Governor Nitembeya is not about justice. It's about power and fear. This government is now using state agencies to punish political opponents," said a leader who sought anonymity.

Even more disturbing was the alleged abduction of Juja MP George Koimburi, a known Gachagua loyalist. According to witnesses and family members, Koimburi was taken by unknown individuals in unmarked vehicles, only to be found hours later dumped in a thicket outside Kiambu County. Though visibly shaken and bruised, Koimburi maintained that his abduction was politically motivated due to his association with



Let him hear me loud and clear — Ruto will be a one-term president. Kenyans are awake now, says Gachagua.

Gachagua.

“This was no ordinary incident. I was targeted because of my political stance,” Koimburi told journalists. “But we will not be cowed.”

However, local authorities dismissed the incident as stage-managed, saying Koimburi faked the abduction to garner sympathy or political mileage. The police statement has only added fuel to the fire, with many questioning the state’s impartiality and the growing use of intimidation tactics in political contests. President Ruto, for his part, has largely remained silent on the brewing political storm.

Most Kenyans believe that the fallout between Ruto and his former deputy may cost him in 2027 when the country holds its general election.



Gachagua has declared that Ruto will face tough opposition during the upcoming polls.

Gachagua’s influence in Mt. Kenya remains significant, and his message of economic marginalization and betrayal is beginning to resonate with sections of the electorate who feel overlooked by Ruto’s administration.

Political analysts believe

Gachagua’s move to form the DCP and his aggressive stance marks the beginning of a wider political realignment, especially within the Mount Kenya region. His fallout with Ruto could open the floodgates for other disenchanted leaders to break

away from the ruling coalition.

As the dust settles from the fallout, one thing is certain: the political marriage between William Ruto and Rigathi Gachagua is over. With new parties, bitter exchanges, and an emerging narrative of betrayal and resistance, the road to 2027 is already heating up — and it promises to be one of Kenya’s most explosive political contests yet.

Recently Gachagua declared that Ruto will face tough opposition during the upcoming polls. He went ahead and warned the president against interfering with the election outcome, saying if he attempts to do that it would be messy. This statement was condemned by a section of leaders who urged the political class to unite Kenyans and promote peace. _____

Mozambique’s Turn Toward Stability, Growth, and Reform

By Wallace Mawire

Mozambique’s political landscape entered a new chapter in early 2025 as President Daniel Chapo officially took office following a decisive victory in the 2024 general elections. A former governor and longstanding figure within the ruling FRELIMO party, Chapo now leads one of Africa’s most strategically positioned nations, which is home to vast energy reserves, a fragile post-conflict peace process, and significant foreign investment interests.

As his administration marks its first months in power, President Chapo is being closely watched for how he will navigate Mozambique’s economic recovery, consolidate fragile stability in the north, and differentiate his leadership style from that of his predecessor, Filipe Nyusi, who stepped down after a decade at the helm.

Who is Daniel Chapo?

A trained lawyer and former governor of Inhambane Province, Chapo emerged as a consensus candidate within FRELIMO after the party opted against more polarizing figures. His technocratic background



A few months into office, President Chapo is credited with pulling Mozambique back from the brink.

and relatively low national profile allowed him to campaign as a bridge-builder—someone more focused on solutions than political infighting.

Analysts describe Chapo as pragmatic, reserved, and strategic, a departure from Nyusi’s often militarized, security-heavy approach. “He is more of a soft-power president,” says political scientist Adriano Nuvunga, adding, “but that also means people are still trying to define his leadership style.”

Stability Returns to Cabo Delgado?

A defining challenge of the last several years has been the insurgency in northern Cabo Delgado province. Since 2017, Islamist militants affiliated with ISIS have launched attacks across the region, resulting in over 4,000 deaths and the displacement of nearly a million people. Under Nyusi, the government brought in Rwandan and Southern African Development Community

(SADC) troops, which succeeded in reclaiming key towns like Mocímboa da Praia and Palma.

Under Chapo, security operations have continued, but with a broader emphasis on reconstruction, humanitarian access, and community reintegration. In one of his earliest field visits as president, Chapo traveled to Cabo Delgado to meet with local leaders and displaced residents. His administration has promised increased investment in health, education, and roads in the north, alongside tighter oversight of military operations to avoid human rights abuses.

“There is a new tone,” says a humanitarian worker in Pemba. “We are hearing less about ‘crushing terrorists’ and more about ‘rebuilding communities.’ That matters.”

Still, the threat remains. Sporadic attacks continue in remote areas, and analysts warn against declaring full victory. But the improved security climate has paved the way for the return of some key economic players.

LNG Projects Regain Momentum

Perhaps the most significant



The resources of Mozambique must serve the Mozambican people, says President Nyusi. Photo AFP, Canpix.

economic signal under Nyusi has been the revival of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) mega-projects, especially those involving TotalEnergies and ExxonMobil.

TotalEnergies halted its \$20 billion LNG project in Palma in 2021 following a deadly insurgent attack. However, following improved security guarantees and local engagement, the company announced in early 2025 that it was preparing for a phased return. Meanwhile, ExxonMobil and Eni are also advancing parallel offshore gas developments.

These projects are transformative. Mozambique's LNG reserves are among the largest in Africa, and revenues from their export could reshape the national economy—if managed well.

President Nyusi has emphasized transparency and local benefits. "The resources of Mozambique must serve the Mozambican people," he said in a recent public address. To that end, his government has promised stronger regulation of procurement processes, more community engagement in resource-rich zones, and greater oversight of sovereign wealth fund management.

However, watchdogs warn that Mozambique still bears the scars of the "hidden debt" scandal, which saw over \$2 billion in secret loans and led to international condemnation and donor withdrawal under Nyusi. Nyusi has so far pledged to avoid such pitfalls, though implementation

will be closely scrutinized.

Public Reception and Political Outlook

Domestically, Nyusi has enjoyed something of a honeymoon period. His quieter, more conciliatory tone has been welcomed by civil society. While he remains firmly aligned with FRELIMO orthodoxy, he has refrained from using inflammatory rhetoric and has met with religious leaders, opposition parties, and youth groups to signal a more inclusive approach.

That said, critics warn of continued constraints on civic space. While the government has relaxed some media regulations, recent arrests of journalists and activists have sparked concern. "It's too early to say Mozambique is opening up," says a representative of the Media Institute

of Southern Africa. "But there's at least a willingness to listen."

Politically, Nyusi faces the dual challenge of rejuvenating FRELIMO while responding to growing urban discontent and youth unemployment. The opposition party RENAMO remains a force, though it remains fractured after recent internal struggles. Meanwhile, a rising class of independent civil actors is demanding accountability, particularly in how gas revenues will be spent.

Diplomacy and Regional Standing

On the diplomatic front, Nyusi has moved swiftly to reassert Mozambique's position in both the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU). In March 2025, he hosted the Angolan and Tanzanian presidents for a tripartite summit on cross-border infrastructure and security cooperation.

He has also prioritized relations with donors and investors. The European Union and World Bank have cautiously resumed budgetary support, and in April, Mozambique signed new infrastructure financing agreements with China and the African Development Bank.

Notably, Nyusi used his first speech to the United Nations to underscore Mozambique's role in global energy markets while calling for fair climate finance access. "We contribute little to global emissions," he said, "but we bear the brunt of climate disasters.

Justice demands investment in both mitigation and development."

Comparing to the Nyusi Era

Filipe Nyusi's presidency was marked by a hands-on, often militarized approach to security and a centralization of executive power. Nyusi played a direct role in negotiating with insurgents and often framed development through the lens of national unity and security resilience.

By contrast, Nyusi appears more consultative. He has delegated more authority to regional governors and ministers and emphasized technocratic governance. However, some observers argue that the real power structures within FRELIMO remain unchanged.

A telling difference lies in tone. Nyusi was often combative in defending his administration; Nyusi tends to de-escalate. "There is less theater and more listening," says political analyst Borges Nhamirre. "That's promising—but it must be matched by action."

Looking Ahead

President Daniel Nyusi's first few months have set a cautiously optimistic tone. His challenge is formidable: to maintain peace in the north, manage expectations over gas wealth, restore trust in public institutions, and offer real economic opportunities to a country where over half the population lives in poverty.

But observers say his early steps suggest a leader seeking consensus, not confrontation. "He's walking a tightrope," says an economist with the International Growth Centre in Maputo. "The resources are coming. But whether they deliver results will depend on discipline, reform, and public accountability.

Mozambique stands at a crossroads. If Nyusi can maintain peace, harness gas wealth, and protect civic space, his presidency could usher in a new era. But the risks of backsliding, into conflict, corruption, or exclusion, remain real.



President Nyusi has made the presence of Mozambique felt at diverse regional forums.

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INFRASTRUCTURE FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Perenco does more than just extract and produce. It also aims to connect energy resources to the needs of African populations and industries. In Cameroon, the company has initiated the first industrial gas supply project at Keda Ceramics, a model of synergy between hydrocarbons and manufacturing development.

In the DRC, the Muanda gas-fired power plant now supplies electricity to local facilities and homes, providing cleaner fuel and stabilising access to energy.

AN ASSUMED LOW-CARBON TRAJECTORY

The energy transition is not limited to optimising resources: it also involves a significant reduction in carbon footprint. In 2024, Perenco's emissions decreased by 800,000 tonnes of CO₂, exceeding forecasts. The objective is ambitious but clear: to halve emissions by 2030.

With this in mind, the company is investing in cutting-edge technologies, modernising its facilities and focusing on cleaner energy solutions. The installation of gas turbines on the Tchendo 2 platform in Congo, enabling the recovery of 8 million cubic feet of gas per day, illustrates this ambition to combine industrial performance and environmental responsibility.

A FUTURE SHAPED BY INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Perenco's history in Africa is above all one of a relationship of trust with governments and local communities. By supporting governments in improving access to energy, investing in strategic infrastructure and training African talent, the company is committed to sustainable and inclusive growth.

At a time when the energy world is reinventing itself, Perenco is pursuing its mission: to be a leading partner for an energy-independent, prosperous and responsible Africa.



Nigeria: APC Unanimously Endorses Tinubu As Sole 2027 Candidate

By Boris Esono Nwenfor



Greater and better days are ahead for Nigerians, says President Tinubu.

Nigeria's ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) on May 22, 2025, formally endorsed President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to run for a second four-year term in the 2027 elections. The decision came at a high-profile APC national summit in Abuja, marking the second anniversary of Tinubu's presidency, and was announced by party national chairman Abdullahi Ganduje. Speaking on behalf of the party's National Working Committee, Ganduje declared: "I hereby affirm the various endorsements and declare President Bola Tinubu as the sole presidential candidate of the APC". The summit, attended by all 22 APC governors, federal legislators, and party officials, effectively settled any internal contest, giving Tinubu a unanimous "pass mark" after a mid-term review of his government. The president "accepted the offer 'gladly,'" according to reporting, and promised that "greater and better days are ahead" for Nigerians.

The APC's move was framed as a vote of confidence in Tinubu's "Renewed Hope Agenda". Cabinet ministers had just given presentations on the government's performance since 2023, highlighting initiatives in infrastructure, health and education. Ganduje and other party leaders hailed a string of policy reforms – from fuel subsidy removal to new fiscal measures – that they say are starting to improve Nigeria's economy. Senate President Godswill Akpabio, who formally seconded the endorsement motion, praised Tinubu's "bold reforms" and even cited praise from the International Monetary Fund (IMF): "He has set Nigeria on the path of economic growth, as confirmed by the IMF," Akpabio said, noting that grassroots sentiment was "excited" by the administration's performance. In framing their case, APC leaders repeatedly contrasted their unity with the opposition's fragmentation – Ganduje boasted that the party now controls 22 states, the National

Assembly, and most local councils.

APC leaders say President Tinubu's first-term reforms warrant continuity, while critics argue his policies have hurt ordinary Nigerians. While the APC's summit was a show of party discipline, it also highlighted deep challenges facing Tinubu. His reform agenda has been controversial. In 2023 Tinubu abruptly scrapped Nigeria's long-standing petrol subsidy and allowed the naira to float, aiming to eliminate budget deficits and attract investment. International observers have noted these moves positively: the IMF recently affirmed that Tinubu "has moved ahead with important structural reforms" notably removing subsidies and unifying foreign exchange rates and in April 2025 Fitch Ratings upgraded Nigeria's outlook to "Stable" from "Negative" precisely because of confidence in "far-reaching policy reforms". Fitch reported that Nigeria's economic "trajectory has shifted toward stability and greater

investor confidence" under Tinubu.

Yet the cost of these policies has been acute. In late 2024 and early 2025, Nigeria saw the highest inflation in decades. By November 2024 headline inflation had surged to roughly 35–40% year-on-year, driven by fuel price hikes and naira devaluation. Reuters noted that these measures "intensified the most severe cost-of-living crisis in decades". Bread, rice and cooking oil have all more than doubled in price, straining household budgets. Official statistics showed inflation easing to about 24.5% by January 2025, but that drop largely reflected a statistical rebasing of price indices rather than an immediate relief at the market level. Unemployment remains high and poverty is widespread, fueling popular anger. As one International Monetary Fund report observed, inflation "reached 27 percent year-on-year in October [2023], reflecting fuel subsidy removal, exchange rate depreciation, and poor agricultural production".

Security has also been a critical concern. Militant groups and bandits remain active. In early 2024, for example, gunmen kidnapped scores of villagers and students in northern Nigeria, incidents which President Tinubu publicly denounced as the worst since the Chibok abductions. Reuters reports that critics accuse Tinubu of "failing to end insecurity, including a long-running Islamist insurgency and widespread bandit attacks". Human rights monitors note that hundreds of schoolchildren and civilians have been abducted even as the government struggles to reassert control in the northeast and northwest. While Tinubu has vowed to pursue the kidnappers, frequent attacks and mass abductions have undermined confidence among many Nigerians.

Those mixed results, reformist gains amid hardship shape public

opinion. Supporters of Tinubu and the APC point to indicators like the recent Fitch upgrade and an emerging stock-market rally as evidence that economic fundamentals are improving. They note that the IMF endorsed the reforms in February 2024 and that foreign direct investment has picked up. Backers argue that the pain of 2023 was an unavoidable reset and that by 2025 some relief is visible.

APC insiders also note that opposition parties have been weakened: a wave of high-profile defections from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Labour Party and other factions has bolstered the ruling party's ranks. For example, Delta State Governor Sheriff Oborewori (a former PDP member) and several lawmakers recently joined the APC, and even a former NNPP senator in Kano switched sides. These developments, along with the defection of state legislators in Delta and Edo, suggest the APC is consolidating its advantage. Many APC figures see the endorsement as a formality that helps strengthen Tinubu's incumbency. The party's Progressive Governors Forum, led by Imo State Governor Hope Uzodimma, initiated the endorsement after what they called a thorough performance



The summit effectively settled any internal contest, giving Tinubu a unanimous "pass mark" after a mid-term review of his government.

review. Uzodimma told the summit delegates that Nigeria is "moving in the right direction, economically, socially and politically" and that under Tinubu the country will reach prosperity "faster".

Likewise, Senate President Akpabio has urged APC members to turn their backing into votes, citing the former presidency's previous failures to convert large rallies into votes in 2023. APC spokesman Femi Fani-Kayode echoed Ganduje

in downplaying opposition: he said defections to the APC occur naturally "when people bail out of a sinking ship" and welcomed more joiners. Some analysts within the party, like ex-Senator Olorunnimbe Mamora (now in the PDP), argue that such endorsements are routine electioneering. Mamora said the move "is about building a stronger political machine" and that ultimately "it's Nigerians who decide," not party bosses. University

strategist Anthony Kila, a Tinubu ally, similarly dismissed fears, noting that Tinubu previously played a key role in uniting the opposition ahead of the 2015 election victory and is simply "playing the political game effectively" again.

By contrast, many opposition figures and voters reacted with alarm or skepticism. The Labour Party, whose own performance was disappointing in 2023, warned that pre-emptive endorsements could backfire. LP spokesperson Tanko Yinusa said that locking in a candidate so early "is a recipe for implosion" and noted that party endorsements do not equal popular support. Chief Peter Ameh of the opposition coalition (CUPP) called the endorsement "a desperate bid for power" and said it "does not reflect the will of the Nigerian people". He added that the APC leadership's action "reflects fear of rejection by a suffering electorate that is enduring unprecedented economic hardship".

In a related statement, CUPP emphasized that Nigerians will ultimately "decide the outcome" with their votes, warning against any attempt to pre-empt or manipulate the 2027 election. Even outside the political class, ordinary Nigerians have voiced concerns. In Port Harcourt's Rivers State, for example, residents noticed campaign posters



Senate President Godswill Akpabio, who formally seconded the endorsement motion, praised Tinubu's "bold reforms".

touting Tinubu's name months before the election cycle. Local observers criticized the premature campaigning as "nonchalant," "distracting," and "selfish," arguing that politicians should be focusing on day-to-day governance rather than next-term contests. One river-state resident warned that obsessing over 2027 "could exacerbate poverty, insecurity, and social unrest" by ignoring current problems.

Political analyst Dr. Obinna Wordi likewise lamented that many politicians are more interested in "grabbing power" than engaging the electorate with concrete plans, a strategy he said leads to "poor leadership and governance". A vice chairman of the PDP in the southwest, Kamorudeen Ajisafe, cautioned that while it's the APC's right to endorse Tinubu, that decision "shouldn't be a yardstick to tamper with the wish of Nigerians" in future elections.

In short, critics fear that the endorsement, coming two years before the vote, amounts to an undemocratic coronation at a time of hardship, rather than a genuine reflection of voter sentiment. Looking ahead, the APC's early endorsement has reshaped the 2027 race. Internally, it means Tinubu faces no serious rival within his party: other APC heavyweights (like Vice President Kashim Shettima, Vice President-elect Obi, or Senate President Akpabio) have fallen into line or endorsed him, signaling a transfer of their support to the incumbent. For the opposition, however, the picture remains unclear. Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar's coalition of PDP, Labour and other figures has not yet settled on a consensus candidate or even a party vehicle. Recent media reports speculated that this alliance might adopt the African



APC leaders say President Tinubu's first-term reforms warrant continuity, while critics argue his policies have hurt ordinary Nigerians.

Democratic Congress (ADC) as a joint platform, but coalition leaders quickly denied the claims. Malam Salihu Lukman, a key coordinator, called the ADC story "completely false" and said negotiations are ongoing, promising a formal announcement later.

In practice, Atiku himself had earlier recused himself from the 2027 contest, saying in May that he would not run and casting his lot with a younger generation. Others like former Delta Governor Ifeanyi Okowa (now in APC) and ex-PDP strongman Nyesom Wike remain independent and unpredictable. Opposition strategists acknowledge they have time, two years is "a long time in politics" but they also note that Tinubu's incumbency is now firmly entrenched.

Regionally and internationally, endorsement has been met with cautious interest. As Nigeria is Africa's largest economy and most populous country, its elections attract global attention. Financial markets

have largely responded positively to the idea of continuity; Fitch's stable outlook and rising capital inflows suggest investors expect policy consistency. World Bank and IMF officials have lauded Tinubu's measures to shrink the budget deficit and stabilize finances, and these institutions are likely to continue engagement through 2027. Diplomats from the US, EU and China – all of which have strategic ties with Nigeria – have not commented publicly on the endorsement itself, but have previously pressed for both economic reforms and credible elections. Africa's regional bloc (ECOWAS) and election observers will watch 2027 carefully for fairness, given Nigeria's role in regional peacekeeping and trade.

So far, international media like Reuters and the BBC have framed the endorsement in standard terms: as a sign of APC unity and Tinubu's incumbency, noting both the praise his reforms have earned and the

criticism over living costs. In short, global investors and governments are likely to interpret the APC's move as a bid for stability and continuity of Tinubu's agenda – even as democracy advocates say Nigerians should have a real choice at the ballot box. In sum, the APC's announcement marks a decisive moment in Nigeria's political trajectory. By uniting behind Tinubu now, the party has cleared the field of internal challengers and signaled confidence in its record. But it has also drawn rebuke from opponents who view the early coronation as undemocratic. For Tinubu, the endorsement reinforces his incumbency advantage heading into 2027. For voters, it raises the question of whether this reflects their will, and whether Tinubu's first-term performance, on economy, security and governance, will convince them to grant him a second term. With two years to go, the race is set: the APC has staked its claim on continuity, and its rivals must decide how to respond.

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Tanzania: Between Progress, Power, Democracy, Hope, and Resistance

By Adonis Byemelwa

When Samia Suluhu Hassan stepped into the shoes of the late President John Magufuli in March 2021, the air in Tanzania felt heavy with uncertainty. For the first time in its history, the nation was being led by a woman—soft-spoken yet resolute, unfamiliar in some political circles but undeniably grounded. The weight of that moment was not just historic; it was emotional. Many Tanzanians saw in her a new possibility: a gentler hand, a broader vision, a departure from the past. Yet for others, the road ahead appeared unpredictable. Could she command authority? Would her presidency be more symbolic than substantive?

Fast forward to today, as the 2025 general elections loom, the question is no longer about whether Samia could lead—it's about how she's led, and what future she's asking the country to embrace once again.

Building Blocks of Progress: Infrastructure and Growth

One of President Samia's most visible legacies is her focus on infrastructure. Throughout the country, from the heavily trafficked corridors of Dar es Salaam to regional airstrips serving smaller cities, the signs of her administration's impact are concrete—literally. Projects like the expansion of Julius Nyerere International Airport's Terminal 3 and improvements to regional airports have indicated a shift toward a more connected, investment-friendly Tanzania. In the bustling streets of Dar es Salaam, the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system is alleviating some of the intense congestion that has troubled commuters for decades.

But infrastructure alone doesn't sustain a nation—it must accompany economic empowerment. Tanzania's GDP growth under Samia has shown consistent upward movement, jumping from 4.8% in 2023 to 5.4%



Zitto Kabwe in stride with President Samia, signaling unity and support for democracy. Photo courtesy.

in the first half of 2024.

Inflation has been managed tightly, holding steady at the 3% mark. Her government has also created a friendlier climate for foreign direct investment, with nearly 900 projects registered in less than a year, collectively worth \$7.7 billion and promising over 200,000 jobs.

While such numbers can often feel abstract to everyday Tanzanians, the increase in job availability and the modernization of the business

environment have resonated more tangibly in urban centers and industrial zones.

Healing the Nation: Healthcare as a National Priority

Perhaps one of the most human-centered achievements under President Samia has been the transformation in healthcare delivery. In a country where access to healthcare has long been a challenge—particularly in rural and underserved

communities—the numbers tell an encouraging story. Between 2021 and 2024, the number of health facilities increased from around 8,500 to over 9,600.

Yet beyond the numbers lies a deeper narrative. Hospitals are now equipped with advanced diagnostic tools—MRI machines, CT scanners, and digital X-rays—that just a few years ago were considered luxuries reserved for private clinics or overseas referrals.

Maternal and under-five mortality rates have declined, not just due to better technology but thanks to a new push in policy, putting women and children at the center of the healthcare conversation. The introduction of a Universal Health Insurance scheme marks another milestone, aiming to leave no Tanzanian behind in the pursuit of wellness.

The Samia Effect: Women, Youth, and the Future of Work

There's a certain poetry in having a woman lead a nation that, for decades, struggled to mainstream gender equality in governance and development. Samia didn't just step into leadership—she carried the banner of possibility for women across the continent.

The "Build a Better Tomorrow" (BBT) initiative reflects this ethos. Designed to harness the energy of the nation's youth and women, the program pushes agribusiness as a platform for job creation and self-reliance. It aims to create three million jobs by 2030, empowering a generation that has too often been excluded from formal employment pathways.

Her scholarship initiatives have also left a mark, targeting disadvantaged students and expanding access to education, especially for girls. The ripple effect is slow but palpable. For many young women in rural Tanzania, "President Samia" isn't just



The introduction of a Universal Health Insurance scheme marks another milestone, aiming to leave no Tanzanian behind in the pursuit of wellness.

a politician; she's a living example that dreams can break through ceilings.

Cracks in the Façade: Politics, Pressure, and Public Trust

Every legacy carries its contradictions, and for President Samia Suluhu Hassan, the tension between progress and political pressure has become increasingly visible. While her administration is often praised for infrastructure growth and healthcare reforms, the democratic space under her leadership appears to be shrinking.

The exclusion of Chadema, the main opposition party, from the 2025 elections—branded a “procedural matter” by the authorities—has stirred deep skepticism. For many Tanzanians, it felt less like bureaucracy and more like deliberate sidelining, a pre-election maneuver that limits meaningful competition.

Then came the arrest of opposition leader Tundu Lissu on treason charges. His case, already controversial, became even more fraught when activists and supporters—some from neighboring Kenya—were detained for showing solidarity. Their treatment, especially that of foreign observers, raised serious alarms. The message from the state was unmistakable: political dissent is not just discouraged, it's risky.

Compounding the tension are allegations of abductions—activists disappearing, only to resurface



One of President Samia's most visible legacies is her focus on infrastructure.

shaken and silent. Rights groups have condemned these as signs of state intimidation. Yet President Samia has remained defiant, insisting Tanzania is a sovereign nation and won't be dictated to by outsiders. That position, while resonant with nationalist sentiment, has done little to ease international concern.

On the ground, the feeling is mixed. Some citizens applaud her resolve and development record. Others whisper their concerns, wary of surveillance, unsure of how far they can speak

Campaigning in Green and Yellow: The Road to 2025

President Samia's re-election campaign is hard to miss. The country is awash in green and yellow—motorbikes branded “Samia 2025,” large billboards bearing her image, rallies wrapped in choreography and color. It's a campaign with undeniable muscle, but one not without

critique. Some question whether state resources are being indirectly channeled into campaign optics. Others wonder if the playing field is truly level when opposition voices are subdued or absent altogether.

Still, the campaign's symbolism matters. It shows a leader not just sitting on incumbency but actively reaching out, mobilizing, and presenting her case to the people, sometimes through spectacle, sometimes through substance.

The Case for Women in Power

Across Africa, the winds of change are slowly picking up, and Samia Suluhu Hassan stands among the vanguard. With the election of Namibia's female president, the continent now watches two women at the helm of sovereign nations. That in itself speaks to shifting norms and possibilities.

Samia has often made her case

not with grand feminist slogans, but through action—showing that female leadership can be pragmatic, nurturing, and bold. From expanding legal aid for widows to reforming land rights and property access for women, her policies often strike at the intersections where gender and poverty meet. And in doing so, she has challenged the status quo—not just for Tanzanians, but for Africa at large.

Looking Ahead: The Promise and the Pitfalls

As Tanzania approaches its next election, it sits at a crossroads. The past four years have brought progress, but also pain points. President Samia's legacy is one of ambition and vision—one that has modernized key sectors and given voice to long-marginalized groups. But it's also one struggling with the weight of democratic expectations, where the pursuit of control sometimes eclipses the promise of consensus.

Her reelection bid will be a referendum not just on roads built or scanners bought, but on trust. Trust in the process, trust in pluralism, and trust in whether leadership can listen as much as it leads. For many Tanzanians, the jury is still out. But one thing is clear—Samia Suluhu Hassan has already reshaped the contours of Tanzanian politics. Whether she gets another term or not, the story of her presidency is already a defining chapter in the nation's history.



President Samia Suluhu Hassan views different rice products processed for human and animal use at an exhibition outside Jakaya Kikwete Hall in Dodoma. Photo courtesy



The exclusion of Chadema, the main opposition party, from the 2025 elections—branded a “procedural matter” by the authorities—has stirred deep skepticism



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Namibia : Netumbo Nandi Carves Her Niche

By Simnikiwe Hlatshaneni.

Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah's ascent to the presidency on March 21, 2025, marked a historic first: she became Namibia's first female head of state. A veteran of the independence era and long-time SWAPO loyalist, she took office amid a mixed economic picture. Namibia is enjoying a boom in oil, gas and green hydrogen investment, yet remains one of the world's most unequal countries. In that context, financial markets and analysts note that SWAPO's continued rule generally "reassures investors," even as inequality and high unemployment (nearly 37% overall, over 44.4% for youth) pose urgent challenges. In her inaugural speech, Nandi-Ndaitwah warned that "business as usual" would not suffice and promised "radical shifts" on poverty and jobs.

Historic Milestone: Namibia's First Female President

Dr. Nandi-Ndaitwah's electoral victory capped a contested campaign. The ruling SWAPO party garnered 58% of the vote in November 2024, but the opposition challenged the results. Namibia's Supreme Court later dismissed those appeals, clearing the way for her to take power.

In a region where only Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf had been directly elected female president, her rise is widely seen as a breakthrough for gender equality. In media interviews she acknowledged the extra scrutiny she faces: if she succeeds, it "will be seen as a good example, but any mistakes will unfairly be blamed on her gender. Nandi-Ndaitwah, a former freedom fighter, foreign minister and vice president, has struck a tone of unity and continuity, stressing that despite SWAPO's longstanding dominance, the electorate sent a message that



In her inaugural address Nandi-Ndaitwah warned that "business as usual" would not suffice and promised "radical shifts" on poverty and jobs. Photo credit X

it still "trust[s] in the Swapo Party" while demanding better lives for ordinary Namibians.

Domestic Agenda: Economy, Jobs and Inequality

From the outset, President Nandi-Ndaitwah has framed her mandate as addressing Namibia's socio-economic gaps. In her first address after inauguration, she pledged to rebuild agriculture and diversify the economy. "We are going to increase investments in the agriculture sector to increase output and meet domestic food requirements," she told parliament. At the same time, she emphasized that Namibians must gain more from the country's mineral wealth. "We cannot continue exporting raw materials," she declared in an international interview, stressing "we must invest in value-addition, and that starts now".

Her campaign and early speeches repeatedly named food security, jobs, youth empowerment and land reform as interconnected priorities. In sum, her programme can be summarized as follows:

- Agriculture and food security:

Boost investment in farming and irrigation to reduce import dependence.

- Economic diversification: Promote processing and manufacturing of Namibia's minerals and commodities so citizens "derive maximum benefits from the country's natural resources".
- Job creation: Target growth in sectors that absorb large numbers of workers, notably agriculture, mining (with local beneficiation), agro-processing and the nascent oil and gas industry.
- Youth employment and skills: Expand technical and vocational training, create internships, and invest in youth-owned businesses to tackle a 44.4% youth unemployment rate.
- Education access: Eliminate tuition fees at public universities and vocational colleges, beginning in 2026, to empower young people.
- Land reform: Continue pursuing land redistribution within a "willing-seller, willing-buyer" framework, acknowledging that "land is a serious problem" left

over from apartheid.

Analysts note that this agenda echoes long-standing SWAPO slogans but is delivered with new urgency. One commentator observed that, like previous presidents, Nandi-Ndaitwah inherited lofty goals, poverty eradication, industrialization and jobs, but must now fill in policy details. IPPR expert Graham Hopwood said her launch speeches are strong on vision; the question is whether she will specify the concrete steps needed to achieve them, as former President Geingob had tried (Geingob, in his first 100 days in 2015, had set strict deadlines for ministers to outline poverty-eradication

Education and Youth Empowerment Initiatives

In late April's State of the Nation Address (SONA), Nandi-Ndaitwah unveiled several signature social reforms aimed at youth and education. Most prominently, she announced that starting in 2026 the government will fully subsidize tuition and registration fees at all public universities and technical colleges. "From the next academic year... tertiary education will become 100% subsidised by the government," she said.

Alongside the free-education policy, she unveiled a N\$257 million fund to support youth-owned micro and informal businesses and promised a national internship/apprenticeship programme to give school leavers on-the-job experience. She also vowed to build 10,000 low-cost housing units annually to help informal settlement dwellers, and to explore nuclear power development as part of a diversified energy strategy. In speeches she cited youth aspirations and Namibia's slogan of

“youth empowerment” to justify these measures.

Civil-society reaction was mixed. Many welcomed the intent, noting Namibia’s 44.4% youth jobless rate and saying education reforms are “groundbreaking”. But analysts immediately raised practical concerns. Dorthea Nangolo, head of the Namibian National Students Organisation, warned that doubling university enrollment could overwhelm campuses. Economist Johan Coetzee questioned whether tax revenues could cover the lost fees, given that universities already run deficits.

Opposition figures joined the critique: PDM leader McHenry Venaani acknowledged free education’s appeal but asked “how will the government create jobs for the thousands of young people who will now graduate?” He stressed that “the only industry able to create employment and grow the economy is agriculture,” implying more investment is needed there.

President Nandi-Ndaitwah has defended the plan as phased in over time, saying “we have heard your cries” about prohibitive tuition costs. Observers say this test will be determined by the 2026 budget allocations and job-market outcomes.

Government Reforms and Anti-Corruption Stance

Nandi-Ndaitwah has begun reshaping government institutions to match her agenda. Within days of taking power, she announced a leaner cabinet: 14 ministers (down from 21) and 7 deputies (down from 21). She merged overlapping ministries to cut costs and improve efficiency – explicitly to “eradicate duplications” in government.

Key appointees included Ericah Shafudah, a former finance ministry official, as Finance Minister, and Lucia Witbooi as Vice President. Natangwe Ithete became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Mines and Energy, overseeing Namibia’s emerging oil and gas sector. Notably, Nandi-Ndaitwah moved the entire oil and gas portfolio under the presidency’s



In a region where only Liberia’s Ellen Johnson Sirleaf had been directly elected female president, the rise of Nandi Ndaitwah is widely seen as a breakthrough for gender equality

direct control for “close monitoring”, citing its strategic importance. She has said the new oil industry will be “properly managed to benefit all Namibians,” implying stricter oversight than under predecessors.

Against a backdrop of long-perceived elite corruption, the president has cast herself as a reformer. In public remarks she equated graft to “treason” and vowed to strengthen transparency and the rule of law. Political analyst Rui Tyitende noted that her anticorruption rhetoric resonates with voters frustrated by scandals, but cautioned that turning speeches into measurable actions will take time.

The president’s merger of agencies and devolution of some powers to the presidency, along with a promise of service delivery, reflects a push for accountability. In this respect she follows Geingob’s model of demanding ministerial accountability, but unlike Geingob (whose initial cabinet was described as “bloated”), she began by slimming the executive.

Tackling Land, Poverty and Inequality

On the emotionally charged issue of land reform, Nandi-Ndaitwah has so far favored a moderate approach. In interviews she repeated her

commitment to a “willing-buyer, willing-seller” policy, rejecting expropriation without compensation. She acknowledged that “absent land owners” and white minority patterns persist as a “serious problem”, but signaled her preference for market-based redistribution. Land activists have expressed frustration with the slow pace of land transfers, and this remains a potential flashpoint.

More broadly, she has zeroed in on inequality. Namibia remains one of the world’s most unequal societies (2015 Gini ≈0.59). In her speeches she linked diversity and natural resources to a future of shared prosperity, and vowed to fight poverty by growing the economy. In particular she stressed uplifting rural and peri-urban poor through agricultural jobs and housing. Some civil-society observers note that addressing Namibia’s stark wealth gaps will require not just plans, but real redistribution. As one analyst put it, the electorate expects “concrete employment creation steps” without which “poverty... leads to dire [social] problems”.

Challenges and Criticism at Home

Even as SWAPO holds a legislative majority, Nandi-Ndaitwah faces vocal skeptics. Many observers see

continuity with SWAPO’s past – raising questions over whether she will truly diverge from the status quo. For example, economist Coetzee warned that Namibia’s civil service is “bloated and inefficient,” arguing that any new employment scheme must tackle bureaucracy. Opposition politicians have largely pledged to engage but have also demanded accountability. PDM’s Venaani, for instance, said he trusts the president to address national priorities, but immediately pressed her to justify cabinet cuts and policy details.

A common theme in critiques is timing. Critics note that some of the most eye-catching promises – free university education, expanded public service projects, large-scale housing – will take years and big budgets to fulfill. Political analyst Tyitende warned that judging the new government after only 100 days is premature: the real test will come as policies are implemented over 365 days and beyond.

For now, many young Namibians remain impatient. While Nandi-Ndaitwah enjoys historic stature and initial goodwill, polls indicate that SWAPO’s margins have shrunk, and youth discontent (echoed in high unemployment) remains a potent force.

Regional Diplomacy and International Outreach

President Nandi-Ndaitwah wasted little time building her foreign policy profile. Her first official trip in early May was to Angola, followed by Botswana and Zambia – all key SADC partners. In these visits she emphasized joint infrastructure and energy projects. In Angola, she and President Lourenço agreed to revive efforts on the Baynes hydropower plant on the Cunene River and to expand a cross-border railway, as well as to boost collaboration between their national oil companies.

In Zambia and Botswana, she discussed trade links via Namibia’s Walvis Bay port and cooperation in mining and logistics. Foreign-policy experts say this regional focus was to be expected. Retired diplomat Pius Dunaiski noted that new presidents in Southern Africa traditionally make quick rounds of neighboring capitals to build “goodwill” and set bilateral agendas. Analysts such as Marius Kudumo praised her reaffirmation of SADC ties, arguing that economic projects like railways and power plants are in Namibia’s strategic interest.

However, some caution that past governments have made similar promises without follow-through. One analyst pointed out that previous Namibian leaders also talked up regional refineries or transport corridors, but many projects stalled for lack of execution. Economist Omu Kakuja-Matundu applauded her “pan-African” vision, but warned that rhetoric must be matched by “practical, deliverable” projects, such as the railway from Walvis Bay to Zambia or joint energy pipelines.

Beyond SADC, Nandi-Ndaitwah has signaled eagerness to attract global investment. In April she opened Namibia’s premier International Energy Conference, declaring that Namibia aims to be a “global energy hub” and highlighting policies to ensure local value addition.



Within days of taking power President Nandi-Ndaitwah announced a leaner cabinet and merged overlapping ministries to cut costs and improve efficiency

In a May visit to Mozambique, she toured a large thermal power plant and proposed deeper energy cooperation, lamenting that “our region is facing...energy scarcity” and urging joint projects in renewables and conventional power.

Namibian officials have also met with delegations from China, the EU and others to pitch Namibia’s promising oil and green-hydrogen sectors. Media report that investors so far view the country’s stability and SWAPO continuity favorably, even as they remain watchful of future economic reforms.

Comparing with the Past

In many ways Nandi-Ndaitwah’s first 100 days echo the opening acts of her predecessors, yet with notable differences. Like President Hage Geingob in 2015, she has laid out a vision of a unified “Namibian house” of progress, and she has pressed ministers to deliver on his ambitious agenda. However, Geingob was criticized for expanding the government before later trimming

it, whereas Nandi-Ndaitwah immediately cut the number of ministers and deputies nearly in half.

Both have emphasized fighting corruption and using the state to drive development. But Geingob’s early days were marked by deadlines and speeches; Nandi-Ndaitwah’s have been marked by headline-grabbing policies (like free education) and swift institutional reforms. Importantly, she brings a different persona – a seasoned diplomat – and her rhetoric on unity, youth and gender empowerment differs in tone from previous male presidents. Yet observers note that in substance she remains a SWAPO leader in the mould of her forebears: her biggest test will be delivering on the broad promises her party has long made on land, inequality and jobs. As one commentator quipped, voters will be watching to see if “we do what we say,” a phrase she echoed, by measuring concrete outputs rather than just slogans.

Outlook: Beyond 100 Days

President Nandi-Ndaitwah’s first months in office have been eventful, setting an ambitious and reformist tone. She has cut government size, reshuffled ministries, launched popular social programs, and courted regional allies. So far, official metrics (GDP, unemployment, budget balance) show no dramatic turn – but it is also too early for data. Many analysts underscore that sweeping changes will play out over years, not months. As political scientist Rui Tyitende remarked, one should give the new administration at least a year before making a definitive judgment.

Meanwhile, public expectations remain high. Early civil-society feedback was hopeful yet cautious: student leaders and opposition parties say they will judge the president by follow-through on jobs, services and equity. For now, Nandi-Ndaitwah’s presidency is widely seen as Namibia’s “new era,” and her handling of these early reforms will shape confidence at home and abroad in the ambitious promises she has laid out.



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Ramaphosa's Washington Visit: Trade, Tech and Turbulence

By Ajong Mbandah L

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa traveled to Washington, D.C. towards the end of May on a working visit aimed at “resetting the strategic relationship” with the United States. The trip, which included a White House meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump on May 21, was called a chance to discuss “bilateral, regional and global issues of interest”. It came amid a sharp downturn in ties since Trump returned to office, with U.S. aid suspended and South Africa’s land reform and its pending International Court of Justice case against Israel fueling tensions. Ramaphosa’s visit sought to address these rifts while pursuing expanded trade and investment, even as protesters outside the White House carried banners decrying Trump’s “white genocide” rhetoric. The carefully choreographed but contentious Oval Office meeting underscored both the areas of contention and the potential opportunities in U.S.–South Africa relations.

Historical Context of U.S.–South Africa Ties

Since the end of apartheid, the United States and South Africa have been partners in trade, health, education and security cooperation. The U.S. is South Africa’s second-largest bilateral trading partner after China, and the two countries have co-operated on issues ranging from HIV/AIDS programs to counter-terrorism. Notably, South Africa has received substantial U.S. assistance through PEPFAR (the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) – in 2023 alone, roughly \$460 million of PEPFAR aid (about 18%



President Ramaphosa’s visit came amid a sharp downturn in ties since Trump returned to office, with U.S. aid suspension, and South Africa’s land reforms fueling tensions

of South Africa’s HIV/AIDS budget) flowed from the U.S. to the country.

Washington and Pretoria have also held annual strategic dialogues: for example, the 14th U.S.–South Africa Bilateral Forum took place in October 2024, co-chaired by senior U.S. and South African officials. However, by early 2025 relations had sharply deteriorated. The Trump administration in Washington cut off all U.S. financial assistance to South Africa, explicitly citing disagreements over Johannesburg’s land expropriation proposals and Ramaphosa’s decision to bring a genocide case against Israel at the ICJ. In February 2025 the U.S. formally froze South Africa’s aid programs and began winding down USAID activities, a move that analysts warned would undermine South Africa’s health sector and HIV/AIDS efforts. In March, Washington designated a refugee program for white Afrikaner farmers, granting asylum to dozens – a policy Ramaphosa’s government strongly denounced as based on unfounded claims of persecution.

Pretoria said the U.S. “got the

wrong end of the stick” on these issues, noting that South Africa has no evidence of systematic persecution of whites. Meanwhile the U.S. announced increased tariffs on South African goods and even expelled the South African ambassador, reflecting a severe chill in relations. In this fraught climate, both sides came to the May visit recognizing that the bilateral relationship was at a critical juncture. South Africa’s presidency stated that Ramaphosa’s White House meeting would be a “platform to reset the strategic relationship” between the two countries. In practice, that meant trying to find common ground on economic and security issues while managing sharp disagreements over domestic and foreign policy. As one U.S. commentator noted, the meeting had been “billed as a chance to reset strained relations” after Trump’s aid cuts and inflammatory remarks. For his part, Ramaphosa prepared to make the case for increased trade and investment ties, even as he expected a hostile reception on other fronts.

Main Meetings and Agenda

Ramaphosa’s official itinerary centered on the bilateral White House visit. Ramaphosa met with President Trump in the Oval Office on May 21, as confirmed in advance by a South African presidency statement. He brought with him a diverse delegation: beyond political and agricultural ministers, the group notably included prominent South African business and cultural figures, such as billionaire Johann Rupert and golf stars Ernie Els and Retief Goosen, a signal that trade and private investment would figure in discussions.

Tesla and SpaceX founder Elon Musk (a South African-born U.S. entrepreneur and close Trump adviser) was also present in the Oval Office during the meeting, reflecting Ramaphosa’s intent to discuss technology and energy business deals. After their formal session, Ramaphosa toured parts of Washington and reportedly held other talks; for example, South Africa’s agriculture minister, John Steenhuisen, accompanied the delegation and said he aimed to secure trade benefits for South African farmers. In summary, the purpose of the visit was twofold: to address contentious bilateral issues (land reform, race relations, foreign policy stances) and to pursue economic partnerships. The official South African statement explicitly said the talks would cover “bilateral, regional and global issues” of interest.

Issues Discussed and Agreements

- Economic and trade issues: A major focus was on trade promotion and market access. South African officials had prepared proposals on everything from mining to energy

before the visit. In an interview, Ramaphosa's spokesperson Vincent Magwenya mentioned that President Ramaphosa would explore business opportunities for Elon Musk's companies. For example, one idea under discussion was for Musk's Tesla to receive lower tariffs on car imports if it helped build electric vehicle charging infrastructure in South Africa. "(It) could be one of the points discussed," Magwenya said of a proposed tariff deal to support South African EV development.

Industry observers had noted that Washington might pressure Pretoria to allow Starlink, which had not yet obtained a license in South Africa, in line with U.S. calls for African countries to approve the service. Agricultural and trade frameworks were also on the table. South African farm exports currently enjoy duty-free access to U.S. markets under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), but that was under threat. Agriculture Minister Steenhuisen warned that "losing these benefits would be disastrous for farmers, farm workers and the economy at large" if tariffs were imposed. Indeed, the Trump administration had hinted it might revoke AGOA preferences over policy disputes. Accordingly, Ramaphosa's team presented Washington with a broader trade and investment proposal.

After the White House meeting, Ramaphosa told reporters that the U.S. agreed to "discuss critical minerals" extraction projects in South Africa, an important point given both countries' interest in battery metals for green energy. Separately, his agriculture ministry noted that its proposal included the U.S. selling liquefied natural gas to South Africa, which South African officials see as a way to diversify their energy imports

- Equity and affirmative action: A key source of friction was South Africa's Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) laws, which require companies to give a 30% ownership stake to historically disadvantaged groups. U.S. business



Beyond the smiles, the high stakes meeting had a strong dose of nervy moments.

lobbies had urged relief, and Trump's team reportedly pressed Ramaphosa on this. According to anonymous U.S. officials, Trump was "likely to raise" the issue of equity mandates during the Oval Office meeting. Indeed, a senior White House official told Reuters that Trump was expected to seek an exemption for U.S. companies from South Africa's racial-equity requirements. Under South African law, firms above a size threshold must meet these ownership targets or invest in equivalent programs.

Ramaphosa was aware that any change to BEE could be domestically controversial: he responded to such entreaties by noting that efforts to promote black ownership after apartheid were central to the ANC's struggle. In public comments during the meeting, Ramaphosa stressed that crime "is not only white people" but affects all South Africans; he noted that the majority of crime victims are Black. This was a polite rebuke of Trump's narrative on "white farmers." Land reform and racial violence claims: President Trump confronted Ramaphosa with highly sensational claims about farm attacks. During the Oval Office meeting, Trump dimmed the lights and played a video purporting to show evidence of white South Africans being murdered on a large scale

Trump asserted that "people are fleeing South Africa for their own safety. Their land is being confiscated, and in many cases, they're being

killed," and claimed he would take in refugees from such persecution. These assertions mirrored fringe conspiracy theories of "white genocide" in South Africa. Ramaphosa stood by facts: he told Trump, "If there was Afrikaner farmer genocide, I can bet you, these three gentlemen would not be here," pointing to the white men in the room. South Africa's official statistics bear out the disparity: police recorded 26,232 murders nationwide in 2024, of which 44 were in farming areas (and only 8 were farmers). Ramaphosa emphasized this broader perspective in his meeting, saying, "There is criminality in our country. People who do get killed... are not only white people. Majority of them are Black people".

This drawn-out exchange on farm attacks underscored how deeply emotive the issue was and how it dominated the public perception of the visit. Other global issues: Beyond bilateral concerns, Africa's international posture featured. The U.S. has long been uneasy about South Africa's refusal to strongly condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and about its high-profile litigation against Israel. In previous weeks, Trump's administration had criticized Ramaphosa for filing a genocide complaint against Israel at The Hague.

While Africa was not the sole focus of the May 21 meeting, Trump did at one point bring up South Africa's Israel case, and Ramaphosa defended

his government's approach. The meeting seemed to reflect divergent worldviews on human rights: Trump framed land reform as a human-rights issue for white farmers, while Ramaphosa insisted on addressing the legacy of apartheid injustice. There were no new diplomatic agreements announced after the meeting on broader global issues. However, officials agreed (as Ramaphosa told reporters) to keep talking about energy minerals and trade, suggesting at least a tentative economic truce.

Immediate Reactions

Public reactions to the meeting were starkly split. Back in South Africa, many officials and commentators praised Ramaphosa's composure and focus on facts. The ruling African National Congress (ANC) lauded his demeanor as being "in keeping with the proud diplomatic tradition of President Nelson Mandela". In televised comments during the meeting, Ramaphosa mostly sat quietly and occasionally interjected politely. He later told reporters his trip was a "great success" despite the tense moment. Analysts applauded his restraint. Pieter du Toit, a political author, said Ramaphosa "did well to maintain a calm demeanour and he did well to stick to the facts as close as possible". Political analyst Ralph Mathekga noted that Ramaphosa "managed his emotions in a tactful way" and kept focus on the bigger picture.

Indeed, commentators in South Africa largely treated his conduct as dignified; only a few wondered why he subjected himself to an "ambush" in the Oval Office. In the U.S. and abroad, however, impressions were more critical. Trump's abrupt move to dim the lights and play a video of white crosses was widely criticized. One former U.S. ambassador to South Africa, Patrick Gaspard, called it a "shameful spectacle," writing that Trump "savaged" Ramaphosa with "fake snuff film" and inflammatory imagery. Cameron Hudson, a CSIS Africa expert, described the televised

segment as “a circus,” though he noted it “never crossed the line into anger or vitriol”.

. In media coverage, observers compared the meeting to a hostage video or ambush rather than a diplomatic summit. Washington think-tankers privately told reporters that Trump’s approach was likely designed to play to his base, while publicly humiliating a fellow head of state. The White House issued no formal statement on the meeting’s outcome, and a spokeswoman deferred questions on whether the session was meant to “put Ramaphosa in the hot seat”.

Markets and foreign policy commentators took note. The South African rand was little changed immediately after the meeting, reflecting relief that Trump didn’t immediately impose new tariffs. The country’s finance minister was delivering the national budget that day, and was relieved that the exchange rate held steady. But analysts remained cautious. Currency strategist Andre Cilliers of TreasuryONE quipped that while observers “hoped that more constructive talks around trade and bilateral relations took place behind closed doors,” there had been “no updates” to indicate anything concrete emerged. Indeed, no trade deals or formal agreements were announced in the hour after the meeting, leaving many to wonder what, if anything, had been gained. Ramaphosa did later mention an agreement to discuss minerals, suggesting some groundwork had been laid, but details were scarce.

Geopolitical and Economic Implications

The high-profile nature of this visit has broad implications. For the United States, the meeting sent mixed signals about its Africa strategy. On one hand, it reaffirmed that South Africa, the continent’s most industrialized nation and a strategic partner, remains on Washington’s radar. On the other hand, the public spectacle highlighted how transactional and personality-driven U.S. diplomacy



Tesla and SpaceX founder Elon Musk (a South African-born U.S. entrepreneur and close Trump adviser) was also present in the Oval Office during the meeting

has become. Many Africa experts worried that Trump’s confrontational style could deter other African leaders from engagement, especially as Pretoria is also being courted by China. As one analyst wrote, Trump’s “unprecedented use” of the Oval Office to embarrass a leader could make others “think twice” about accepting U.S. invitations. Former Ambassador Gaspard warned that “engaging on Trump’s terms never goes well for anyone”.

This could undermine U.S. efforts to balance China’s influence; if African leaders fear such humiliation, Beijing’s more deferential approach might look preferable. Nevertheless, there were hints that the Trump administration was signaling a shift in Africa policy toward its stated preference for “trade, not aid.” In Abidjan during Ramaphosa’s visit, State Department Africa official Troy Fitrell framed the new approach explicitly: “Trade, not aid’... is now truly our policy for Africa,” he declared, emphasizing commerce, migration and peace as Washington’s priorities on the continent.

The president’s focus on Elon Musk deals, critical minerals and LNG underscores this priority. If U.S. energy and tech firms do gain access to South African markets (for example via favorable tariffs for Tesla or licenses for Starlink), that would fit the “commercial diplomacy” agenda Fitrell described. Washington also

plans to host a U.S.–Africa leaders summit later in 2025, and success in engaging with South Africa – a continent-wide heavyweight – would be seen as important groundwork.

For South Africa, the visit carried its own stakes. Economically, any thawing of trade relations could be a boon. The country’s economy faces slow growth and high unemployment, and South African officials have underscored the need for foreign investment. Securing U.S. commitment on critical minerals or energy could help South Africa meet its climate goals and industrial needs. Conversely, continued U.S. hostility risks hurting South African exporters and budget revenues (for example, revoking AGOA status would raise taxes on billions of exports). In the security realm, South Africa has benefited from U.S. military and intelligence cooperation in the past, as well as health aid; a rupture might force Pretoria to fill gaps with other partners. Indeed, analysts note that South Africa’s pivot toward China and Russia, by remaining neutral on Ukraine and hosting BRICS summits, has already strained ties with the West.

How Ramaphosa balances those relationships will affect not just economics but regional security and development. As one South African commentator observed, “few...would have been left with the impression that SA–US relations are set to

improve” after this visit, implying that Ramaphosa may need to rely more on China in the short term if U.S. barriers persist. More broadly, the visit tested how Africa–U.S. relations will evolve under the Trump administration. In recent years the U.S. has alternated between engagement (such as President Biden’s 2022 U.S.–Africa Leaders’ Summit) and transactional deals. If Trump’s team follows through on its trade agenda, it could open new U.S. investment in sectors like renewable energy and mining on the continent. But if diplomatic tensions continue, for instance over human rights disputes like the Israel case, some African governments might react by distancing themselves from Washington. Already, Chinese and other Asian investors are major partners for African economies, and U.S. foot-dragging can give them room to expand their roles. On the other hand, Ramaphosa’s willingness to engage with Trump despite provocation may signal to other African leaders that cooperative pragmatism can still yield results, even if expectations must be managed.

In the immediate aftermath, both governments played down any sense of failure. Ramaphosa insisted publicly that the visit was successful, and South African officials prepared to follow up on the economic proposals presented. In Washington, Trump’s team claimed to have secured no major concessions but underscored that he “showed Africa that America is back” with a focus on business. Whether the visit will translate into concrete policy shifts remains to be seen. For now, the episode stands as a vivid example of the challenges in U.S.–South Africa engagement: long-standing partnership and shared interests on one hand, deep policy divergences on the other.



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South Africa And The US Have Much To Gain From Working Together

By Cyril Ramaphosa*

Last week, I undertook a successful working visit to the United States at the invitation of President Donald Trump to strengthen relations between our two countries.

The delegation that accompanied me included a diverse range of South Africans, with representatives from Government, business, labour and the sporting fraternity, all united in advancing our country's interests.

South Africa has always regarded the United States as a strong investment and trading partner. Our countries and our economies are bound together in many ways. We went to Washington to establish a basis for greater economic cooperation and to address some of the challenges that have recently arisen in relations between our two countries.

Our visit came at a time when US-SA relations have come under increasing strain, largely as a result of misinformation peddled by fringe groups in our two countries, including a false narrative about a so-called genocide and an orchestrated campaign of violence against white farmers.

In this context, it was critical for us to engage directly with the US administration to correct misinformation and provide a true account of the progress we have made as a democracy and the many and complex challenges we still face.

While this was a necessary conversation, the overarching aim of our visit was to deepen our strategic economic partnership with the US as our second-largest trading partner.

The US is a key export market for South African goods, products and services, including motor



Our visit came at a time when US-SA relations have come under increasing strain, largely as a result of misinformation peddled by fringe groups in our two countries, says President Ramaphosa

vehicles, agricultural products and, increasingly, critical minerals. At the same time we buy many goods and services from the US.

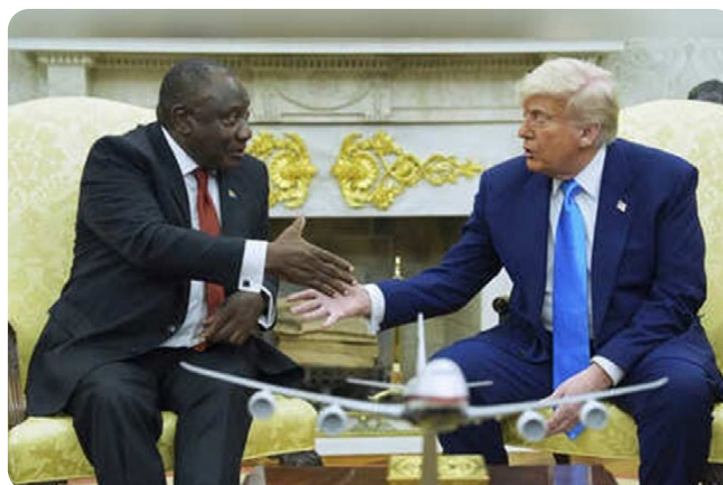
There is potential to increase and diversify trade between our two countries in areas such as gas, mining and critical minerals, agriculture and nuclear products.

The US is a major source of investment in South Africa. There are over 600 US companies, many with a long-established presence here, who

continue to expand their investments.

By way of example, earlier this year tech giant Microsoft announced plans to invest an additional R5.4 billion in expanding its cloud and AI infrastructure in South Africa over the next two years. Last week, there was a strong showing of US companies at an important energy conference in Cape Town.

According to data from the US Department of Commerce, these South Africa-based US companies



We are always ready to acknowledge and address our problems, just as we are always ready to engage our critics in meaningful discussion, says President Ramaphosa

employ around 148,000 South Africans. South Africa continues to be a tourist destination to many US citizens. Last year close to 400,000 American tourists visited South Africa.

South Africa and the US have for many years had a longstanding development partnership in critical areas such as health, education and environmental conservation and protection.

One of the key outcomes of the substantive discussions we had with President Trump was agreement on an economic cooperation channel between the US administration and South Africa to engage further on tariffs and a broad range of trade matters.

President Trump agreed that the US should continue playing a key role in the G20, including attending the G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg later this year, where South Africa will hand over the presidency of the G20 to the US.

We also discussed exploring new opportunities for companies from South Africa and the US in each other's markets. We were able to update US officials on the ongoing structural reform process underway to improve the ease of doing business and facilitate a favourable investment climate.

We are operating from a firm base. Last year's country Investment Climate Summit published by the US State Department highlights South Africa being an attractive investment hub, citing key factors such as deep and well-regulated capital markets, strengths in manufacturing stable institutions, an independent judiciary and robust legal sector, respect for the rule of law, a mature financial and services sector, and experienced local

partners.

We have extended an invitation to President Trump to send a government and business delegation to South Africa to explore opportunities for deepening investment and trade.

In 1990, soon after his release from prison, Nelson Mandela addressed the US Congress. He spoke of the envisaged economic cooperation between a democratic South Africa and the US as “not a relationship

between donor and recipient, between a dependent and a benefactor”, but one of mutual benefit.

This spirit of cooperation remains firmly in place more than 30 years later.

Our successful working visit to the US reaffirmed the importance of keeping the channels of dialogue open. The willingness of the US to engage with South Africa on resetting our relationship is testament to the

strength of the bilateral relationship.

We need to work together as Government, business, labour and all of society to overcome our domestic challenges, including the high rate of crime, if we are to attract investment that advances economic growth and creates jobs.

As South Africans, as a sovereign and independent nation, we are always ready to acknowledge and address our problems, just as we are

always ready to engage our critics in meaningful discussion.

We are pleased that our visit to Washington established a basis for greater engagement and cooperation. Our two countries have everything to gain from working more closely together.

With best regards,
*Cyril Ramaphosa is President of South Africa _____

South Africans Rally Around Ramaphosa After Tense Washington Visit

By Wallace Mawire

South Africans back home were largely upbeat after President Cyril Ramaphosa’s May 21 White House meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump. News reports and opinion columns noted that Mr. Ramaphosa remained composed under pressure, “staying calm” while pressing Trump on facts earning praise from many commentators. In Pretoria and on social media the dominant response has been one of pride and support. Ruling-party figures welcomed the “progressive and responsible” step of engaging the U.S., and urged the nation to unite behind the president’s diplomatic mission.

Following President Ramaphosa’s visit to the US, a flood of encouraging messages under hashtags like #SAinUSA and #OneSouthAfrica came in from ordinary citizens: “You are not alone... carrying the weight of a nation... We stand behind him,” wrote one South African on X. As Ramaphosa himself explained afterward, he went to Washington aiming to “reset” relations and promote South African interests; many here now hope he can secure concrete gains from the visit. At the same time, a minority of politicians and observers voiced caution or



ANC Secretary-General Fikile Mbalula described the White House talks as a “progressive and responsible step” toward mending ties with America

dismay but even critics generally stopped short of turning on the president himself. The overall tone in South Africa has been one of solidarity with Mr. Ramaphosa, reflecting national pride in his conduct and optimism about renewed U.S. engagement.

Government and Allied Support

Senior ANC officials and leaders of the governing coalition quickly backed Ramaphosa’s approach. ANC Secretary-General Fikile Mbalula described the White House talks as a “progressive and responsible step” toward mending ties with America.

He noted that the U.S. is home to hundreds of South African companies and hundreds of thousands of jobs, and said he hoped Mr. Ramaphosa would “come back with positive outcomes that will improve our relations”.

Business leaders echoed this view. Entrepreneur Vusi Thembekwayo urged unity behind the president: “We need Ramaphosa to be successful on this trip,” he said, adding good wishes from across the political divide. “Ramaphosa, good luck in the US. We will be here to criticise you... when you return,” he declared. This business community support

underlined the sense that the visit was a high-stakes effort to attract investment and protect jobs. Even opposition parties aligned with the government expressed backing. Democratic Alliance leader John Steenhuisen who traveled with Mr. Ramaphosa as Agriculture Minister in a broad governing coalition, took pains to defend the mission. At the meeting he told Trump and U.S. media that South African farmers of all races worry about crime, noting “the majority of South Africa’s commercial and smallholder farmers really do want to stay in South Africa and make it work”. His

message to South African viewers was clear: the United States “needs the support of our allies around the world so that we can strengthen our hand, grow our economy”.

The government spokesperson also praised Mr. Ramaphosa’s steadiness. Presidential spokesman Vincent Magwenya told local television the president was being actively “provoked” during the Oval Office session but “did not fall for the trap,” remaining calm and refusing to be drawn into argument. Magwenya said this restraint paved the way for the two leaders to proceed into a working lunch behind closed doors rather than

walk away empty-handed.

Opposition Criticism and Skepticism

A loud minority voiced sharp criticism of the trip’s tactics and motives, though even critics often framed their dissent as concern rather than hostility to Mr. Ramaphosa personally. The EFF and its leader Julius Malema were foremost among the skeptics. On social media Malema celebrated playing a controversial anti-apartheid chant at the meeting as a rebuke to Trump, but made clear he saw nothing to be gained by Mr. Ramaphosa’s concessions. He flatly rejected Trump’s allegations of a “white genocide,” stating that “no significant amount of intelligence evidence has been produced about white genocide” in South Africa.

Malema insisted he would never back down on land reform: “We will not agree to compromise our political principles on land expropriation without compensation for political expediency”. He mocked the U.S. delegation as “a group of older men... gossiping” and blamed Ramaphosa’s ministers for failing to counter misinformation effectively. The EFF’s spokesperson Sinawo Thambo condemned the South African delegation for appearing to “grovel” or “fail dismally” in defending national policies, saying it was “embarrassing” to see the government abandon established legal processes on land.

Other critics outside the EFF were more restrained. Some political commentators and ordinary citizens questioned why South Africa had agreed to a meeting that many suspected would be confrontational. A Reuters report quoted South African trade unionist Sobelo Motha saying he thought the trip was a “pointless exercise” and that “we don’t need to explain ourselves to the USA” on the farmers’ issue.

News columns noted that by bringing famous white South Africans and a billionaire to Washington, Mr. Ramaphosa took a gamble on symbolic reassurance, and some analysts wondered if the visit might sacrifice too much for image reasons. Nonetheless, even these critics were



DA leader and Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen says the majority of South Africa’s commercial and smallholder farmers really do want to stay in South Africa and make it work

outnumbered by messages of national unity and pride. One local columnist summarized the mood this way: many on social media treated the meeting as a moment of “One spirit” for the country, and urged fellow South Africans to “put their local beef aside” in support of their president on the world stage.

Social Media and Public Reactions

Social media buzzed with support for Ramaphosa. Citizens flooded platforms with patriotic messages and memes, often invoking the South African flag and unity hashtags. For instance, a widely shared tweet proclaimed: “Whether in Tshwane or Texas... We are One spirit, and we take pride in our flag and our president Cyril Ramaphosa”. Another supporter encouraged the president directly: “Dear President Cyril Ramaphosa. You are not alone. You are there carrying the weight of a nation... We stand behind him».. Such posts were often tagged #UnitedSouthAfrica or #SAinUSA, underscoring a theme of solidarity. Many black and white South Africans alike wrote that now was the time to back the president. One tweet summed up this attitude: “Trump disrespecting Ramaphosa will be disrespecting us as [a] country,” adding that “we support him on the international stage”.

Across social media there was a notable shift from the usual partisan tone, supporters of all political stripes expressed a sense of collective pride. Journalists noted dozens of pro-Ramaphosa messages under his visit posts, reflecting broad enthusiasm for his performance rather than focus on home-front divisions.

Media and Analyst Commentary

South African media commentary echoed the mixed but largely positive public mood. News outlets highlighted that many observers praised the president’s poise. A Guardian analysis noted that “many South Africans have praised their president... for staying calm” during Trump’s ambush with the video montage. Political analysts quoted in the press emphasized that Ramaphosa “did well to maintain a calm demeanour and... stick to the facts» and played “the role of a defender” rather than lashing out.

Such coverage suggested that his handling of the episode may burnish his statesman image both at home and abroad. At the same time, columnists pointed out that not everyone was convinced. The Guardian and other outlets quoted critics who wondered if the meeting was even necessary. One Johannesburg trade unionist told Reuters, “I don’t think it was the right call... it was a pointless exercise”. An NPR report characterized Trump’s

manoeuvre as “unusual” and “tense,” noting that U.S. correspondents had pondered whether the encounter might deter other foreign leaders from meeting Trump. Within the South African press there were also opinion pieces encouraging unity. For example, the TimesLIVE headline – “You’re not alone’: South Africans send well wishes to Ramaphosa...” – captured the general sentiment.

In sum, the editorial line was that the visit had gone better than feared, with Ramaphosa satisfying domestic audiences by firmly rejecting baseless accusations and focusing on economic issues.

U.S. Reactions and Broader Context

In the United States and abroad, media coverage focused on the surreal tone of the meeting. NPR and Reuters led with Trump’s theatrics and Ramaphosa’s disciplined response. NPR’s political correspondent Mara Liasson reported that Ramaphosa “came prepared for what clearly had the potential to be an explosive meeting,” and noted he “was very calm throughout”. The BBC likewise described Ramaphosa’s refusal to be provoked, quoting him saying “if there was Afrikaner farmer genocide, I can bet you, these three gentlemen would not be here,» a line that undercut Trump’s claims with irony.

U.S. political analysts suggested the unusual scene might have long-term consequences.

American opinion pieces were largely critical of Trump’s approach, but they also acknowledged South Africa’s low point in the relationship and Ramaphosa’s efforts to normalize it. In general the U.S. commentary was that Ramaphosa emerged with dignity intact. As one Washington Post piece put it, he “did well to stick to the facts” rather than argue Trump down. Some commentators urged Ramaphosa to press on with proposed investments and trade talks despite the distraction of Trump’s rhetoric. The encounter quickly made headlines worldwide, serving to highlight the importance of U.S.-South Africa ties. The press on both sides noted that the outcome depended on what came next: South Africans were keen for concrete deliverables for example, keeping the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act trade preferences, as discussed by the delegation, while U.S. analysts cautioned that any thaw would require changes in Johannesburg’s policies.

Looking Ahead: Perception and Momentum

The domestic reaction suggests that Mr. Ramaphosa has gained a measure of political capital from the trip. Public pride in his conduct, even



We will not agree to compromise our political principles on land expropriation without compensation for political expediency, says EFF leader Julius Malema

from some critics, may strengthen his hand at home. Many commentators believe this show of unity will buoy his standing as the country’s face abroad. At the same time, the emphasis on positive outcomes (trade, investment, aid) signals that the real test will be in tangible results. As ANC figures repeatedly remarked, the hope is that Ramaphosa will “come back with positive outcomes”.

Whether by averting sanctions, securing deals, or restoring aid, the president now faces the task of

turning goodwill into action. Even among skeptics, there is agreement that South Africa’s global image received a boost from the solidarity displayed. One analyst noted that inviting businessmen, sports icons and a broad delegation “encircling Cyril” helped present a united South African front. Many in the country believe the visit has reset the narrative: rather than caving to pressure, South Africa’s leader stood firm on constitutional principles while signaling openness to trade. In the

words of one supporter: “We put our local differences aside... we support him on the international stage”. If Mr. Ramaphosa can leverage the trip into new investments or preserved trade benefits, the public mood is likely to stay warm. For now, however, the dominant public sentiment is one of pride. South Africans have rallied behind their president’s handling of the Washington gambit – a show of unity that may itself become a piece of diplomatic momentum going forward.

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Zoom On The US-African Business Summit With Florie Liser

By Ajong Mbapndah L

There's a genuine sense of pride and ownership in Angola hosting this year's US-Africa Business Summit, says Florie Liser, President and CEO of the Corporate Council on Africa-CCA. Fielding questions from PAV, Florie Liser, a veteran of US trade with Africa says the CCA is working closely with the Government of Angola, our members, and a range of public and private sector partners to deliver a world-class Summit, in Luanda, Angola.

Running from June 22 – 25, CCA's 17th U.S.-Africa Business Summit will bring together more than 1,500 delegates including African presidents, heads of government and ministers, senior U.S. Government officials and leaders from U.S. and African companies. The 2025 Summit sessions will cover the full range of opportunities to expand U.S.-Africa trade, investment and business relations.

"We expect robust U.S. government participation at the highest levels, as they recognize that this Summit is not just an event – it's a platform to drive real deals, deepen partnerships, and shape the future of U.S.-Africa business relations," says Florie Liser.

What gives me confidence is the enduring strength of U.S.-Africa business relationships that transcend any single administration, Florie Liser says in response to the uncertainty created by the tariff regime of the Trump administration.

While policy shifts may occur, the fundamentals remain clear: Africa is a critical trade and investment partner, with a young, growing population and a rapidly transforming economy. U.S. companies see the opportunity, and many are committed to long-term engagement, Florie Liser says.

"At the CCA, we continue to advocate for stable, mutually beneficial trade and investment frameworks, and we believe this administration recognizes the strategic importance of deepening ties with Africa," says Liser citing progress with prospects of renewing



Our team at the CCA is working closely with the Government of Angola, our members, and a range of public and private sector partners to deliver a world-class Summit, says Florie Liser

AGOA and the US-Africa Leaders Summit later in the year as positive signs.

May we know how preparations are going for the 2025 USA Africa business summit?

Preparations are progressing very well. The excitement is building both in the U.S. and across the African continent. Our team at the Corporate Council on Africa is working closely with the Government of Angola, our members, and a range of public and private sector partners to deliver a world-class Summit. We are finalizing the agenda, securing high-level speakers, and coordinating with both U.S. and African stakeholders to ensure this Summit is impactful, inclusive, and forward-looking. Angola has been an exceptional partner, and their commitment to making this Summit a success is evident in every aspect of the planning process. We are pleased that there are now 8 African Heads of State

or Government leaders confirmed as well as Ministers and leaders of key institutions including the AU, African Development Bank, AfCFTA Secretariat and AUDA-NEPAD. The Summit will be an important opportunity to shape and advance the U.S.-Africa economic partnership through trade, investment, and commercial engagement.

You were in Angola recently, what is the mood like in anticipation of the Summit?

The energy in Luanda is palpable. There's a genuine sense of pride and ownership in Angola hosting this prestigious gathering. From government officials to private sector leaders and everyday citizens, everyone I met understands the significance of this moment – not just for Angola, but for Southern Africa and the continent at large. I had the privilege of meeting with President Lourenço who has empowered a high level inter ministerial team to work

with CCA to ensure the Summit's success.

What motivated the choice of Angola to host the 2025 Summit?

Angola is the Chair of the African Union Presidency this year and is leading the continent-wide efforts of the AU and countries across the continent to promote peace and prosperity. This also seemed a good coincidence that while Angola is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its independence, that it is working with other nations to lead African continental integration and economic development. Angola also represents a dynamic and evolving economy with immense potential for deeper U.S.-Africa business engagement – not unlike a number of other African nations. The country is not only rich in natural resources, but also actively working to diversify its economy, modernize infrastructure, and create a more business-friendly

environment. Angola is also a key anchor in the Lobito Corridor, a strategic regional initiative linking the economies of Angola, DRC and Zambia to transport and transform key mineral, agricultural and other value chains. This project also aligns with U.S. priorities for sustainable development through infrastructure, energy, and trade connectivity in Southern Africa and serves as a model for similar projects across the continent.

May we know some of the innovations participants should expect at this year's Summit?

Absolutely. We're building on the success of the previous Summits but also introducing several new features. For the first time, we'll be incorporating a Lobito Corridor Investment session, focusing on regional opportunities along this vital trade route. We're also launching a Future of Africa Pavilion, showcasing innovations in sectors like fintech, climate tech, agribusiness, and creative industries. There will be curated matchmaking sessions, deal rooms, and expanded youth and women entrepreneur programming. In addition, we're making the Summit more interactive with sector-specific site visits and immersive experiences that connect participants directly to the African business landscape.

Still on participation, any idea on some of the African leaders and big corporate names who have confirmed their presence in Angola?

You have probably seen our recent announcement of a number of African heads of state or government leaders who have confirmed their participation including from Southern, East, West and North Africa (some confirmations list below). On the corporate side, many of the top U.S. and African multinationals in sectors like energy, agribusiness, infrastructure, ICT, and finance have already confirmed or expressed strong interest. Companies like Chevron, Visa, Coca-Cola who are longstanding partners on the continent as well as major Angolan and other African



President Lourenço has empowered a high level inter ministerial team to work with the CCA to ensure the Summit's success, says Florie Liser.

companies will be well-represented, as will emerging U.S. and African SMEs and startups who are driving innovation and growth

Confirmed Heads of State & Vice Presidents:

- H.E. João Lourenço, President, Republic of Angola
- H.E. Duma Boko, President, Republic of Botswana
- H.E. Felix Tshisekedi, President, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- H.E. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President, Republic of Equatorial Guinea
- H.E. Brice Oligui Nguema, President, Gabonese Republic
- H.E. John Dramani Mahama, President, Republic of Ghana
- H.E. Hakainde Hichilema, President, Zambia
- H.E. Philip Isdor Mpango, Vice President, Tanzania

Confirmed Heads of Government:

- H.E. Nadir Larbaoui, Prime Minister, People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
- H.E. Sam Matekane, Prime Minister, Lesotho
- Gervais Ndirakobuca, Prime Minister, Burundi
- H.E. Russell Mmiso Dlamini, Prime Minister, Eswatini

Confirmed Ministers

- H.E. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ghana
- H.E. Dhananjay Ramful, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Republic of Mauritius
- H.E. Basilio Muhate, Minister of Economy, Republic of Mozambique

Confirmed African Leaders

- Akinwumi Adesina, President, African Development Bank
- Nardos Bekele-Thomas, CEO, African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD)
- Wamkele Keabetswe Mene, Secretary-General, African Continental Free Trade Area

How supportive or involved is the current US administration in the Summit?

The U.S. government remains a vital partner in the Summit and in our broader efforts to strengthen U.S.-Africa business ties. The Trump administration is demonstrating a commitment to engaging Africa as a strategic partner. We expect robust U.S. government participation at the highest levels, as they recognize that this Summit is not just an event — it's a platform to drive real deals, deepen partnerships, and shape the future of

U.S.-Africa business relations.

With the tariff regime of the Trump administration and the general uncertainty, how concerned are you about the future of trade and business ties between the USA and Africa?

Uncertainty is always a factor in international trade, but what gives me confidence is the enduring strength of U.S.-Africa business relationships that transcend any single administration. While policy shifts may occur, the fundamentals remain clear: Africa is a critical trade and investment partner, with a young, growing population and a rapidly transforming economy. U.S. companies see the opportunity, and many are committed to long-term engagement. At CCA, we continue to advocate for stable, mutually beneficial trade and investment frameworks, and we believe this administration recognizes the strategic importance of deepening ties with Africa. A reflection of that is the government's openness on working with us and the Congress to renew AGOA and plans that are being made to hold a U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit later this year.

How affordable is participation for interested companies?

We are very mindful of the need to make the Summit accessible, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, African entrepreneurs, and local businesses. We've introduced tiered pricing models, early bird discounts, and targeted sponsorships to support broader participation. In partnership with the Government of Angola, we're also working to offer special packages for regional participants. Our goal is to ensure that if a company is serious about doing business in Africa, there is a pathway for them to be part of this critical conversation.

For companies interested in joining the CCA, how open are you to welcome new membership?

We are absolutely open and eager to welcome new members. CCA is



We expect robust U.S. government participation at the highest levels, as they recognize this Summit as a platform to drive real deals and deepen partnerships, says Florie Liser

the premier U.S. business association focused exclusively on U.S.-Africa business relations. Whether you're a large multinational or a growing SME, a U.S. or African company, membership in CCA provides unparalleled access to high-level decision-makers, curated networking opportunities, market intelligence, and a platform to shape policy and drive business. As the landscape evolves, so does our network — and we believe in bringing fresh voices and new ideas to the table.

be in Angola?

If you're serious about doing business in Africa — if you want to connect with the leaders shaping the continent's future, and if you're looking to build real partnerships that translate into real impact — then you need to be in Luanda this June. Angola is opening its doors to the world, and the 2025 U.S.-Africa Business Summit is your gateway to opportunity. This isn't just another conference — it's a catalytic platform for action. Come to Angola. Come to connect. Come to invest in Africa's future.

Any last sales pitch you would like to make to potential participants, why should they

Angola's Rise As Africa's New Strategic Powerhouse Under President Lourenço

By Ajong Mbapndah L & Adonis Byemelwa

In what has become a defining chapter in Angola's modern history, President João Lourenço is celebrated across the continent, not only as a statesman but also as a visionary reformer whose leadership is reshaping the nation's destiny.

Garnering two of Africa's most prestigious accolades in 2025—the African Energy Chamber's 'Energy Person of the Year' and the Babacar Ndiaye Africa Road Builders Prize—Lourenço's journey is not one of sudden stardom but rather steady, determined transformation. His rise is deeply rooted in lived experience: the discipline of military service, the patience of political apprenticeship, and the burden of inheriting an economy in distress.

When he assumed the presidency in 2017, Angola was in a precarious place. Oil production was plummeting, foreign investors were retreating, and the specter of corruption loomed large. But Lourenço, quietly pragmatic and unflinchingly focused, saw opportunity in the crisis. He understood that for Angola to thrive, it needed not just a change in policy but a cultural shift—one grounded in transparency, market confidence, and



Under the leadership of President João Lourenço Angola has emerged as a strategic powerhouse in Africa. Photo courtesy.

inclusive growth.

That's precisely what he delivered. His overhaul of Angola's oil and gas framework has turned the tide. By introducing flexible, investor-friendly mechanisms—like risk service contracts, a permanent offer scheme, and tax re-energized a sluggish sector. These weren't abstract reforms; they were hard-fought changes that required rebuilding trust, especially with foreign partners long wary of

opaque governance. And the results speak for themselves. Angola's oil sector, once in decline, is now on a renewed path of expansion, attracting a wave of upstream and downstream investments.

"President Lourenço has not only been an instrumental leader in Angola but has played a major part in facilitating investment and development across the broader African oil and gas landscape. By

committing to industry reform, working closely with international partners and implementing clear and actionable objectives, President Lourenço has shaped Angola's oil and gas market into what it is today," states NJ Ayuk, Executive Chairman of the AEC.

Landmark projects like the Agogo Integrated West Hub and TotalEnergies' Kaminho development reflect more than technical

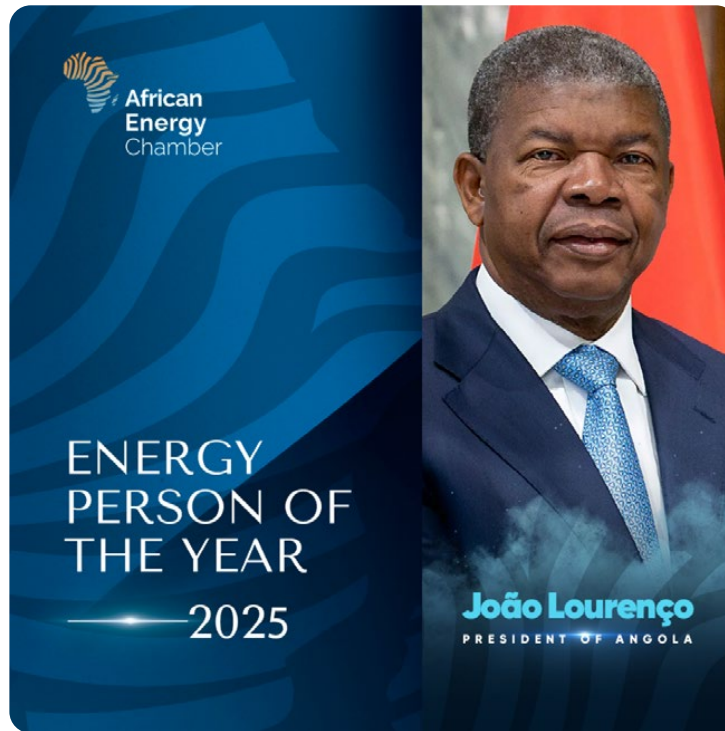
advancement—they are the physical markers of Lourenço’s patient diplomacy and dogged commitment to restoring Angola’s energy stature.

But President Lourenço’s ambitions were never limited to black gold. He recognized that a modern Angola must think beyond its natural reserves. That insight fueled a national pivot toward natural gas, once seen as a by-product, now viewed as a growth engine. With the country’s first non-associated gas project set to come online by early 2026, Angola is laying the groundwork for long-term energy security and regional export potential.

And while global leaders often stop at sectoral achievements, Lourenço has shown that infrastructure—roads, rails, and refineries—can be just as revolutionary. The awarding of the Babacar Ndiaye Road Builders Prize is a fitting tribute to this dimension of his legacy. Under his leadership, Angola has embarked on the most ambitious infrastructure upgrade in its post-independence history: resurfacing and paving over 4,000 km of roads, launching a light metro system in Luanda, and completing the Dr. Agostinho Neto International Airport.

“We were aware that in recent years, Angola has embarked on a major transformation of its transport infrastructure, with the aim of strengthening its strategic position in southern and central Africa and diversifying its economy. The immediate impacts of these various projects and achievements have been the creation of several services, including the use of new information and communication technologies,” explained the Africa Road Builders selection committee.

At the heart of this vision lies the Lobito Corridor—a railway project connecting Angola to Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It’s not just a trade route; it’s a symbol of how Lourenço envisions Angola: as a gateway, a connector, and a catalyst for regional prosperity. The project’s co-financing by



President João Lourenço was recently selected as the 'Energy Person of the Year' by the African Energy Chamber (AEC), for his steadfast vision in transforming the energy sector in Angola

the African Development Fund is also a subtle reminder that Lourenço has successfully repositioned Angola as a credible partner on the global stage.

This repositioning did not go unnoticed. When President Joe Biden chose Angola for his only African stop in 2024, it was a diplomatic gesture rich with symbolism. Biden’s visit was more than a nod of approval—it was a signal that Washington sees in Angola a strategic partner, one that balances natural resource wealth with governance reforms and economic diversification.

The timing could not be more fortuitous. With the upcoming U.S.-Africa Business Summit, Angola’s emergence as a regional heavyweight will take center stage. As global investors and policymakers converge, they will find in Angola not just a compelling story of recovery, but a living example of what deliberate, principled leadership can achieve.

“Angola represents a dynamic and evolving economy with immense potential for deeper U.S.-Africa business engagement. The country is not only rich in natural resources, but

also actively working to diversify its economy, modernize infrastructure, and create a more business-friendly environment. Angola is also a key anchor in the Lobito Corridor, a strategic regional initiative that aligns with U.S. priorities for sustainable, inclusive development through infrastructure, energy, digital, and trade connectivity. Their leadership has demonstrated strong political will and commitment to economic transformation, which made Angola a natural and compelling choice,” says Florie Liser, President and CEO of the Corporate Council on Africa.

The energy in Luanda is palpable. There’s a genuine sense of pride and ownership in Angola hosting this prestigious gathering. From government officials to private sector leaders and everyday citizens, everyone I met understands the significance of this moment — not just for Angola, but for Southern Africa and the continent at large, says Florie Liser as she harps on the mood and importance of the 2025 U.S.- Africa Business Summit in Luanda, Angola, from June 22 – 25

And this is perhaps the most striking thing about João Lourenço’s ascent—it feels earned. Not orchestrated or manufactured, but built day by day, policy by policy. His leadership doesn’t rest on populist flourishes or grandstanding rhetoric.

It thrives in the methodical, often thankless work of institution building, courting investors, and executing visions. At 50 years since independence, Angola finds itself in a moment of rare clarity—and Lourenço, weathered yet resolute, stands at the helm, transforming the nation’s past into a foundation, not a shackle.

His legacy is still being written, but if 2025 is any indication, it will be a story not just of oil and roads, but of rebirth. And in that, Angola offers something increasingly rare in global politics: a hopeful example.



President Lourenço here with AfDB President Adesina, won the 2025 “Africa Road Builders” prize –awarded to African leaders who have invested in infrastructure development

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African Diamond Sector Seeks Ethical Shine Amidst Calls for Reform, New Tech: Dr M'zée Fula Ngenge

By Hillary Munedzi*

The diamond industry is increasingly concerned about the provenance of the stones, and their journey from the mine to the market, and thereon, to the consumer. The importance of a traceability solution, thus, cannot be over-emphasized.

The African Diamond sector is valued at \$18.5–22.6 billion annually, most of which are driven by technological advancements, expanded domestic processing, and rising demand for ethically sourced stones. Countries like Botswana and Namibia now process 40–50% of rough diamonds domestically, but some countries like Zimbabwe still lack behind on the value addition drive and clarion calls have been made to value add gemstones for the prosperity of African nations.

WeMine Zimbabwe had an exclusive interview with Dr M'zée Fula Ngenge, Chairman of the African Diamond Council (ADC), a Mine Engineer and highly respected Senior Strategy Advisor highlighted on how AI driven mining have reduced conflict diamond and how Authentia's emergence as a transformative force suggests it's having a significant impact beyond just traceability.

Here, in an exclusive interview with Hillary Munedzi, WeMine Zimbabwe Editor, Dr Ngenge expresses his views on the Keynote Speech made by the World Diamond Council (WDC) President and the Opening Remarks by the KP Chair during the KP Intersessional Meeting in Dubai highlighting several concerns ranging from how the KP's consensus-driven structure allows powerful nations like Russia to veto critical reforms, and other grave issues being faced by the global diamond industry currently.

Some excerpts from the interview

What is African Diamond Council (ADC) where is it



The ADC has devoted close to two and a half decades working to enhance bargaining power in global markets and positioning of African diamond producing countries, says Dr M'zée Fula

headquartered, and when/why was it founded?

The African Diamond Council (ADC) is an international diamond industry body, headquartered in Luanda, the Republic of Angola and was founded in 1999.

Since there was no existing governing body prior to that time, the ADC was established to offer an organizational framework for the African continent that would first and foremost, unify African diamond producing nations. The ADC was boldly established to effectively legitimize the African diamond trade by confronting industry difficulties at the time, such as illicit diamond trafficking, industry misconduct, eradication of military efforts aimed at undermining or overthrowing legitimate governments, subjection, misrepresentation, forced labor, sales declines, sovereignty, smuggling,

gender inequality and lack of unanimity amidst natural diamond-producing nations in Africa.

The ADC has devoted close to two and a half decades, tirelessly and unapologetically working to enhance bargaining power in global markets and elevate the global positioning of African diamond producing countries through propitious policy-making, solution-driven mediation, assertive advocacy, fortuitous revenue recovery strategies and prolific industry empowerment initiatives that functionally advance alluvial miners, women and youth. The ADC has had great success in prioritizing local employment and community benefits from mining activities in Africa, ensuring profits reach grassroots levels.

Who is Dr M'zée Fula Ngenge and how would you describe the principles or experiences that

have shaped who you are?

It is essential to acknowledge that I am, first and foremost, my parents' son, which is a reflection of their fearless principles and unyielding commitment to integrity. As a leader who values privacy and operates with unshakable moral clarity, my tenure as Chairman of the African Diamond Council (ADC) has been guided by an unwavering belief that trust, credibility, and professionalism transcend the superficiality of image management. My ethos is rooted, not in optics, but in cultivating authentic relationships and fostering direct collaboration with global and industry leaders who share a resolute character and the courage to act decisively.

My life's work is driven by an unapologetic devotion to Africa's untarnished advancement. Where others retreat, I advance with uncommon valor, confronting

challenges others might deem insurmountable and addressing systemic inequities many choose to ignore. This continent's prosperity demands more than rhetoric; it requires leaders willing to prioritize transformative impact over fleeting acclaim. My steadfast guardianship of the continent's interests transcends the transient agendas of opportunists, and I have long accepted that meaningful progress demands sacrifice. True leadership, after all, is measured not by universal approval, but by the courage to champion what is right, even when it is neither easy nor popular.

In every endeavor, I remain anchored to a singular truth that Africa's destiny will be shaped not by those who seek comfort in complacency, but by those audacious enough to forge paths where none exist. To linger further on this matter would be to trespass beyond the bounds of necessity.

How will you sum up the state of the diamond sector in Africa today from worth to potential and impact on the global scene?

As of mid-May 2025, the African Diamond Council's (ADC) data affirms that Africa's diamond sector is valued at \$18.5–22.6 billion annually, most of which are driven by technological advancements, expanded domestic processing, and rising demand for ethically sourced stones. Inventory management systems that take paper to digital and AI-driven mining have reduced some conflict diamond risks and improved operational efficiency, while countries like Botswana and Namibia now process 40–50% of rough diamonds domestically, creating jobs and retaining much of the revenue. This can also be credited to formidable and spirited leadership in both countries. Enhanced sustainability practices, including solar-powered mines and stricter mining protocols, position African diamonds as ethical alternatives in Western markets, further amplified by sanctions on Russian diamonds that increased Africa's global market share to more than 65%. Recent projects



Bruno Scarselli, the founder of Authentia.io.

in Zimbabwe's Marange diamond fields and Angola's Luele mine hint at a 20% production boost by 2030, with revenues funding infrastructure and healthcare in mining-dependent economies. However, we must not get too excited, given that persistent challenges include artisanal mining in the DRC and Sierra Leone, where illegal operations account for 15–30% of unregulated output, alongside environmental damage from water pollution and land degradation. Lab grown diamonds, now representing over 20% of the global market, impel African producers to lower prices and innovate marketing strategies. Political mutability in Zimbabwe and Guinea delays projects, while over-reliance on diamonds in countries such as Botswana and Lesotho, representing 30–50% of GDP, exposes economies to volatile demand, particularly amid slowdowns in the People's Republic of China and the United States that trigger 10–15% annual price fluctuations. Despite these hurdles, Africa's dominance in supplying over 64% of global natural diamonds cements its strategic importance, with ethical certifications shaping industry standards and EU-U.S. partnerships reinforcing trade

ties. Balancing sustainability, equity, and innovation remains critical to maintaining this leadership. Lastly, it is crucial to caution that outward displays of confidence in this sector are frequently underpinned by unethical practices, nepotism, systemic corruption and a failure to cultivate meaningful stakeholder relationships.

You have made diamond miners, diamond centers, retailers and consumers aware of what you have been referring to as a "traceability solution". What exactly is "Authentia" and how can the global diamond industry, the KP and Africa benefit from it?

In an industry characterized by opacity, where trust remains as scarce as the gemstones it produces, Authentia has emerged, not merely as a traceability solution, but as a seismic and transformative force redefining ethical standards, particularly in African nations. This is not just innovation, it's actually a rebellion against complacency, gatekeepers, and the hollow theatrics of "ethical" claims that crumble under minimal scrutiny. In other

words, it transcends conventional innovation and represents a systemic reconfiguration of accountability, challenging complacency and dismantling the performative claims of ethical stewardship that have long dominated the sector. Competitors remain preoccupied with proprietary blockchain systems that are designed to appeal to industry insiders.

Nevertheless, while such systems may generate a beneficial impact on allied industry organizations by producing fragmented and incompatible tools, they consistently fall short of meeting the internationally recognized expectations, regulatory benchmarks, and strategic imperatives set by major multilateral institutions such as the African Union, United Nations, European Commission, G7, or key governmental entities such as the White House and the Kremlin.

At the outset, Authentia went out of their way to address and provide solutions for critical voids pointed out by the African Diamond Council (ADC). The Authentia leadership recognized and understood that traceability is not a technological novelty, but is an actual necessity, which the ADC refers to as a safeguard for miners, a legitimate guarantee for consumers, and an effective mechanism for equitable justice across all nations producing gemstones.

Following a comprehensive evaluation against the myriad of blockchain innovations and platforms that have emerged over the past four years, this solution has consistently demonstrated unparalleled distinction. Authentia has distinguished itself through its principled divergence from industry norms. Eschewing the limitations of closed ecosystems, it has established a robust public blockchain infrastructure that is transparent, immutable, and universally accessible. This advanced system transcends passive tracking, offering instead, an irrefutable ledger of truth. While other tech companies play in walled gardens, Authentia committed to building a public blockchain colossus

that is transparent, immutable, and accessible to all. It is crucial to emphasize that this initiative extends far beyond mere monitoring. At its core, we are collectively cultivating a nuanced practice of “truth-tracking”, which is a deliberate, rigorous pursuit of factual accuracy that champions discernment, verification, and intellectual integrity at every stage.

Each diamond’s provenance, from extraction in African mines to its presentation on global platforms, is indelibly recorded. In essence, each diamond’s journey is immutably inscribed within a system that is impervious to tampering or falsification, unlike conventional centralized environments where data aggregation is standard practice. Through advanced digital twin technology and sub-surface nanotagging, every gemstone is assigned a unique, unforgeable identity. Stakeholders, such as consumers, governments and retailers, leverage smartphone-enabled verification to instantaneously authenticate legitimacy, while block chain-anchored Certificates of Origin and Titles of Ownership eliminate historical vulnerabilities to unethical practices that slam shut the “blood diamond” loopholes. Crucially, Authentia harmonizes public transparency with private data security via a hybrid architecture, achieving a balance of accountability and confidentiality that the Kimberley Process (KP), constrained by bureaucratic and procedural inertia, has failed to attain.

The KP, once regarded as the definitive authority on conflict-free certification, now confronts a paradigm shift as governments, NGOs, gemological labs, diamond centers and industry institutions increasingly align with Authentia. The platform’s capacity to furnish real-time, immutable evidence of ethical sourcing, equitable labor practices, and community reinvestment has rendered traditional mechanisms obsolete. Established industry entities, accustomed to unchallenged authority, now grapple with eroded influence. Better put, the industry’s



As of mid-May 2025, the African Diamond Council’s (ADC) data affirms that Africa’s diamond sector is valued at \$18.5–22.6 billion annually, says Dr Fula Ngenge

old guard scrambles, their fragile control exposed. Authentia’s ascendancy has not merely disrupted the industry, it has helped African diamond producing nations redefine power structures, inviting both admiration and resistance from those whose dominance it challenges. Yet, as global stakeholders recognize the platform’s potential to democratize a historically exclusionary industry, momentum tilts irreversibly toward its vision. Authentia’s meteoric rise didn’t just disrupt during the “Provenance Traceability Technology Forum at Dubai’s Almas Conference Center a year ago, it humiliated and deflated those who were initially viewed as contenders.

Beyond supply chain mechanics, Authentia catalyzes a cultural realignment. Prominent figures at events, such as the 2025 Cannes Film Festival, foregrounded narratives of provenance, highlighting mining communities in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Sierra Leone and Angola as well as the verifiable socioeconomic impact of their adornments. This shift transforms universal red carpets into forums for conscientious advocacy, where luxury intersects with accountability. Consumers, increasingly discerning,

no longer purchase gemstones alone, but invest in legacies of integrity. Authentia’s dual role as collaborator and reformer underscores its nuanced approach, which does not seek to dismantle the existing framework, but elevates them, integrating AI-driven oversight with block chain’s incorruptibility to convert opaque supply chains into auditable, equitable ecosystems.

For mining communities, Authentia amplifies a great deal of deserved visibility and dignity. For retailers, it provides an incontrovertible ethical credential and for consumers, it empowers informed participation in global commerce. The implication is unequivocal, where an era of monopolized control has concluded. The innovation of Authentia’s traceability solution transcends technological achievement, embodying instead, a principled movement toward transparency. The age of unchecked monopolies is over, so while institutions and nations embrace this standard, the diamond industry’s future is no longer defined by extraction alone, but by the construction of trust. As humanity stirs to the radiant dawn of a diamond industry reinvented through transparency rather than

inherited practices, an irrefutable truth crystallizes: The future of gemstones shines not from the depths of the earth, but from the heights of human ingenuity. It is engineered, not extracted—a testament to progress forged in laboratories of innovation and conscience.

I am a believer in a world where every diamond’s lineage must transcend mere documentation to become etched in an incorruptible ledger of ethics. For African diamond producing nations, this is not evolution; it is revolution. A visionary alchemy where innovation meets integrity, and every facet of creation reflects the light of accountability.

What did the Keynote Speech made by the World Diamond Council (WDC) President and the Opening Remarks by the KP Chair during the KP Intersessional Meeting in Dubai bring to light? Now that both are made public, can you break it down for those of us who are interested?

The speech given by the WDC President underscores the Kimberley Process’s (KP) achievements and challenges with a tone of cautious optimism, though it downplays

systemic flaws and overstates progress. While praising the UAE's leadership and endorsing Qatar's candidacy for continuity, the narrative sidesteps critiques of Gulf states' geopolitical influence in a process often criticized for marginalizing African diamond-producing nations.

The UAE's digitization efforts, such as its blockchain proof of concept, are highlighted as progress, yet these initiatives remain untested at scale, and until now, many KP members still rely on outdated paper based systems. Similarly, reforms like multi-origin certificates and co-chairing models are framed as strides toward equity, but power imbalances persist in a consensus-driven structure that allows vetoes by actors like Russia or Zimbabwe to stall critical reforms.

Central to her speech is the hint to have the definition of "conflict diamonds" updated beyond rebel controlled gems to address state violence and human rights abuses. While welcoming a long-overdue proposal that one of KP Observers made via numerous recommendations of the African Diamond Council (ADC) as a breakthrough, the WDC President glosses over the likelihood of resistance from nations wary of scrutiny, such as Russia, which has historically blocked reforms to avoid accountability for its diamond trade. The KP's failure to address Russian diamonds after the Ukraine invasion that prompted unilateral G7 bans, exposes its diminishing relevance in high-stakes geopolitics. The speech's emphasis on consensus risks conflating procedural unity with meaningful progress, as the KP's requirement for unanimous agreement often prioritizes political convenience over protecting vulnerable communities.

The World Diamond Council (WDC) functions as a lobby group or task force that is idolized by for its avowed global authority and voluntary initiatives, which include promotion of inventory management that could take the industry from paper to digital. Even so, these masked measures lack binding enforcement, allowing common loopholes for illicit



diamond trading and smuggling, such as Russian stones laundered through third countries, to enter the global marketplace. While the message sheds light on Africa's often overlooked global relevance, the self-congratulatory tone that was conveyed, not only ignores ongoing abuses in regions where forced labor and environmental harm continue to persist, but prompted unforeseen whispers of resistance throughout the African continent. By framing incremental steps like "aligning sustainability terms" as achievements, the WDC diverts attention from the need for rigorous regulation, which is what I now believe is part of the industry's original master plan to begin with.

Ultimately, the speech's call to avoid letting "perfect be the enemy of the good" risks legitimizing a status quo of inertia. The KP's structural paralysis, reliance on voluntary industry action, and avoidance of state sponsored violence render it a talking shop rather than a transformative force. While the definition change proposal offers a glimmer of hope, the KP's refusal to confront hard truths, such as binding enforcement, environmental safeguards, or accountability for state actors, leaves communities in diamond-producing regions vulnerable. Without overhauling its consensus model and addressing geopolitical irrelevance,

the KP's "progress" will remain symbolic, failing those it claims to protect.

Considering the KP Chair's Opening remarks, the speech opens with quite a celebratory tone, highlighting procedural achievements, such as the WTO's renewal of the Kimberley Process (KP) certification waiver, Uzbekistan's membership, and the operationalization of the KP Secretariat in Botswana. While these milestones are factually accurate, the WTO extension, for example, is documented, the framing, however, glosses over critical nuances. For instance, the lifting of the Central African Republic (CAR) embargo, while technically true under "enhanced vigilance," sidesteps ongoing concerns from NGOs like Global Witness about persistent armed group influence in CAR's diamond trade. This selective emphasis on bureaucratic progress risks overshadowing unresolved governance failures, which, in my humble opinion, is an anticipated pattern that is repeated throughout the address.

The introduction of Verifico is presented as a leap forward in traceability, however, the speech omits practical challenges, which uncover the fact that the system's compatibility with platforms like SAP or Oracle remains untested. It is important to highlight that it is a

UAE-developed digital certification tool and its integration into the KP's existing infrastructure lacks transparency. Similarly, the push for AI adoption, while ambitious, feels rather disconnected from the KP's core challenges, such as smuggling, human rights abuses in artisanal mining and the failure to return confiscated, smuggled goods back to their country of origin. This adherence to conventional industry practices underscores his reluctance to exercise independent judgment, revealing a reluctance to make the difficult, autonomous decisions that define true leadership. Such conformity reflects a lack of the innovative thinking and decisive courage expected of those entrusted with guiding organizations forward.

These tech-centric proposals, though innovative, risk prioritizing UAE's diplomatic branding over actionable, collaborative solutions. The Secretariat's planned takeover of the statistical database within 12 months is another underdeveloped idea, lacking public timelines or budgetary details, which raises many questions with regard to feasibility.

A significant portion of the speech deflects criticism of natural diamonds by amplifying fears about lab grown alternatives. While it's true that lab-grown diamonds now dominate in excess of 60% of the U.S. bridal market by volume, the

argument that safety concerns drive this shift misrepresents reality. Travel advisories from Singapore or the UK's Metropolitan Police caution against flaunting any jewelry, not specifically natural diamonds. This exaggeration distracts from the lab-grown sector's ethical and affordability appeals to younger consumers, which is a demographic the KP has struggled to successfully engage. The speech's dismissal of lab-grown diamonds as a passing trend, which is "no more realistic than lab-grown meat" ignores market realities. Natural diamonds are increasingly seen as luxuries, not necessities, and the KP's failure to innovate its messaging recklessly leaves it vulnerable to irrelevance.

The critique of Apple's cobalt sourcing practices, while rhetorically sharp, is riddled with several inaccuracies. Apple's 2023 policy required supply chain audits, which is not a full halt of Congolese cobalt, and the company has actively funded third-party oversight initiatives, albeit imperfectly. This is why we do not see the Apple, Samsung or Huawei logos above the entry gates of African mining operations. By contrasting Apple's alleged failures with the KP's "global best practice," the speech engages in "Whataboutism", where the criticism is typically twisted back on the initial critic and this approach deflects from the KP's own traceability gaps, such as its inability to monitor Zimbabwe's Marange fields effectively. This comparison also overlooks a key difference: Apple's supply chain spans thousands of components, whereas the KP focuses on a single commodity, yet still struggles with enforcement.

The call to address the arms trade's role in destabilizing diamond regions is a rare moment of introspection for the African Diamond Council (ADC), acknowledging a systemic issue the KP has long ignored. However, the proposal to collaborate with the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) lacks a great deal of substance. The UAE itself is a major arms importer and a careful look at their ATT compliance may, in fact, undermine the credibility of this plea. Without any concrete steps,

such as integrating arms trafficking data into KP reporting, the gesture fundamentally remains symbolic.

The speech's overarching flaw is its reliance on procedural wins to mask institutional stagnation. Celebrating the Secretariat's staffing or Uzbekistan's membership does little to address the KP's existential crises, with an outdated "conflict diamond" definition that excludes human rights abuses, the marginalization of civil society voices, and a consensus model that paralyzes reform. The UAE's focus on digital tools and AI, while forward-looking, feels incongruent with the urgent need for governance overhauls. Even the appeal for "Best Practices" in 2025 is undercut by the admission that negotiations, rather than action is what dominates the agenda.

The speech embodies the KP's central paradox and unfortunately, it is an institution adept at celebrating itself, but reluctant to confront its limitations. The UAE's tenure has brought technological ambition and diplomatic polish, yet these achievements ring hollow without progress on transparency, inclusivity, and accountability. Until the KP addresses its foundational gaps, whether through redefining "conflict diamonds," empowering NGOs, or meaningfully engaging lab-grown diamond stakeholders, it risks becoming and wearing the label of a relic that is praised for its past ideals, but deemed as ill-equipped for future challenges.

The Kimberley Process faces a reckoning, and to remain relevant, it must expand beyond rough diamonds to address polished gem traceability, environmental safeguards, and revenue distribution. Without reform, its role will continue to diminish as platforms like Authentia.io set new norms that would offset the KP's depreciation.

There is an admirable, supportive and cultural relationship there between the existing leadership of the KP and WDC, hopefully, both can attend the ethical sourcing standard breakfast next month during JCK Las Vegas, which is a premier event for all

to gain invaluable insights into.

There is also the perception that much of the diamond industry is under the control of foreign firms or entities, and not Africans, is this assessment accurate and are you comfortable with that?

Perception molds reality, and it is the precision of this assessment that exacerbates my apprehension. After an arduous span of 6,690 days, which is equivalent to 18 years and 4 months of institutional stagnation and persistent credibility challenges, the African Diamond Producers Association (ADPA) finally marked a historic milestone on February 27, 2025, with the formal inauguration of its long-awaited headquarters. This momentous occasion, delayed by decades of inertia, now stands as both a testament to a compromise of values, an abandonment of principles and a clarion call for internal due diligence within the organization.

I recently read a quote where the World Diamond Council (WDC) President commented that "The Kimberley Process is not just about stemming the flow of conflict diamonds. It is also about supporting the people behind it. More than compliance, this is about empowerment," which is a clear indication of where ADPA's recent support is coming from as a KP Observer. ADPA will constantly have to reinforce its commitment in efforts to prop the KP and will be depended upon heavily to function as a leading contributor to the KP undertakings and consensus.

A day will inevitably arrive when the African Diamond Producers Association (ADPA) finally comprehends the rationale behind Angola's withdrawal from OPEC, Global Witness's principled 2011 departure from the Kimberley Process (KP), and Partnership Africa Canada's (PAC) 2009 decision to sever ties with the KP. Above all, that day will illuminate how the Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition (KPCSC), in just 72 hours during the 2025 Intersessional Meeting, exemplified

unparalleled integrity, wielded greater influence, and commanded far more credibility than ADPA has cultivated over the past 72 months. When this reckoning comes, it will underscore not only the failures of shortsighted diplomacy but also the enduring power of ethical leadership in shaping a just global diamond trade. While Africa represents 8 of the top 10 global diamond producing nations, we should pay closer attention to what Board of Directors African faces are on and most importantly, need to remember where they are not. This whole "trading boxes of dates for parcels of diamonds" syndrome must come to an end.

In a February 27, 2023 article published by Rough&Polished, the African Diamond Council (ADC) proposed expanding the Kimberley Process (KP)'s stringent definition of conflict diamonds to include "natural diamonds that are being mined as a result of human suffering." Notably, there was no prior indication that ADPA had endorsed this stance before the article's release.

Subsequently, during the KP Intersessional Meeting, observers noted that ADPA introduced a communiqué advocating for the expansion of the KP's criteria for blood or conflict diamonds. This move effectively bound ADPA member states and observers to their historical commitments, eliminating their ability to retract or veto earlier positions. The recurrence of this ADC suggestion underscores a strategic shift, compelling adherence to past declarations without affording members the flexibility to revise their stance in light of evolving contexts.

This development highlights tensions within the KP framework, particularly around the balance between enforcing enduring commitments and allowing adaptive governance in response to new human rights challenges.

Regional cooperation and implementing Base Erosion and Profit-shifting (BEPS) actions in the mining sector can curb losses in corporate

income tax revenues as Sub-Saharan Africa continues to lose between \$450 million and \$750 million per year. How can diamond companies deal with profit shifting by multinational companies in the mining sector?

Regional coordination is paramount, as harmonizing tax policies across bodies like the SADC or ECOWAS could standardize minimum corporate tax rates, transfer pricing norms, and audit protocols, reducing opportunities for cross-border arbitrage. Strengthening institutional capacity through joint training programs for tax authorities, supported by technology-driven tools like blockchain for inventory management, would bolster the detection of complex profit-shifting schemes. Structural reforms, such as recalibrating fiscal regimes to include revenue-based royalties alongside profit taxes, could further insulate economies from manipulative accounting practices. Concurrently, African nations should move rapidly to encourage ratification of the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC), which is a progressive and specialized Agency of the African Union. In addition to that, diamond companies should engage in global advocacy that align with initiatives like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Inclusive Framework on BEPS and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) to foster accountability and harmonize anti-shifting measures internationally.

However, these efforts must contend with systemic challenges, including political resistance,

corruption, and the need to balance deterring profit shifting with maintaining an attractive investment climate. By embedding BEPS principles into national legislation, fostering cross-border data-sharing networks, and cultivating public-private partnerships, Sub-Saharan African nations can reclaim fiscal sovereignty over their mineral wealth. This holistic approach—rooted in transparency, regional solidarity, and adaptive policymaking—would not only curb annual revenue losses but also promote equitable resource governance, ensuring that diamond extraction translates into sustainable economic benefits for local communities.

While lab-grown diamonds do offer some benefits, like reduced environmental impact and conflict-free sourcing, it's crucial to consider the complexities of diamond-producing countries, particularly in Africa. These countries have economies and communities that rely heavily on diamond mining, and shifting the narrative might overlook the potential consequences for workers and local economies. What are your thoughts on how we can balance the benefits of lab-grown diamonds with the needs of diamond-producing countries?

Balancing the benefits of synthetic, man-made or lab-grown diamonds (LGDs) with the economic realities of diamond-dependent nations demands a nuanced, collaborative strategy that harmonizes innovation with socio-economic responsibility.

The De Beers Group arrived at this pivotal realization only after enduring a series of formidable challenges, a journey that ultimately necessitated a profound strategic recalibration.

Central to this is redefining the market narrative by emphasizing the distinct value propositions of both, natural and lab-grown diamonds. Natural diamonds could be positioned as symbols of heritage and rarity, steeped in cultural and geological uniqueness, while lab-grown alternatives might cater to ethically conscious consumers prioritizing sustainability. Strengthening ethical frameworks, such as evolving the Kimberley Process (KP) into a more rigorous certification system with transparent labor and environmental benchmarks, could reinforce trust in mined diamonds, even if this was not part of the original racketeering strategy.

Introducing “ethical premium” labels, linked to community development funds, would allow consumers to directly support mining regions through their purchases. Simultaneously, the long-term viability of diamond-producing economies hinges on diversification. International partnerships could channel resources into education, vocational retraining, and infrastructure, enabling transitions into sectors like renewable energy, agriculture, or localized lab-grown diamond production, however, the World Diamond Council (WDC) and the Kimberley Process (KP) are poised to assert that such concerns lie beyond the scope of their mandate. Financial mechanisms, such as levies on lab-grown diamond sales or corporate revenue-sharing agreements, could

generate capital for reinvestment in mining communities, fostering resilience without stifling innovation. Both sides must prioritize embracing comprehensive sustainability practices, a commitment widely recognized as essential for fostering long-term environmental stewardship and responsible growth.

Mining operations could adopt renewable energy to reduce their environmental footprint, while labgrown producers might invest in circular economy models to minimize waste. Consumer education is more critical that one would imagine, given that the global diamond industry has long capitalized on carefully cultivated consumer perceptions, relying more on strategic marketing narratives than on the intrinsic value or scarcity of the gems themselves. Transparent supply chains, powered by advanced technologies, could demystify the origins and impacts of each diamond type, empowering buyers to make informed, values-driven choices.

Finally, global cooperation through policy frameworks and debt-relief initiatives could incentivize equitable transitions, ensuring that progress in one sector does not destabilize vulnerable economies. While challenges like timing, political alignment, and shifting consumer preferences loom, a just equilibrium is achievable, one where innovation coexists with tradition, and ethical advancement uplifts rather than displaces the communities historically entwined with diamond extraction.

* WeMine Zimbabwe Editor

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Zimbabwe's Public Debt Crisis and the Path toward Poverty Reduction: Breaking the Cycle Through Resource-Based Development

By Alexander Maune (PhD, MSc, BCom, Dip. MA CIMA)*

Introduction

Zimbabwe is facing an economic paradox: a nation rich in natural resources but burdened by crippling public debt, widespread poverty, and limited fiscal space. The country's debt—over USD18 billion and counting—has become both a symptom and a driver of underdevelopment. Amid soaring inflation, stagnant job growth, and a growing informal economy, the question arises: Is continued borrowing a viable strategy, or should Zimbabwe pivot to leveraging its natural wealth to build a sustainable, self-reliant economy?

This article consolidates an in-depth analysis of Zimbabwe's debt challenges, the implications for poverty reduction, and a forward-looking vision centered on responsible resource governance and economic self-sufficiency.



Mnangagwa's Zimbabwe is facing an economic paradox—a nation rich in natural resources but burdened by crippling public debt, widespread poverty, and limited fiscal space.

Zimbabwe's Debt Landscape: Size, Structure, and Trends

Scope of the Debt

As of 2024, Zimbabwe's total public debt stands at more than USD18 billion. This comprises of external debt (~USD14 billion) that is owed to multilateral (World Bank, IMF, AfDB) and bilateral creditors (China, Paris Club) as well as domestic debt (~USD4 billion) in the form of Treasury bills, central bank overdrafts, and government bonds. Much of the external debt is in arrears, which has cut Zimbabwe off from low-interest development loans and forced reliance on high-cost or politically restrictive borrowing.

Debt Accumulation Drivers

Zimbabwe's debt crisis has evolved through decades of:

- Economic mismanagement (for example, overreliance on

agriculture subsidies, Command Agriculture).

- Quasi-fiscal spending by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe.
- Costly conflicts and social programs in the early 2000s.
- External shocks such as pandemics, droughts, and sanctions.
- Institutional weaknesses and corruption in public finance.

Implications of Debt for Poverty Reduction

Fiscal Constraints

High debt servicing obligations divert funds from critical social sectors:

- Education and health budgets are underfunded.
- Water, sanitation, and electricity infrastructure suffer from neglect.
- Social protection programs are insufficient to meet rising poverty

levels.

Inflation and Currency Depreciation

Deficit financing and money printing to service debt have fueled chronic inflation, eroding real incomes as well as currency volatility, which increase the cost of living.

These disproportionately affect poor households who lack access to inflation-hedged assets.

Investment Disincentives

Debt uncertainty deters both domestic and foreign investment:

- Investors are wary of unpredictable tax regimes and debt-related austerity.
- Capital flight and brain drain worsen as confidence erodes.

Erosion of Sovereignty

Being in debt arrears undermines

Zimbabwe's fiscal autonomy, as creditors often attach stringent conditionalities to new financing. This reduces the government's ability to craft poverty-focused policies.

Why borrowing alone is not the solution

When borrowing makes sense

Borrowing can be strategic if:

- Funds are used for growth-enhancing investments, for example, infrastructure, energy, and agriculture.
- Terms are concessional, with low interest and long grace periods.
- Borrowing is transparent and under strict parliamentary oversight.

When borrowing is harmful

- Zimbabwe's current borrowing is mostly:

- Used to cover deficits, not investments.
- Expensive and short-term.
- Non-transparent, with limited accountability.
- Misaligned with pro-poor development goals.

In this context, borrowing deepens the debt trap and hinders progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Why not leverage natural resources instead?

Zimbabwe's Resource Wealth

Zimbabwe is rich in minerals (Gold, platinum, lithium, diamonds, and chrome), agriculture (arable land, favorable climate, and water resources) and tourism (Victoria Falls, Hwange, Great Zimbabwe). Theoretically, these could generate significant revenues—enough to reduce or even eliminate dependence on external borrowing.

Challenges to resource-based development

Despite this wealth, the country struggles to convert resources into sustainable income due to:

a) Corruption and poor governance

Opaque mining contracts, illicit trade, and underreporting cost Zimbabwe billions in lost revenue. For example, it estimated that USD1.5 billion worth of gold is smuggled out of the country annually.

b) Low value addition

Raw minerals and crops are exported with minimal processing and this deprives the country of job creation and higher export earnings.

c) Lack of Infrastructure and Technology

Processing minerals or expanding agribusiness requires modern technology, skilled labor, and capital.

d) Policy Instability

Frequent changes in tax laws, ownership regulations, and forex policies deter long-term investment.



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e) Unequal Distribution

Resource-rich regions often see no benefit from extraction, fueling community resentment and deepening rural poverty.

Roadmap to sustainable, resource-driven development

Responsible resource governance

Government should enact and enforce the Zimbabwe Mining Revenue Transparency Initiative (ZMRTI). There is also need to publish all mining contracts and license allocations. Government should also establish clear and consistent legal frameworks to prevent elite capture.

Build domestic value chains

There is need to invest in local refineries, smelters, and agri-processing zones as well as incentivize Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to build value chains around mining and agriculture.

Stop illicit financial flows

Government has to strengthen the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) and the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). It is

high time government introduce the use digital tools to monitor mineral exports and forex revenues as well as implement tougher penalties for smuggling and tax evasion.

Reinvest in development

A Sovereign Wealth Fund modeled after Botswana or Norway need to be created and mandate that a portion of all resource revenues is allocated to; education, health care, infrastructure, and social protection

Mobilize domestic resources

Government to formalize the informal sector through inclusive policies and incentives as well as introduce diaspora bonds and community development trusts. There is need to strengthen tax compliance and broaden the tax base.

Reducing debt reliance through structural reforms

Even as Zimbabwe works toward resource-led growth, it must:

- Limit future borrowing to strategic, growth-driven projects.
- Adhere to an independent debt sustainability framework.
- Re-engage with international creditors for debt restructuring

or forgiveness, contingent on governance reforms.

- Protect pro-poor spending during any fiscal consolidation process.

The role of citizens, civil society, and parliament

No debt or development strategy will succeed without:

- Civic engagement and transparency in public finance decisions.
- Parliamentary scrutiny of loans, contracts, and budgets.
- Active monitoring by civil society to hold leaders accountable.

Conclusion

Zimbabwe's debt crisis is not just about numbers—it is about people. It is about children who cannot go to school because the education budget is cut. It is about patients dying in underfunded clinics while billions are lost through corruption and smuggling. And it is about future generations who may inherit a country drained of both wealth and hope. But Zimbabwe is not without options. By curbing excessive borrowing, leveraging its natural resource wealth more effectively, and committing to transparency, the country can break the debt-poverty cycle. A resource-based, inclusive development model is not only possible — it is necessary. Zimbabwe does not need to be rescued by lenders. It needs to be rebuilt by its own people, using its own resources, with integrity, vision, and justice at the core. Zimbabwe does not lack wealth — it lacks systems, trust, and accountability in how that wealth is managed. If the country could plug leakages, improve transparency, promote value addition, and reinvest resource revenues wisely, it would not need to borrow nearly as much, if at all. But achieving that requires deep institutional reform, political will, and citizen oversight

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Nandi-Ndaitwah Urges Young Women to Lead with Purpose, Defy Barriers, and Succeed Boldly

By Adonis Byemelwa



My election to the presidency was not because I am a woman but because I had a vision and had something to offer, says Namibian President Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah

It was more than just a speech; it was a call to purpose—sharp, grounded, and deeply personal. As visiting Namibian President Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah stood before a packed hall at the University of Dar es Salaam, she didn't merely discuss leadership.

She embodied it. Her message to young women—delivered without hesitation—was clear and unwavering: “You must not allow discouraging voices to derail your ambitions.”

Drawing from her own long and winding path to the presidency, Dr. Nandi-Ndaitwah pulled no punches. “Leadership is not a miracle,” she said. “It's not reserved for the chosen few. It is for those who have a vision and are willing to stay the course.”

The crowd, made up of students, scholars, and top officials, listened closely as she shared insights from her life in public service. It wasn't a tale of smooth ascents, but one of

persistent resolve in the face of doubt, resistance, and social expectations.

“Discipline,” she said, “is everything. If you want to lead, in any profession, you must be disciplined. You must be focused.” In a world where young people are often told to wait their turn, particularly women, her words served as both affirmation and challenge.

She spoke directly to those in the audience who have felt the sting of underestimation, the weight of silence in boardrooms, or the sting of rejection not for lack of talent, but because of gender. “We've seen women rise—Joyce Banda, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Sahle-Work Zewde, Samia Suluhu Hassan, and I. That list must grow,” she said, pausing to a wave of cheers and applause.

What was striking wasn't just her assertion of women's rightful place in leadership; it was the simplicity with which she delivered her truth. “My election to the presidency,”

she added, “was not because I am a woman. It was because I had a vision. I had something to offer.” And with that, the room seemed to lean in a little closer.

This wasn't rhetoric. It was a lived experience. It was the voice of someone who had walked the terrain she now urged others to cross.

Away from the lecture hall, her presence in Tanzania carried diplomatic weight too. During her two-day state visit, she held high-level talks with President Samia Suluhu Hassan at the State House in Dar es Salaam.

The two leaders struck a cordial and collaborative tone, speaking to the press with an air of shared purpose. “We've agreed to strengthen our economic ties,” President Samia announced. “There's so much potential between Tanzania and Namibia that has not yet been tapped.”

Dr. Nandi-Ndaitwah echoed this

sentiment, noting that Namibia would soon dispatch ministers responsible for industry and trade to explore development models and deepen economic cooperation. “This is how we grow together,” she said. “By learning from each other, by building bridges, not walls.”

Trade between the two countries has increased modestly, from 17 billion Tanzanian shillings in 2019 to 20 billion in 2023. Still, both leaders acknowledged that the figures fall short of what is possible. “Our private sectors must step up,” said President Samia. “They are central to generating employment and lifting people out of poverty.”

Among the tangible outcomes of the visit was a new educational partnership between the Open University of Tanzania and Namibia's Triumphant College, which will offer Kiswahili language courses. “Language is not just communication—it's connection,” said Dr. Nandi-Ndaitwah. “This initiative will help us deepen our ties and foster mutual understanding among our youth.”

The focus on youth and inclusivity remained front and center throughout the visit. “Our energy policies must also reflect this,” Dr. Nandi-Ndaitwah said, stressing the importance of a diversified energy mix to support regional development. Both leaders agreed on the urgency of investing in renewable energy and natural gas to ensure steady and affordable power for industries and communities across the region.

As the rain quietly fell in the Tanzanian capital during parts of the visit, it mirrored the quiet but powerful resonance of her words—words not wrapped in academic theory or diplomatic platitudes, but rooted in decades of activism, political engagement, and personal growth.

“We've come far,” she told the

audience at the university, “but we’re not yet where we need to be. And for that to happen, we need young people—especially young women—to step forward.”

The energy in the room didn’t wane as she closed her remarks. If anything, it built into something more urgent, more promising. She reminded the audience that societal barrier, though real, are not fixed. They can be broken, reshaped, and rebuilt. “Do not ask for permission to lead,” she said. “Prepare yourself and take your place. The continent needs you.”



We’ve come far, but we’re not yet where we need to be and for that to happen, we need young people—especially young women—to step forward, says Nandi Ndaitwah

It wasn’t just a lecture. It was a living example of what leadership looks like—an invitation to rise, to resist discouragement, and to redefine what power means in a continent still shedding the legacies of exclusion.

Through both her words and her presence, Dr. Nandi-Ndaitwah made one thing undeniable: the future of African leadership isn’t just about structures and systems. It’s about courage, clarity, and commitment. And more than ever, it’s about women daring to lead—on their terms.

Two Women in Power: Tanzania and Namibia Forge a Bold, Visionary, United Pan-African Future

By Adonis Byemelwa

The rains came gently in Dar es Salaam—soft, steady, and quiet. But inside the University of Dar es Salaam, the atmosphere was anything but calm. As Namibian President Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah stood before a hall brimming with students, academics, diplomats, and the press, she didn’t just deliver a speech. She delivered a spark.

Her words cut through the formality often expected at state events. “Leadership,” she said, looking out over a sea of young, attentive faces, “is not a miracle. It’s for those with vision, those who stay the course.”

It was more than inspiration; it was lived truth. Her presence in Tanzania from May 20 to 21, 2025, marked her first official visit since being sworn in as Namibia’s first female President two months earlier.

It was also an unmistakable moment of symbolic and strategic importance—two female heads of state, President Nandi-Ndaitwah and her host President Samia Suluhu Hassan, carving out new contours of leadership in a continent still learning to trust women in power.

Their meeting, full of warmth and quiet strength, was a study in shared



Their meeting, full of warmth and quiet strength, was a study in shared purpose. Photo courtesy.

purpose. One had risen from the coastlines of Zanzibar to become East Africa’s most prominent female voice.

The other, shaped by the winds of Namibia’s liberation history and a lifetime of public service, now led a nation rich in minerals, culture, and potential. Together, they stood not as anomalies, but as affirmations—reminders that African women are no longer waiting to be handed the reins. “We’ve seen women rise—Joyce

Banda, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Sahle-Work Zewde, Samia Suluhu Hassan, and I,” President Nandi-Ndaitwah told the university audience. “That list must grow.”

It was a state visit heavy with substance, not just symbolism. At the State House (Ikulu), the two Presidents discussed cooperation in trade, education, energy, and heritage. Their nations share deep historical ties—born in the fires of

Africa’s anti-colonial struggles—and their friendship has matured over the decades. But this visit was about more than nostalgia. It was about what’s next.

Tanzania, with a GDP of roughly \$85 billion, is one of East Africa’s economic engines, driven by agriculture, natural gas, and a steadily expanding manufacturing base. Namibia, smaller in population and economy—boasting a GDP of around \$13.5 billion—is nonetheless strategically vital. Rich in diamonds, uranium, and now green hydrogen potential, Namibia is becoming a player to watch on the continent’s energy map.

What do these nations have to learn from each other? Plenty.

“Namibia may be smaller in economic scale, but its leadership in renewable energy and mining governance is something we admire,” President Samia told reporters after the bilateral talks. “There is space here for shared innovation.”

President Nandi-Ndaitwah agreed, emphasizing collaboration over competition. “This is how we grow together,” she said. “By building bridges, not walls. We are not only neighbors in history, but partners in

progress.”

They signed agreements to boost trade, which has seen only modest growth, from 17 billion Tanzanian shillings in 2019 to 20 billion in 2023. Both leaders admitted those numbers were underwhelming. “Our private sectors must step up,” President Samia said. “They are central to generating employment and lifting our people out of poverty.”

And then came the heart of the visit: a shared commitment to education and youth. One of the visit’s most tangible outcomes was a new academic partnership between the Open University of Tanzania and Namibia’s Triumphant College, which will begin offering Kiswahili courses in Namibia.

“Language is not just a tool for communication—it is a bridge of understanding,” President Nandi-Ndaitwah said. “Our youth must know each other’s histories, cultures, and hopes. That’s where true Pan-Africanism begins.”

Her speech at the University of Dar es Salaam was electric. It didn’t feel like diplomacy; it felt like a reckoning. Addressing a packed hall, she spoke candidly to young women, telling them not to wait for permission to lead.

“You must not allow discouraging voices to derail your ambitions,” she said. “Discipline is everything. If you want to lead anywhere, in any field, you must be focused.”

It wasn’t lofty or detached. It was the voice of someone who had fought



Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, President of Namibia, warmly reunited with her former 1980s Magomeni Mikumi neighbor, Salama Salehe Ghulum, in Dar es Salaam. Photo courtesy

her way to the top in a system not designed for her. Her anecdotes were sharp, intimate. She spoke of being doubted, second-guessed, underestimated—not for lack of talent, but for being a woman. And then she smiled, as if to say: but here I am.

The moment that brought many to tears was her reunion with Salama Salehe Ghulum—Mama Salehe—her former neighbor in the 1980s when she lived in Magomeni Mikumi, Dar es Salaam. It was unscripted and deeply personal, a reminder that history is built not just in parliaments and press rooms, but in kitchens, courtyards, and quiet friendships.

“Seeing Mama Salehe again,” she said later, “was a full-circle moment.

This country gave me shelter, dignity, and purpose when my own was still fighting for freedom.”

Critics and commentators across Africa took note. Pan-African think tank researcher Dr. Isaac Biko described the visit as “an affirmation of soft power diplomacy driven by vision, not bravado.”

“We often talk about Africa’s rising,” he said. “But if we’re honest, that rising must be rooted in inclusive leadership. These two leaders—Samia and Nandi-Ndaitwah—are not just figureheads. They’re architects of something deeper.”

One area of real urgency discussed was energy. Namibia’s booming interest in green hydrogen and Tanzania’s vast reserves of natural gas have the potential to create a regional energy corridor—one based not on exploitation, but on sustainable planning.

“Our energy future must reflect our demographics—young, ambitious, and hungry for opportunities,” said President Nandi-Ndaitwah. “We can no longer afford to be energy poor on a continent so rich.”

That sentiment echoed across the diplomatic meetings and into private sector roundtables. Namibia is already attracting European interest in its hydrogen projects, while Tanzania is steadily advancing its LNG infrastructure. The synergy is

real and timely.

As the visit drew to a close, many in Tanzania reflected not just on what was said, but how it was said. There was no overt fanfare, no grandstanding. Instead, there was clarity. A kind of political elegance.

“We’ve come far,” President Nandi-Ndaitwah said in her closing remarks, “but we’re not yet where we need to be. And for that to happen, we need young people—especially young women—to step forward.” She paused, letting the silence stretch long enough for the message to sink in.

“Do not ask for permission to lead,” she added. “Prepare yourself and take your place. The continent needs you.”

It was a call—sharp, grounded, and unapologetically urgent.

As her motorcade left the university and later departed from Dar es Salaam, what lingered wasn’t just the diplomatic agreements or the photo ops. It was a shift. A sense that the conversation about leadership in Africa had moved beyond glass ceilings to blueprints.

Real blueprints. Ones drawn with conviction, collaboration, and courage. And at the center of that blueprint, two women stood tall—leaders not just of their countries, but of a continent still daring to imagine what’s possible.



Do not ask for permission to lead, prepare yourself and take your place, the continent needs you, President Nandi Ndaitwah said.

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Cameroon's Ailing Democracy Needs Urgent Reforms - Akere Muna

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

BUEA, Cameroon – 72-year-old Barrister Akere Muna, an anti-corruption activist and former president of Transparency International Cameroon says he's not just campaigning for power, but for what he calls a five-year "transition mandate" to reset a nation battered by decades of stagnation, corruption, and unresolved conflict.

In an exclusive interview with DW Africa, Akere Muna, a member of the African Union High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, laid out his vision for a new Cameroon, arguing that his age and experience are strengths, not setbacks, in a system that desperately needs institutional reform.

"I'm not trying to be a king. I'm trying to serve," Akere Muna said. "And we need a transition, which I put at five years, less than the seven years that will permit us to reset the system. And then everybody can come in and I will leave after that."

"So what I'm proposing today is different from what I did in 2018. And of course, now we also have a critical situation with a president who is seven years older. We have seen the country stagnate. We have seen the institutions stagnate. And we've seen corruption grow to amazing levels."

From Civil Society to Coalition Candidate

Although he once bowed out of the 2018 Presidential race in favour of fellow opposition figure Maurice Kamto, Akere Muna says the stakes in 2025 are too high for hesitation. This time, he is running under the banner of a coalition led by political parties like UNIVER and UPC, alongside smaller civil society groups. His candidacy, they argue, is uniquely positioned to address two of Cameroon's most critical issues: the lingering Anglophone crisis and systemic corruption.



Barrister Akere Muna is one of the leading candidates in the 2025 Cameroon presidential elections.

"Thirty years of my life I've spent in the fight against corruption," Muna told DW Africa, referencing his experience in institutions like Transparency International, the African Union's Economic and Social Council, and the African Peer Review Mechanism. "It would be a shame not to use that knowledge now."

"30 years of my life I've spent in the fight against corruption. So I just thought, it would be a shame for me not to use the knowledge I have amassed in many institutions against corruption, governance, and for governance, be it the African Peer Review Mechanism. I wound up being the chair of the Eminent Persons Panel, be it at the level of the African Union, where I was president of the very first elected Economic and Social Council, be it in Transparency International for nine years, where I was the international vice president, be it in the International Anti-Corruption Council, where I was chair."

"I have this experience of governance and fighting against

corruption. And that is really what is killing our country. There are two things our country needs to solve; Corruption and the problem in the North West and South West. These go to the heart of the kind of debacle in which our country is. And because of that, I think the elections of 2025 are critical. So, that's why I think that 2018 was 2018, and 2025, I'm all in," Akere Muna added.

A Divided Opposition, A Unified Goal?

Cameroon's opposition has historically struggled to present a united front, often undermined by fragmented loyalties and personal ambitions. Asked whether he would support another opposition candidate like Kamto again, Muna did not rule it out – but questioned the logic of using 2018 results as a political barometer in 2025.

"I am from the civil society; I don't have a political party. So when you talk about the fragmentation of political parties, I agree with you, it doesn't concern me. I'm willing to

work with whomever," Akere Muna said. "Elections are not frozen. The electorate evolves. You can't assume someone who voted seven years ago will vote the same way today."

Muna also pointed out that while Kamto boycotted the 2020 parliamentary elections, other opposition figures like Cabral Libii and his PCRN party secured over 500 elected officials – a metric he believes matters more than past presidential vote shares. In contrast, the ruling CPDM boasts over 9,000 municipal councillors.

"I am open to working with any opposition figure. But we must be realistic about who brings what to the table," he emphasized. "We have planned to make sure that we are present now in 360 districts of the country and we are now slowly making sure that we can fit in all the polling stations. So that's a strategy. I'm proposing a transition government that will come in, do all the institutional reform, and do the audit."

A Transition Blueprint

At the heart of Muna’s campaign is a promise to deliver a transition government that would last just five years, during which he vows to carry out sweeping institutional reforms, address the Anglophone crisis, integrate the diaspora into political life, and audit the country’s financial books.

Key points of his plan include: declaring assets, dual nationality, nationwide consultation, and Inclusive dialogue – a new platform for solving the Anglophone conflict, possibly with third-party mediation.

“I know what the problems are. The government is disconnected from the people. My mission is to restore that connection and institutional accountability,” he said.

Some Cameroonians have argued that the country needs younger leadership. But Muna dismissed concerns over his age, especially when compared to the sitting president, Paul Biya, who is 92 and has been in power for over four decades.

“When I was in secondary school, they said we were the future. I’m 72 now – am I still the future?” he quipped. “Age should not be the focus. The question is: who can get the job done, and who has the experience to reset the system?”

The former chairman of the



At the heart of Muna’s campaign is a promise to deliver a transition government that would last just five years, during which he vows to carry out sweeping institutional reforms

International Anti-corruption Conference did not mince words when assessing President Biya’s decade year rule. “Nepotism is on the rise. Corruption is on the rise. Infrastructure is destroyed,” Akere Muna said.

“If you were eight years old when

Biya became president, today you’re 50? You’ve been to primary school, secondary school, university, and married. You’re five years from retirement. These people, between eight and 50, what systems do they know? What choices can they determine?”

In a country where political loyalty is deeply entrenched, and electoral transparency is often questioned, the real test may not just be Akere Muna’s vision – but whether Cameroonians can rally around a transitional leader for lasting change.

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Rain, Resistance, and the Renaissance: Thabo Mbeki Ignites Africa's Youth at UDSM

By Adonis Byemelwa

By the time the skies burst open over the Nkrumah Hall at the University of Dar es Salaam on May 21st, 2025, the atmosphere was already charged. Security personnel flanked the campus, the rhythmic hum of anticipation thickened by an ensemble of South African and Tanzanian student songs, swirling together in one pan-African harmony.

Over 30 students and professors from the University of South Africa (UNISA) had traveled alongside the former South African president, Dr. Thabo Mbeki, whose entrance was anything but ordinary. With academic robes, clenched fists, and weathered voices belting songs of struggle and unity, the crowd didn't merely await a speech—they awaited a reckoning.

The rain was a fitting metaphor. A continent soaked in potential but weathered by corrosion—corruption, complacency, and the decaying credibility of institutions. But beneath the storm, a rebirth was brewing. And Mbeki, now deep into his senior years but unbowed, took to the podium like a prophet returning to the village square.

In a gathering marked by thunder both literal and rhetorical, the



Former South African President admitted the ANC had drifted from its founding principles. Photo courtesy.

former statesman peeled back layers of African malaise with surgical precision. Instead of relying on the laurels of nostalgia or past revolutions, Mbeki did what few elder statesmen dare: he placed the burden and hope of the continent squarely on the shoulders of its youth.

«Africa's youth are not the future—they are the present,» he seemed to say, without needing to spell it out. If they remain engaged, their collective voice could transcend the stale, senior-dominated narrative that has paralyzed reform. His challenge was sharp: stop waiting for the veterans. Become the vanguard.

With a voice heavy from decades in the trenches of politics, diplomacy, and intellectual warfare, Mbeki lamented the current erosion of democratic principles. «We make policies on paper—gender equality, youth empowerment, accountability, development—but where is the action?» he asked. It was less a rhetorical question and more a slap in the face of a continent often rich in declarations but poor in delivery.

Mbeki's tone was far from nostalgic. If anything, it carried the weight of betrayal. He recounted how, four years prior, he was sought by Ivory Coast's opposition parties to intervene in a political standoff. His

guidance was ignored by the ruling class, resulting in a flawed election.

His caution to the African Union not to send observers was disregarded. The AU, he argued, had become complicit in a cycle of legitimizing illegitimacy. «We cry unity, yet disrespect the very principles meant to guide us,» he warned.

That skepticism extended to African institutions at large. ECOSOC, AU agencies, trade unions—entities meant to represent the voice of the people—have devolved into dysfunctional echoes of their founding missions. They arrive with fanfare, Mbeki quipped, only to vanish with the first winds of accountability.

But even as he critiqued, Mbeki's remarks brimmed with reverence for what once was. He called for a return to the foundational ethics of Pan-Africanism—an ideology that once galvanized freedom fighters like Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X.

Citing Tanzanian scholar and political science PhD student Sabato



UDSM Chancellor Jakaya Kikwete recalled their fearless student days—challenging British envoys and chanting against apartheid. Photo courtesy

Nyamsenda, Mbeki pressed for a renaissance that echoed the energy of black American liberation, this time rooted firmly in African soil.

He recalled, with evident disappointment, an invitation by the Chama Cha Mapinduzi Youth League in Zanzibar. There, he observed youth jostling for power not with ideas or ideology, but with money. “Even the youth are buying votes,” he noted with visible disgust, calling it a betrayal of the liberation movements that birthed modern African states. “This is not democracy. This is decay.”

And he didn’t spare his party, the ANC. Mbeki confessed that the once-revolutionary party now seemed adrift from its founding principles, veterans clinging to relevance while offering little in terms of substantive progress.

His prescription for the future was simple but powerful: crave skills, yes—but never at the expense of values. «We need loyalty to principles, not just personalities,» he urged, calling for a revival of the ethics that defined Julius Nyerere’s vision—equality, integrity, and the rule of law.

The former president of Tanzania and current UDSM Chancellor, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, delivered an equally rousing vote of thanks. He painted Mbeki not only as a man of vision, but as a “citadel of change.”

Kikwete reminisced about his student days in the same university halls, leading protests against colonial figures and authoritarian leaders. “Back then, education was a weapon for freedom. Today, it must be a tool for transformation,” he said, drawing roaring applause. He honored the university’s legacy in nurturing change agents like Professor Issa Shivji, who was also present in the hall.

Kikwete recounted the boldness of their era—when students dared to challenge British envoys, chant against apartheid, and embrace revolutionary ideals without fear. “Now, with independence achieved,



If this symposium was any indication, Africa’s rebirth isn’t a far-off dream. Photo courtesy.

what do we do with this freedom?” he asked pointedly. “We need an African renaissance, driven not by slogans, but by substance. And the youth must lead it.”

Indeed, the symposium, themed “The State of the Continent: Reigniting the African Renaissance,” became a crucible for critical reflection. UDSM Vice Chancellor Prof. William Anangisye praised the Thabo Mbeki Foundation’s commitment to scholarship, urging Africa to define its own intellectual path rather than mimic Western templates. His message was clear: African problems need African scholarship.

From the KIONGOZI Institute, Kadari Singo emphasized the need for leadership rooted in values, while also urging African governments to keep pace with global technological shifts like AI and cloud computing. For him, change would not come by rhetoric alone but through modernized, responsive leadership that can marry tradition with innovation.

Dr. Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, the firebrand political thinker from South Africa, implored Africans to reclaim their

villages, not as symbols of poverty but as bastions of ecological harmony. “Why should we wait for white tourists to tell us our nature is beautiful?” he asked.

“Let us use our resources to uplift ourselves. Trade among ourselves. Educate ourselves—not to escape poverty, but to fight it.” He didn’t spare global politics either, pointing to Trump’s trade tariffs as an example of economic nationalism that Africa must learn from. Simon Shayo from Kiongozi Institute took a more grassroots view, arguing that real progress must begin with basic needs—maternal health, access to clean water, and walkable distances for women and children. “If Africa still struggles with these in 2025,” he said, “how dare we talk about a renaissance?”

And as the day wore on, as discussions moved from colonial scars to digital futures, from slogans to accountability, one message became indisputably clear: the time for polite panels is over. Action is overdue.

Sabato Nyamsenda, youthful but

incisive, embodied the fusion of old ideals and new urgency. “Agenda 2063? That’s too late. We need an Agenda Now. Today’s youth must claim the same radical energy that once stirred the diaspora into revolt,” he declared.

By the end of the stormy day, Mbeki had become more than a guest of honor. He was crowned an agent of change by none other than Kikwete himself. The honor wasn’t ceremonial. It was a mantle passed, a call resounded, a torch relit. As students, scholars, and leaders filed out of the hall—some still soaked from the earlier rain—it wasn’t just clothes that were drenched, but spirits, soaked in the call for a new dawn.

If this symposium was any indication, Africa’s rebirth isn’t a far-off dream. It’s a storm already gathering. And this time, its thunder comes not from podiums, but from the determined footsteps of its youth, finally moving to reclaim their continent, not someday, but now.



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“Divided They Fall”

An Essay on Africa’s Fragmented Response to Great Power Competition

We face neither East nor West; we face forward - Kwame Nkrumah(1960)

Introduction: The Langley Controversy and Africa’s Strategic Paradox

On 3 April 2025, General Michael Langley’s testimony to the United States (U.S.) Senate Armed Services Committee crystallised a profound contradiction in contemporary international relations. When questioned about Chinese trade practices in Africa, the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) commander accused Burkina Faso’s President Ibrahim Traoré of diverting the nation’s \$4 billion gold reserves «just in exchange to protect the junta regime» rather than benefiting his people.

The accusation sparked immediate continental outrage. Burkina Faso’s government condemned Langley’s statements as «regrettable» and «gravely inaccurate,» denouncing what they characterised as a transparent provocation against the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). Reports suggest General Langley may be quietly retracting his controversial statement, but Burkinabe officials are reportedly pressuring him to clarify publicly. Yet beyond the diplomatic fury lies a more troubling question: why could a single American General’s comments generate such upheaval across a continent that controls thirty per cent of global critical minerals and represents twenty-five per cent of UN member states?

The answer reveals Africa’s central strategic paradox. Despite enormous demographic and resource advantages, the continent cannot translate these into meaningful geopolitical influence. Instead, Africa finds itself caught between aspirational declarations of strategic autonomy and the operational



Gen Michael Langley (L), President Ibrahim Traoré (R)–Dubawa

reality of strategic opportunism—a fragmented approach that external powers readily exploit.

Langley’s characterisation of Africa as a «nexus theatre» where global interests converge reflects how major powers increasingly view the continent through zero-sum competitive lenses. Meanwhile, Africa’s response—fragmented outrage without coordinated action, perhaps under the mistaken belief this concerned a military regime’s unconstitutionality—exemplifies the very strategic incoherence that perpetuates its marginalisation. This contradiction is particularly ironic given Africa’s rejection of Western paternalism while maintaining institutional dependencies on Western financial support, even as it pursues alternative partnerships with China, Russia, and middle powers like Turkey.

This essay examines how Africa’s fragmented approach to great power competition undermines its aspirations for strategic autonomy

and continental relevance. It begins by exploring the immediate geopolitical controversy ignited by U.S. AFRICOM Commander General Langley’s testimony, before turning to Africa’s broader strategic paradox. It then analyses key models of coherence and divergence, such as Burkina Faso’s post-coup pursuit of economic and cultural nationalism under Captain Traoré and the disintegration of regional coordination exemplified by the ECOWAS rupture. It further assesses the continent’s fragmented engagement strategies, contrasting them with isolated successes like AfCFTA and the coordinated COVID-15 vaccine response. Drawing from these insights, it proposes a comprehensive reform agenda, including institutional, economic, and security coordination mechanisms, aimed at transforming Africa’s structural disunity into collective geopolitical power. Ultimately, the essay argues that only a decisive commitment to binding continental coordination can reverse Africa’s

marginalisation and secure its place as an autonomous force in a multipolar world.

Traoré’s Sovereign Development Model: A Case Study in Economic and Cultural Nationalism

But assuming without admitting that General Langley’s allegation is true, would Captain Traoré be the first and only African kleptocrat or a regime-state-centric leader, and why are America and France fixated on him and the three West African countries? Regardless, Traoré’s leadership in Burkina Faso offers a compelling example of strategic coherence and resource sovereignty despite externally induced existential threats. Since assuming power in September 2022, his administration has pursued post-colonial autonomy through economic nationalism, cultural nationalism and geopolitical realignment, countering narratives like General Langley’s by demonstrating how African states can



Burkina Faso President Ibrahim Traoré inaugurates second tomato processing factory, Dec. 2024-WA Weekly

reclaim control over development trajectories.

At the heart of Traoré’s model is the nationalisation of extractive industries. Creating a state-owned mining company and the mandate for local gold refining have shifted mineral control from foreign firms to the state. A compulsory 15 per cent state stake in mining ventures and mandatory training for Burkinabè workers further entrench this pivot toward resource sovereignty.

This economic nationalism extends to infrastructure development aligned with national needs. The Electricity Sector Support Project has brought power to 50 villages and 40 communities through extensive grid expansion, while solar lamp distribution and water infrastructure have benefited over 1.2 million people. The Sahel Irrigation Initiative has also expanded food security by supporting 21,000 farmers across 1,300 hectares of newly irrigated land.

It also extends to comprehensive value-added industrialisation aligned with national needs, including multiple processing facilities to transform raw materials locally—three tomato processing factories with combined investments exceeding \$30 million in Bobo-Dioulasso, Yako, and Tenkodogo to process over 200 tonnes daily

and eliminate reliance on imported tomato paste, and Burkina Faso’s second cotton processing factory and the first National Artisanal Cotton Processing Support Centre, a \$50 million investment to retain cotton industry profits locally rather than exporting raw materials.

Geopolitically, Traoré’s government has redefined Burkina Faso’s alliances. His expulsion of French forces and pivot to Russian military cooperation, alongside the formation of the AES with Mali and Niger, signal a rejection of neo-colonial security arrangements in favour of sovereignty-affirming partnerships. This reflects a Pan-Africanist and Afrocentric orientation rooted in regional solidarity and strategic independence.

The Traoré model shows that African states can adopt development paths based on resource control, infrastructure sovereignty, and geopolitical self-determination. While questions about long-term sustainability and political stability remain, it marks a significant departure from externally driven paradigms and offers a tangible alternative for African post-colonial governance.

Africa’s Strategic Significance in Contemporary Geopolitics: U.S. Perspectives

General Langley’s April 2025 testimony before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee underscores a significant shift in how the U.S. views Africa’s role in global affairs—moving beyond traditional development paradigms to a complex blend of demographic, economic, strategic, and security considerations. Africa is no longer seen merely as a recipient of aid but as a critical player in shaping the 21st-century geopolitical landscape.

At the heart of this recalibration is Africa’s demographic and economic emergence. With its population projected to account for 25 per cent of the global total by 2050 and currently home to the world’s largest youth demographic, the continent is becoming a dynamic engine of global labour, consumption, and innovation. Rapid urbanisation and sustained economic growth—reflected in the presence of 11 African economies among the world’s 20 fastest-growing in 2024—further reinforce this trend. Combined with its 54 votes in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, Africa’s demographic weight is translating into greater influence in multilateral governance structures.

However, this growing importance is being reframed through a lens of great power rivalry. Langley characterises Africa as a “nexus

theatre,” where the strategic interests of the U.S., China, and Russia increasingly collide. Within this framework, partnerships are seen less as vehicles for mutual development and more as instruments in a global zero-sum game. This competitive posture echoes Cold War containment logic, risking the reduction of African states to passive theatres of proxy influence rather than active partners in shaping their own destinies.

A major driver of this rivalry is Africa’s immense resource wealth. Central and Southern Africa are rich in critical minerals essential for emerging technologies, many of which underpin modern defence and energy systems. With China dominating global mineral processing, the U.S. views African access as vital to ensuring secure and diversified supply chains. Resource security thus emerges as a core motive in America’s strategic calculus, with Africa framed as both opportunity and vulnerability in an era of technological competition.

Security concerns provide the final—and perhaps most entrenched—pillar of U.S. engagement. Langley invoked the threat of ISIS and al-Qaeda’s expansion in Africa as a direct risk to U.S. homeland security, justifying ongoing military presence and bilateral security partnerships. Counterterrorism thus remains a potent rationale for maintaining influence, reinforcing U.S. military engagement under the guise of mutual security interests.

Together, these four dimensions—demographics, great power rivalry, resource competition, and counterterrorism—reveal a complex and at times contradictory U.S. approach to Africa. They offer Africa both leverage and risk. While the continent’s growing population and resource endowments create opportunities for more equitable partnerships, the framing of Africa as a strategic prize rather than a sovereign actor threatens to entrench dependency and erode agency. For African states, the challenge will be to navigate this landscape with clarity and cohesion, leveraging



USMC Gen Micheal Langley & Royal Moroccan Armed Forces IG Maj Gen Mohammed Berrid, attending Exercise African Lion 21, May 2025-AP.

demographic and economic capital while resisting being drawn into the gravitational pull of external rivalries. Africa's future global agency will depend on its ability to convert its strategic significance into sustainable prosperity on its own terms.

Strategic Divergence and Continental Disunity: Mapping Africa's Fragmented External Engagement in a Competitive World

Africa's engagement with the global order has grown increasingly complex and fragmented. Rather than projecting a coherent continental strategy, African states have adopted diverse regional and national postures, often at odds with each other. This lack of coordination undermines Africa's potential leverage in international affairs and exposes the continent to strategic manipulation by external powers. This section explores the patterns of divergence, the implications for Africa's strategic coherence, and more unified global engagement prospects.

At the regional level, Africa's external alignments reflect four broad strategic orientations. In the Sahel, the emergence of the Alliance of Sahel States— comprising Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger—has marked a decisive turn towards anti-Western, pro- Russian military partnerships. This realignment has been part of

a broader Russian strategy, which now includes military cooperation agreements with 33 African countries. In East Africa, countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia have adopted a model of balanced multi-alignment, simultaneously engaging with China, the U.S., and other global actors to maximise diplomatic flexibility and preserve policy autonomy.

Southern African states, on the other hand, maintain pragmatic economic partnerships with China, focusing primarily on infrastructure development and trade. These engagements vary in depth, with some states demonstrating a higher degree of economic dependency than others. Meanwhile, North African countries largely sustain their historical ties with the European Union, albeit with growing efforts to diversify partnerships beyond traditional Western actors. Collectively, these varied alignments reflect not strategic coordination but the absence of a unified continental posture, weakening Africa's collective voice in a multipolar world.

Beyond these regional orientations, individual African countries have crafted distinct diplomatic strategies based on their unique political circumstances and ambitions. Kenya provides a prime example of strategic balancing, maintaining relationships with the U.S., China, and the European Union while leveraging

its regional stability to negotiate favourable terms without overreliance on any single actor. Mali, by contrast, has undertaken a sweeping ideological realignment, expelling French forces, rejecting the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and deepening military ties with Russia. Egypt has embraced a form of geostrategic hedging, simultaneously cultivating U.S. aid, Russian security partnerships, and Gulf investment through a highly transactional foreign policy approach. Burkina Faso, under the leadership of Captain Ibrahim Traoré (and the AES leaders in general), is advancing more structured forms of economic and cultural nationalism, focused on sovereign resource management and a deliberate retreat from external dependency. See table 1

These national strategies, while rational from a domestic standpoint, collectively contribute to a broader pattern of strategic incoherence. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Africa's approach to resource diplomacy. Despite holding over 30 per cent of global reserves of critical minerals, African countries rarely negotiate as a bloc. Instead, they compete individually for bilateral agreements at international summits in Washington, Beijing, and Moscow. This fragmented approach significantly reduces Africa's bargaining power, dilutes its

geopolitical influence, and reinforces patterns of dependency that favour external actors.

A particularly stark illustration of this fragmentation occurred in January 2024, when Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger formally withdrew from ECOWAS. This marked a profound rupture in West Africa's institutional architecture. ECOWAS, long seen as a pillar of regional integration, had facilitated trade, coordinated security interventions, and provided a platform for diplomatic consensus. The exit of three member states—choosing military alignment with Russia over multilateral cooperation—exposed the vulnerability of even Africa's most mature regional bodies to unilateralism and ideological divergence. For Nigeria, the region's largest economic and demographic power, the challenge now lies in navigating fractured regional alignments while preserving what remains of ECOWAS' influence, as the bloc is expected to revitalise its reform agendas.

This case encapsulates the broader problem facing Africa's international engagement: structural disunity. Competing ideologies, colonial-era linguistic divides, unaligned national interests, and the institutional weakness of continental bodies have resulted in a patchwork of 54 divergent foreign policy strategies. While global powers such as China publish coordinated Africa strategies and approach the continent with clear geopolitical intent, Africa lacks a comparable collective framework. This asymmetry (Figure 1) leaves African states vulnerable to divide-and-rule tactics and diminishes their ability to shape the terms of engagement.

Yet, the narrative of fragmentation is not without counterpoints. Africa has shown, in moments of necessity, that collective action is achievable. The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)—the world's largest free trade bloc by membership—is a landmark achievement in regional economic integration. Similarly,

the African Union's coordinated response to the COVID-15 pandemic, particularly through the African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT) and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), demonstrated effective health diplomacy and logistical collaboration. These initiatives prove that when political will converges with institutional clarity, Africa is capable of meaningful unity.

Underlying this structural problem is a deeper conceptual divide. While global powers often frame their engagement with Africa through a lens of strategic competition—focusing on resource access, security footprints, and geopolitical positioning—African states articulate aspirations for partnerships grounded in mutual benefit, national sovereignty, and sustainable development. This vision is commendable, but it is consistently undermined by internal divisions. The absence of unified messaging, coherent regional strategies, and consolidated negotiation platforms allows external actors to exploit

Africa's fissures, often engaging individual states on terms that reinforce inequality and dependency.

In conclusion, Africa's strategic divergence is not a foregone conclusion. The continent has already demonstrated that coordinated action is possible when shared interests are prioritised. However, moving from episodic cooperation to sustained strategic coherence will require a decisive shift away from bilateral opportunism and towards institutionalised collective engagement. If Africa is to convert its demographic and resource advantages into geopolitical power, it must embrace unity not just as a rhetorical ideal, but as a strategic imperative.

Strategic Recommendations: Transforming Fragmentation into Continental Power

Africa's continued strategic fragmentation poses a serious obstacle to its emergence as a coherent global actor. While endowed with considerable demographic and

Country	Strategic Model	Partners Engaged	Policy Approach
Kenya	Multi-alignment	US, China, EU	Strategic Balancing—Chatham House Brookings, & Kenyan foreign policy briefs.
Egypt	Geostrategic Hedging	US, Russia, Gulf States	Transactional Diplomacy—SIPRI, Carnegie ME Centre, & WB data.
Mali	Ideological Realignment	Russia, AES	Anti-Western Pivot AJ, BBC, & Crisis Group
Rwanda	Western-aligned	UK, US, EU	Developmental Authoritarianism—Economist, & OECD reports.
B/Faso	Economic Nationalism	Russia, AES	Resource Sovereignty—Reuters, Jeune Afrique, & Africa Confidential.

Table 1: Strategic Models by Countries. Source: Compiled by the author

resource advantages, the continent's uncoordinated external engagement leaves it vulnerable to manipulation, dependency, and marginalisation. Achieving genuine strategic autonomy will require a decisive shift from individual opportunism to binding continental coordination, anchored in institutional transformation and supported by grassroots momentum.

Intellectual Decolonisation and African-Centred Vision

Correcting Africa's trajectory demands intellectual rebalancing—restoring African voices and perspectives long sidelined in strategic discourse. The conspicuous absence of African epistemologies and current strategic thinkers like Thabo Mbeki (South Africa), Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), P.L.O. Lumumba (Kenya), Arikana Chihombori-Ruwa (Zimbabwe), Carlos Lopes (Guinea-Bissau/Cape Verde), Julius Malema (South Africa), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria), among others, who have long championed African agency, continental integration, and post-colonial sovereignty must be corrected. Strategic autonomy cannot be achieved through foreign analysis alone; it requires reclaiming Africa's own intellectual sovereignty and anchoring continental reform in African-authored visions rather than risk reproducing dependency through borrowed frameworks.

This intellectual transformation must inform all subsequent

institutional and policy reforms, ensuring that Africa's strategic framework emerges from African rather than external conceptual foundations.

Leadership Reform and Continental Identity

Leadership transformation provides the essential foundation for institutional coordination. A merit-based system of continental appointments, reinforced by Leadership Academies that train cadres in pan-African coordination, would shift focus from national prestige to continental strategy. This requires abandoning post-colonial institutional affiliations, such as the Commonwealth or Francophonie, to strengthen a unified African identity and reduce external influence.

Without leaders committed to continental over national optimisation, institutional reforms will remain hollow shells. Continental leadership must be restructured from «contests of prestige and clout» to merit-based appointments focused on coordination capability, with institutional mechanisms that prioritise continental rather than national strategic objectives.

Bottom-Up Mobilisation and Civil Society Engagement

Institutions alone cannot drive transformation. Durable change must rise from below, grounded in the creativity and activism of Africa's youth, civil society, and

entrepreneurial networks, to end the legitimisation of pillage. Pan-African initiatives like AfriLabs, the African Youth Charter implementation network, Senegal's «Y'en a Marre,» Burkina Faso's «Balai Citoyen,» «Filimbi» and «La Lucha» in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and AfCFTA-aligned small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) platforms demonstrate how bottom-up energy can shape continental discourse, sustain reform, and reinforce integration in practice, underpinned by societal awakening to Western hegemonic exploitation.

True autonomy will emerge only when empowered citizens and responsive institutions evolve together, linking top-down coordination with bottom-up mobilisation. This co-evolution between grassroots movements and institutional reform ensures that continental integration reflects popular aspirations rather than elite interests.

Binding Continental Coordination Mechanisms

At the heart of institutional transformation lies the need for credible and enforceable architecture. A Continental Strategic Council should be established to provide the foundation for unified engagement with external powers, equipped with graduated sanctions for non-compliance and financial incentives for coordination. Unlike existing AU structures that rely on consensus without consequences, this body must possess enforcement powers that make coordination profitable and fragmentation costly.

This council must transcend voluntary cooperation characterising current continental institutions, possessing mandatory participation requirements and mechanisms to prevent individual countries from pursuing separate arrangements that undermine collective positions.

Financial Independence and Resource Sovereignty

An African Monetary and Development Fund represents

the most crucial element of institutional reform, capitalising on the continent's resource wealth to provide development financing without conditionalities that perpetuate external donor dependence. Continental institutions cannot achieve genuine sovereignty while remaining «dependent on Western financial support.» This fund must eliminate external dependency by leveraging Africa's own natural resources for continental development priorities.

A Continental Resource Authority should coordinate the extraction and marketing of Africa's critical minerals through collective bargaining and standardised pricing. This transforms Africa's control over thirty per cent of global critical minerals from fragmented competition into unified leverage, enabling the continent to demand partnership terms that reflect its collective strength rather than allowing external powers to exploit individual vulnerabilities.

Economic Integration and Value Creation

Africa must legislate significant value addition of raw materials before export and enforce compliance through collective economic sanctions. Countries violating these requirements must face continental economic consequences, ensuring standards that prioritise African economic development over external extraction interests. This shifts the continent from commodity supplier to manufacturer through coordinated policy implementation.

Economic integration must be deepened through accelerated AfCFTA implementation, guided by binding timelines and harmonised policies across Regional Economic Coordination Zones. This prevents external powers from exploiting individual markets while creating the scale necessary for meaningful economic independence. A Continental Infrastructure Master Plan should prioritise intra-African connectivity over externally driven projects designed for extraction, supporting development that serves

African rather than foreign interests.

Coordinated External Engagement

Africa's approach to international partnerships must be restructured to prioritise unified positions over fragmented bilateral deals. Continental Partnership Frameworks should replace the proliferation of «Africa Plus One» summits, ensuring that major agreements—whether in infrastructure, mining, or security—are negotiated collectively. This shifts engagement from fifty-four individual negotiations to coordinated continental engagement that maximises collective leverage.

A Continental Strategic Assessment Centre should analyse global actors' strategies and coordinate Africa's response, helping the continent engage proactively rather than reactively. This corrects the current information asymmetry where «China regularly releases comprehensive Africa strategy documents» while «African countries have little coherent strategy» for engaging major powers, ensuring unified analysis and coordinated responses to external strategic initiatives.

Security Coordination and Collective Defence

Security coordination requires transformation from bilateral to binding multilateral defence agreements. This prevents individual countries from pursuing separate military partnerships with external powers while eliminating opportunities for external actors to exploit individual security vulnerabilities. Continental security frameworks must prioritise collective defence over individual arrangements that fragment continental coherence.

Binding mutual defence obligations must replace the current patchwork of bilateral security arrangements that allow external powers to play African countries against each other through competing military partnerships.

Transparency and Accountability Systems

Binding governance standards

must mandate transparency in external partnerships, with compulsory disclosure of major deals to prevent fragmentation of continental coherence through secretive bilateral arrangements. This creates institutional mechanisms that prioritise continental over individual country optimisation while ensuring that external engagements serve collective rather than narrow national interests.

Continental accountability mechanisms must require disclosure of all major external partnerships and prevent agreements that undermine continental coordination through mandatory review processes for significant bilateral arrangements.

Implementation Strategy and Political Economy

Implementation requires acknowledging that current elites often benefit from fragmentation through bilateral deals and personal relationships with external powers. Success demands creating incentive structures that make coordination more profitable than individual opportunism, while building coalitions of leaders who prioritise long-term continental influence over short-term bilateral gains.

Rather than attempting simultaneous transformation across all sectors, implementation should follow strategic sequencing: beginning with resource coordination and financial independence, progressing to economic integration, then advancing to political and security coordination. This approach builds success momentum while addressing the most feasible reforms first, accommodating regional variation while maintaining continental coherence.

Conclusion: From Fragmentation to Strategic Autonomy

Africa's current strategic fragmentation undermines its potential to emerge as a coherent and influential actor in global affairs. Despite its demographic and resource advantages, the continent remains

divided, with individual states pursuing uncoordinated partnerships that reinforce dependency and diminish collective agency. Transforming this fragmentation into continental power demands bold institutional reforms, unified external engagement strategies, and a reimagined partnership between states and society.

At the core of this transformation lies the need for binding institutional mechanisms that go beyond the voluntary cooperation characterising existing continental frameworks. A Continental Strategic Council with enforcement powers and financial incentives for compliance would replace toothless consensus-based systems with credible coordination. Equally urgent is the creation of a Continental Resource Authority to manage Africa's vast critical mineral wealth through collective bargaining and standardised pricing, turning fragmented competition into unified strategic leverage. To achieve true autonomy, the continent must also establish an African Monetary and Development Fund that finances development free of conditionalities, thus reducing dependence on external financial systems.

Ultimately, the choice before Africa is stark but achievable: embrace strategic coordination and continental sovereignty or remain a fragmented terrain for external manipulation. Success requires institutional frameworks that make unity rewarding and disunity costly. Without such transformation, Africa will continue to be approached by global powers not as a collective force but as a collection of disparate states, perpetuating its marginalisation in an increasingly multipolar world. What is needed is not only a new architecture of power, but also the political will to subordinate national opportunism to shared continental purpose, embracing Kwame Nkrumah's vision of non-alignment.

The time to choose between fragmentation and future relevance is not now; it is long overdue.



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Ghana: The Curious Case of CJ, Gertrude Torkornoo

By Charles Prempeh

The law is the law and a foregone silenced petition in context

Is the current Chief Justice (CJ) matter in Ghana a locus classicus of the proverbial Chief Rabbi or Pope visiting a terminally sick person on admission? To simply put this: How would a terminally ill person on admission receive the news of a Chief Rabbi or Pope carrying with him an oil of anointing? Or what would it mean for one's fate to hang in the air (not in balance) when a cognate Pentecostal religious organization that organizes annual intercessory prayers for the country decides to exercise no-prayer vigil (at least not advertised publicly, as usual) over the current impasse of an embattled CJ that is believed by a session of Ghanaians to constitute a serious matter of public and trans-national interest?

Just by way of context, in Ghana, nearly all major issues of public governance tend to elicit intercessory prayer from religious figures/organizations (not least AGLOW International) and statements from the country's traditional figures and the clergy. As non-partisan stakeholders, significantly holding the fortress of the country's evolving democratic governance away from needless politicization and erosion, it is expected that chiefs and the clergy would offer policy statements when they see threats to Ghana's peace. Prayers would have also been expected.

However, the suspension of Ghana's CJ alleged in the camp of a section of Ghanaians to constitute a major fault line in the country's public governance, has seen a visible mum from the chiefs and clergy. Why are the chiefs and clergy publicly quiet over the issue, if indeed it is an important one? Why is that while the Catholic Bishops were very much interested in challenging the government of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo over two entangled issues of: Galamsey (illegal mining) and frustrating the passage of law against sexual perversion, the same did not talk about the CJ (in



Since Ghana's CJ, Gertrude Torkornoo was suspended by the country's president in April 2025, the issue of rule of law has resurfaced in animating popular discourse

whose bosom the issue of the intended law against sexual perversion was discussed/if not frustrated), but rather illegal mining when they met the current President (John Dramani Mahama) on 24 May 2025?

In this article, I respond to the issue by choreographing myself tactically from the current petitions that compels the CJ to live by the law is the law (lex est lex). Instead, I focus on talking about a foregone petition that was issued to the CJ and Ghana's erstwhile President, Nana Akufo-Addo long before the New Patriotic Party (NPP) miserably lost the December 2024 elections and long before we got to where we currently find ourselves: A situation that has drawn out the hypocrisy of fraternal legal associations that pretend to have an imagined mandate to speak for Ghanaian citizens.

To begin with: Since Ghana's CJ, Gertrude Torkornoo was suspended by the country's president over prima facie evidence in petitions against her in April 2025, the issue of rule of law has resurfaced in animating popular discourse. What has perhaps infused a humorization into an otherwise supposed serious subject of public

and international interest in the discussion stems from the embattled CJ's presumed mantra that the law is the law to index the impartiality of the judiciary.

I should believe that the CJ is identifiable with the mantra largely because of the widely perceived sinking integrity of the judiciary arm of government. This perception of a corrupt and biased judiciary elicited response from a section of Ghanaians who profiled the Supreme Court, inter alia as, The Unanimous FC. Justifying the tag, it is alleged that members of the bench, administratively headed by the CJ, have often ruled unanimously in favour of the NPP in almost all major legal disputes between the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and NPP. This was while the NPP was in government (from 7 January 2018 to 7 January 2024). It was, therefore, the presumable predictability of the court's unidirectional ruling that earned it the nickname of Unanimous FC.

Given the charge against the Court, was the CJ not right to have insisted that the law is the law to signal and similarly affirm that public governance is more about rationality

and impartiality, than emotionality and prejudices? Also, is the 'law is the law' mantra not a trans-national democratic ethos anchor upon which the concept of separation of powers and its concurrent checks and balances rest? Whereas, there is hardly any equivocation about the fecundity of the mantra, Ghana's judiciary has an ideological disposition that varies significantly from other jurisdictions, particularly the United States of America. For example, in the US, presidents appoint Justices to the Supreme Court, whose ideological learning is generally known to the public. So, the direction of their gavel in cases with ideological undertones, such as abortion and minority sexual rights, is generally predictable. Meanwhile, much as the justices of Ghana's SC are similarly appointed by the President in consultation with other relevant stakeholders, the ideological stance of Ghana's justices is differently expressed. The judicial philosophy of the justices appointed to the SC could be ascertained when they are vetted before the country's people's representatives, the legislature.

However, it is often difficult to tell

whether these justices once approved would live by the dictum, the “law is the law.” This is also because Ghanaian justices appear (and would affirm that they are) politically non-aligned. Second, Ghana’s judicial philosophy and its entanglement with public governance is not as visibly discernible as that of the US. So, whereas in both the US and Ghana, the appointment of justices to the Supreme Court is necessarily a political project, the presumption of non-politically aligned justices in the case of Ghana rather blurs (or so it is believed by a section of the public) the impartiality of the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, whether in the US or Ghana, the judiciary is an important arm of government with justices charged with a sacred duty to uphold the rule of law (or the law is the law).

Meanwhile, in relation to the Ghanaian context, the country’s president has or appears to have enormous power to act in office as a real sovereign. The president appoints nearly all the major figures in public office, including the CJ. At the same time, the CJ is expected to put his or her office into good use, fulfilling his or her rule by ensuring checks and balances. Clouded with significant power, the CJ is expected to protect the judiciary interest of Ghanaians by checking any spillover effects of excessive power in the hands of the president. The circumstance under which the CJ is appointed makes his or her work quite challenging. The circumstances, to recap, include the fact that he or she is appointed by the president and second, he or she is expected to present an image of a political neophyte, if not entirely a political virgin, who sees no political party but the law is the law.

But as human as the CJ is and the fact that he or she is appointed by the president, how could the CJ negative his or her loyalty of a usually expected reciprocal “thank you” to the appointing officer and still hold absolute fidelity to what constitutes citizens, the Constitution of Ghana? Can the CJ comfortably bite the finger that fed him or her? Well, whether in the case of America



President John Mahama suspended Chief Justice Torkornoo barely four months after she swore him into office

or Ghana, the question holds true to all justices because of shared human nature that seeks to please onlookers and also look good in the eyes of a political sovereign. But, both in the US and Ghana, there may be some differences. US has a significant decline in the economy of affection that sometimes breeds corruption in countries like Ghana, where kinship ties have resonance with political ties. The threats of poverty, complexities of ethnocentrism, ideological globalism, and lack of real faith in the hereafter tend to weigh heavily on Ghana’s CJ in the administration of justice, concretized in the law is the law.

Before the current case of suspension that has saddled the CJ, it was not lost on me that she would be in trouble when power changed hands from the NPP to the NDC. I could also predict that when she fell in trouble, she would not enjoy the usual support and sympathy of major stakeholders of public governance, specifically chiefs/traditional leaders, and the clergy. All of this also meant predictably that she would have to fall on a section of the Ghana Bar Association and the NPP. To be sure, apart from snippets of the petitions against the CJ that are in public knowledge, I have in truth and honesty not read the petitions against the CJ.

Besides, what I have read about

the petitions is not immensely of direct concern to me. So, whereas ordinarily I should be concerned when the CJ is alleged to be complicit in different shades of corruption, I am not impassionate to discuss that. This is because issues of corruption are certainly not new in public governance in Ghana or anywhere in the world.

My interest is rather about why the CJ appears to be enjoying support from leading members of the NPP and a section of the GBA and not the traditional leaders and the clergy. As at the time of writing (26 May 2025), none of these institutions of public governance have publicly commented on the subject. On 24 April 2025, the Ghana Catholic Bishop’s Conference called on Ghana’s president. In the course of their meeting, as it was reported, the bishops talked about the Galamsey (illegal, destructive gold mining), not the burning issues that have entangled the CJ. Meanwhile, towards the end of last year, the bishops similarly addressed the issue of Galamsey, issued a statement charging the erstwhile NPP government of not having done enough to end the canker. The bishops also charged the regime (specifically Ghana’s former president Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo) of intentionally refusing to respect the people’s representative (legislature)

who had passed a law to protect the family values of the country.

So, my own understanding of the current issue, as I have said is measured from the visible silence of non-politically exposed stakeholders of public governance. They are of concern to me because nothing significantly would change about the NPP and NDC and their sometimes overly politicization of public governance. Thus, my own position on the embattled CJ is about a foregone petition that was sent to her (while she did not pay attention enough to have acted pre-emptively). I discuss the subject in relation to how the CJ for whatever reasons decided to needlessly allow the SC to be encumbered with an important legislation in Ghana.

Here is what I provide as a context: In the midst of a country submerged in the oversized impact of the coronavirus, a group of foreign diplomats decided to audaciously offer publicity to the opening of an LGBTQT recreation centre in the country. They were supported by a minority elite from Ghana’s institutions of higher learning and civil society organisations who had staged themselves or imagined themselves to be advocates of minority sexual rights. The whole scenario was both confusing and annoying, and an act of provocation to an overwhelming

number of Ghanaians who have already vowed to resist any form of ideological imperialism.

Already, it is trite knowledge that America's first president of African descent, Barack Obama became the first president of the US to leverage the near universal presence of America's USAID to promote minority sexual rights across the world, particularly so-named developing economies in sub-Saharan Africa. Donald Trump rolled Obama's agenda back. But Biden, following after the footsteps of Obama, under whose regime he (Biden) served as Vice President, revitalised it. So, since Obama's time, the overwhelming religious public in Ghana has been very vigilant in mounting a guardrail against US Democratic-led ideological inanity. Another country that has gone the woke way of the US is the United Kingdom under whose Prime Minister, David Cameron, Ghana and many other countries were threatened with liberalising minority sexual rights or lose an imagined British aid, as if an island is wealthier than an empire.

In all of this, Ghana's political leaders, since the time of JA Kuffuor and Atta Mills, had identified with the constitution of Ghana to resist. But everything predictably changed following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. Since a person's true character is known in times of crisis, the Akufo-Addo's character became manifestly known during the covid-19 pandemic. Needless to say, the economic and social crises instigated by the pandemic reshaped national and international politics. Of course, crisis remains a major resource to reinvent the wheel of imperialism and also a test of resilience. So, during the covid crisis, America's Biden and other imperial stooges decided to test the resilience of Ghanaians. Biden decided to shove the LGBTQ agenda down the throat of Ghanaians mediated by local agents who called themselves allies. Allies against their own people and their cultural aspirations.

To be sure, whereas people claiming

to be sexually different have been known in Ghana for long, marriage is a sociogenic practice, a reason for which the advocacy of minority sexual rights is foreign and an index of antinomianism in Ghana's religious public. Meanwhile, since sexuality is largely a private matter, most Ghanaians don't care about what consenting adults do in the closet. So, just like the rest of the world, it is the so-called coming out of the closet and its attending self-imposed cultural confusion that had sustained the resistance and occasional regrettable overt and covert assault on members of the LGBTQ community. Knowing the alertness of Ghana's public against LGBTQ issue, the wanton impudent of the foreign diplomats angst Ghanaians. The result of that was the passage of The Human Sexual Rights and Family Value Act of Ghana, sponsored as a bi-partisan private member bill.

After about 3 years of back and forth and judicious application of best laws globally on the subject, Ghana's parliament on 28 February 2024 passed the bill awaiting presidential assent. It was at this point that Ghana's Akufo-Addo and the CJ were perceived to have gone against the people of Ghana, ably represented by the Speaker of Parliament. It is usually said that when the gods want to kill their victim, they first make him mad. Otherwise, why would the President and the CJ have forgotten that Ghana subsisted on an unprecedented hung parliament headed by a veteran politician and legal luminary from a constituted opposition party?

Anyhow, soon after the Bill was passed, Nana Akufo-Addo was reported to have presumptuously signalled that he was not ready to sign because a legal challenge had been raised in court where the CJ governed. Already, in an international interview, he had indicated that Ghana's hard-line position on the LGBTQ community was also a case of lack of a formidable counter-opposition. So, two persons and 18 academics constituted an enormous majority to be praised by the president when he was interviewed on Kwame Sefa Kai's

programme on 22 October 2021.

Meanwhile, the contention brought before the CJ's jurisdiction was miserably unconstitutional, as it amounted to interfering with the work of the legislature. This is because the work of the legislature, specifically passage of law, cannot be truncated (as the process continues) until it is assented by the president. Was this basic knowledge in the study of Government not known to the CJ? If she pretentiously didn't know, why didn't she listen to the speaker's lawyer on it? Why did she allow such a frivolous case to drag for so long undermining the law is the law? Was it the behaviour of the CJ that emboldened and amplified the arrogance of executive power to the point that a relative of the president operating in the corridors of power could order Parliament about? Didn't the CJ see tension surging in the country whenever the useless legal challenge of the Bill was made public? Why didn't both the president and the law heed the counsel and incessant plea of traditional authorities and the clergy?

Graciously, just a few weeks to the country's major elections, what appeared like a simple matter came up in the country's parliament. It was about the supposed suspension of 4 members of parliament (3 of whom were NPP) who were said to be seeking reelection into parliament on a party ticket, other than the means they had entered the House. Knowing they would suffer the predicaments of being in an opposition, the NPP run to the law is the law who quickly empaneled and expectedly ruled in favour of the NPP. Knowing and recognising power was at play, the Speaker, as a mature, seasoned politician, acted and responded, accordingly. He decided to mind his business by keeping the fortress of his share of governance away from open rape from the President, his relative, and the law is the law. When the NDC and a cross-section of Ghanaians charged the CJ of acting hypocritically and needlessly doing the bidding of the NPP, she decided to open her court to decide on the needless,

unconstitutional case against the family law on 18 December. Remember Ghana's elections were on 7 December. Everything showed something was in the belly waiting to be born. In response, the speaker said he would also open his parliament after elections.

In the end, the NPP had the CJ's proverbial pyrrhic victory, while they were to suffer an unprecedented electoral defeat in Ghana's fourth Republic. Not only was the president's arrogance of not handing over power to the opposition overturned by an act of God and voters' anger, but also the law is the law is now standing in trial. She is being defended from expected quarters, including a section of the GBA who are calling for laws to be passed to govern the president's exercise of discretionary power. I beg to ask: Is that proposal not only a subversion of reasoning and a subtle attack on the exercise of discretionary power? Could the CJ have avoided all these dramas? Potentially yes, if she had acted according to the law is the law, the constitution of what constitutes the people of Ghana is not a political figure in Ghana and/or abroad.

To conclude: Politicians have a permanent interest, not permanent friends. They will use you, if you allow them, pretend to defend you in crisis only to damn you as their legal representative. But pre-political institutions, faith and family (the clergy and traditional figures), have both permanent interest and friends. Because unlike law that undergirds politics, love undergirds both faith and family. A major and respected legal figure, illegally imprisoned, came out through a necessary legal challenge to say that he admired the family more than party when he was in prison. Is it not the case that if only pre-political institutions were loudly talking, the law is the law would have had some respite?

Charles Prempeh, PhD, Research Fellow, Centre for Cultural and African Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana_____

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Kenyan Literary Icon Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o Dies Aged 87

By Samuel Ouma

Kenya and the literary world are mourning the death of one of Africa's most celebrated writers and intellectuals, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who breathed his last on May 28, 2025, at the age of 87.

His death marks the end of an era for African literature. Still, his legacy will endure through his groundbreaking works and unwavering advocacy for African languages, culture, and identity.

Ngũgĩ died while undergoing treatment in Buford, Georgia, in the United States, where he had been residing. His daughter, Wanjiku wa Ngũgĩ, confirmed his death via a Social Media post.

"It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing of our dad, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o this Wednesday morning, 28th May 2025. He lived a full life, fought a good fight. As was his last wish, let's celebrate his life and his work," said Wanjiku wa Ngugi.

Born in 1938 in Kamĩrĩthũ village in colonial Kenya, Ngũgĩ was originally named James Ngugi before renouncing his Christian name in the 1970s as part of his commitment to decolonizing the African mind. He was the fifth child of his father's third wife and grew up in a large family that lived through the turmoil of British colonial rule and the Mau Mau uprising.



Ngugi's death marks the end of an era for African literature, Photo credit Nation Media Group.

Ngũgĩ burst onto the literary scene in the early 1960s with his debut novel *Weep Not, Child* (1964), the first major novel in English by an East African author. The book, which tells the story of a young boy caught in the crossfire of the Mau Mau rebellion, gained international acclaim for its vivid portrayal of colonial injustice and African resilience.

He followed it with other powerful novels including *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), and *Petals of Blood* (1977). These works not only solidified his place as a literary giant but also positioned him as a sharp critic of neo-colonialism, political corruption, and inequality in post-independence Kenya.

In 1977, Ngũgĩ co-wrote the controversial play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I Will Marry When I Want*) in his native Kikuyu language. The play's themes of social injustice and exploitation drew the ire of the Kenyan government, leading to his arrest and imprisonment without trial.

It was during this time in Kamiti Maximum Prison that he made a radical shift — vowing never to write fiction in English again. He instead embraced indigenous languages, asserting that true liberation could only come when Africans reclaimed their cultural roots.

From that point on, Ngũgĩ authored several works in Kikuyu, including *Caitani Mũtharaba-Inĩ* (*Devil on the Cross*, 1980) and *Matigari* (1986). His essays, particularly the seminal *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), became foundational texts for scholars of postcolonial studies and African literature. In it, Ngũgĩ argues that language is a key instrument of colonization and calls for the use of African languages in education and literary expression.

Exiled from Kenya for many years due to threats against his life, Ngũgĩ lived and worked abroad, holding teaching positions at universities including Yale, New York University, and the University of California, Irvine. Despite his distance from home, he remained deeply connected to Kenya. He continued to comment on its political and social developments.

In 2006, Ngũgĩ published *Wizard of the Crow*, a sprawling satire of dictatorship and global capitalism, written originally in Kikuyu and later translated into English. His 2018 prison memoir, *Wrestling with the Devil*, detailed his time in detention and his unwavering belief in the power of literature to confront tyranny.

His 2020 poetic work, *The Perfect Nine*, was longlisted for the prestigious International Booker Prize — the first nomination for a work written in an indigenous African language. It was a testament to his lifelong mission to elevate African languages on the global literary stage.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o leaves behind a towering legacy as a writer, activist, and teacher who challenged generations to rethink colonial narratives, embrace African identity, and fight for justice through the written word. He is survived by his wife, Njeeri, and several children, including writers Mukoma and Wanjiku wa Ngũgĩ.



Exiled from Kenya for many years due to threats against his life, Ngũgĩ lived and worked abroad, holding teaching positions at prestigious universities across the globe.

Decolonising Minds, Building Bridges: The Ngũgĩ-Chakava Partnership

By Francis B. Nyamnjoh, University of Cape Town*

The remarkable, decades-long partnership between Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1938-2025), East Africa's leading novelist and advocate for linguistic decolonisation, and Henry Chakava (1946-2024), "the father of Kenyan publishing", transcended a mere business arrangement. It evolved into a shared ideological struggle against colonial legacies and repressive governments, championing African voices and indigenous language publishing. Their intertwined lives and collaborative efforts profoundly shaped African literature published on the continent and serve as a powerful embodiment of "Incompleteness and Conviviality" as a framework for an inclusive humanity. Notably, Chakava and Ngũgĩ, deeply connected throughout their careers, passed away one year apart from each other.

Incompleteness and Conviviality: A Guiding Framework

Incompleteness is not a flaw, but a fundamental aspect of human existence that drives connection, highlighting the need for humility and an acknowledgment of our inherent limitations. No person, group, or society is entirely self-sufficient or possesses absolute knowledge. Conviviality is the active embrace of this incompleteness, encouraging connection and collaboration not to achieve a state of "completeness," but to become "more efficacious in their relationships and sociality". This framework champions interdependence and fosters an openness to diverse perspectives. The relation between Chakava and Ngũgĩ vividly illustrates these principles, demonstrating how acknowledging inherent limitations can foster powerful, mutually beneficial collaborations.

Foundations of a Partnership:



The lives and work of Henry Chakava and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o represent an unparalleled chapter in the history of African literature and publishing. Photo courtesy.

Early Influences and Shared Vision

The genesis of their relationship lies in post-independence Kenya, a period marked by both nationalistic aspirations and the lingering shadows of colonial influence. Chakava, rapidly ascending to Managing Director at Heinemann Educational Books (HEB) by 1976, began steering the company towards local production and indigenous language books, a significant departure from Western-influenced content. Concurrently, Ngũgĩ was emerging as a leading literary voice during the 1960s, with early English works like *Weep Not, Child* (1964) addressing the struggle for Kenyan independence. He also challenged the Eurocentric curriculum at the University of Nairobi, advocating for African literature to be central to study. Their professional relationship commenced early, with Chakava involved in publishing Ngũgĩ's works at Heinemann Educational Books. This initial, relatively stable platform, influenced by Heinemann's Chairman Alan Hill, allowed for African-centric

ideas to germinate and provided a crucial base for their later, more radical actions.

The Crucible of Repression: Challenging Legacies and Promoting Indigenous Voices

The mid-1970s marked a pivotal shift, transforming their relationship into a courageous alliance against state repression and for the radical decolonisation of African literature. In 1977, Ngũgĩ co-authored and produced *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I Will Marry When I Want*) in Gikuyu, a play that critically examined corruption and directly led to his detention without trial for a year. While imprisoned, Ngũgĩ made a "life-altering decision" to write exclusively in Gikuyu, famously penning *Caiaani Mutharabaini* (*Devil on the Cross*), the first modern novel written in Gikuyu, on toilet paper. This linguistic shift was a profound act of decolonisation, aimed at reconnecting with cultural roots, reaching a wider Kenyan audience, and asserting language as a fundamental carrier of culture. His seminal work, *Decolonising the*

Mind (1986), further articulated his stance, arguing for African-language literature as the "only authentic voice for Africans".

During this tumultuous period, Henry Chakava demonstrated extraordinary courage, risking his life to publish Ngũgĩ's controversial works, including *Decolonising the Mind*, and crucially, facilitating the publication of Gikuyu translations. Chakava's willingness to publish books with a "critical stance on local governments" and in "local languages," seen by authorities as "state-subversive," exposed him to significant personal and professional risks, including repeated threats. These decisions were inherently political acts of cultural and political resistance, demonstrating ideological alignment with Ngũgĩ's mission.

A further testament to Chakava's vision was the "indigenisation" of Heinemann into East African Educational Publishers (EAEP) in 1992, making it a "wholly Kenyan-owned company" and the "foremost African-owned publishing entity on the continent and globally". This

move was a direct response to the need for “indigenous publishing” and “publishing for the cultural liberation of the continent”. Chakava also founded crucial pan-African initiatives like the African Publishers Network (APNET), the African Publishing Institute (API), and the African Books Collective (ABC) to strengthen African publishing and distribution globally.

Ngũgĩ’s radical intellectual shift and his articulation of Decolonising the Mind relied heavily on Chakava’s willingness and ability to publish them, often against significant odds. Conversely, Chakava’s visionary commitment to indigenous publishing found its most potent expression in championing a writer like Ngũgĩ, who was pushing the boundaries of language and political critique. This reciprocal relationship highlights that transformative intellectual movements require practical champions and institutional support to move from abstract ideas to widespread impact. It is arguable that Chakava was indispensable to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o becoming the advocate and practitioner of African language literature and orality that he did. They “made each other” by embracing their mutual needs, leveraging their respective strengths, and aligning their ideological commitments.

Conviviality in Practice: Translation and Global Engagement

Ngũgĩ’s understanding of incompleteness and conviviality is

further evident in his willingness to have his novels translated into English and other colonial languages, despite his renowned advocacy for African language publishing and his initial publication of later works in Gikuyu. He personally translated his Gikuyu works, such as *Caitani Mutharabaini* and *Murogi wa Kagogo* into English (*Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow*), and *Matigari* was translated from Gikuyu by Wangui wa Goro. Henry Chakava also played a role in facilitating the translation of major titles from the Heinemann African Writers Series into Kiswahili, and some from Kiswahili into English, thus expanding accessibility. This approach suggests that Ngũgĩ’s “decolonisation of the mind” leaned less towards radical rupture and more towards conviviality and repair. By embracing translation, Ngũgĩ acknowledged the “incompleteness” of any single linguistic sphere, recognising that his message of decolonisation could achieve greater “potency” by reaching diverse audiences through multiple languages. This act of translation serves as a quintessential example of conviviality: a “reaching out” and an “encounter” that fosters dialogue and engagement across linguistic and cultural boundaries rather than promoting coercive conversion. It demonstrates a rejection of rigid dualisms and an openness to various forms of being, adaptable to context and necessity.

Ngũgĩ’s strategy was not to isolate African languages or create an

insular literary tradition; instead, it aimed to assert their centrality while actively participating in the interconnected global landscape. This nuanced position emphasises a vision of decolonisation that seeks to rebalance power and cultivate mutual respect, rather than simply reversing historical exclusions. It advocates for a more equitable and convivial global literary space, where African voices can “move the centre” of world literature by enriching the global literary landscape through their unique contributions and active engagement, rather than by severing existing ties. This was deeply rooted in his character, as James Ogude remarked: “As a person, Ngũgĩ was profoundly warm and down-to-earth, and always carried himself around with a deep sense of humility and ease, not to mention his infectious laughter and humour. He was simply ordinary – a man of the people”. As I’ve argued, incompleteness isn’t a weakness; it’s a powerful source of learning, growth, connection, and humility.

Enduring Legacy: A Blueprint for Cultural Liberation

The lives and work of Henry Chakava and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o represent an unparalleled chapter in the history of African literature and publishing. Their relationship, characterised by mutual respect, shared ideological commitment, and courageous defiance, profoundly reshaped the literary landscape of Kenya and the broader African

continent. Their individual incompleteness – the visionary writer needing a platform for his radical ideas, the pioneering publisher needing powerful narratives to fulfil his mission – converged to form a profoundly convivial partnership. This enabled them to navigate formidable state repression, challenge entrenched colonial legacies, and champion the voices of Africans, particularly through the vital medium of indigenous languages.

Their distinctive contributions – Chakava as the pragmatic architect of an indigenous publishing infrastructure and a pan-African network, and Ngũgĩ as the intellectual vanguard of linguistic decolonisation and grassroots cultural engagement – have left an enduring legacy. They not only brought African stories to the world but, crucially, empowered Africans to tell their own stories, in their own languages, on their own terms. Their partnership stands as a powerful testament to collaboration between a visionary writer and a courageous publisher in the face of political adversity and economic challenges. For future generations, their story offers a compelling blueprint for fostering cultural identity, promoting free expression, and building resilient literary ecosystems through incompleteness and conviviality, demonstrating that the future of African literature is, indeed, a convivial one.

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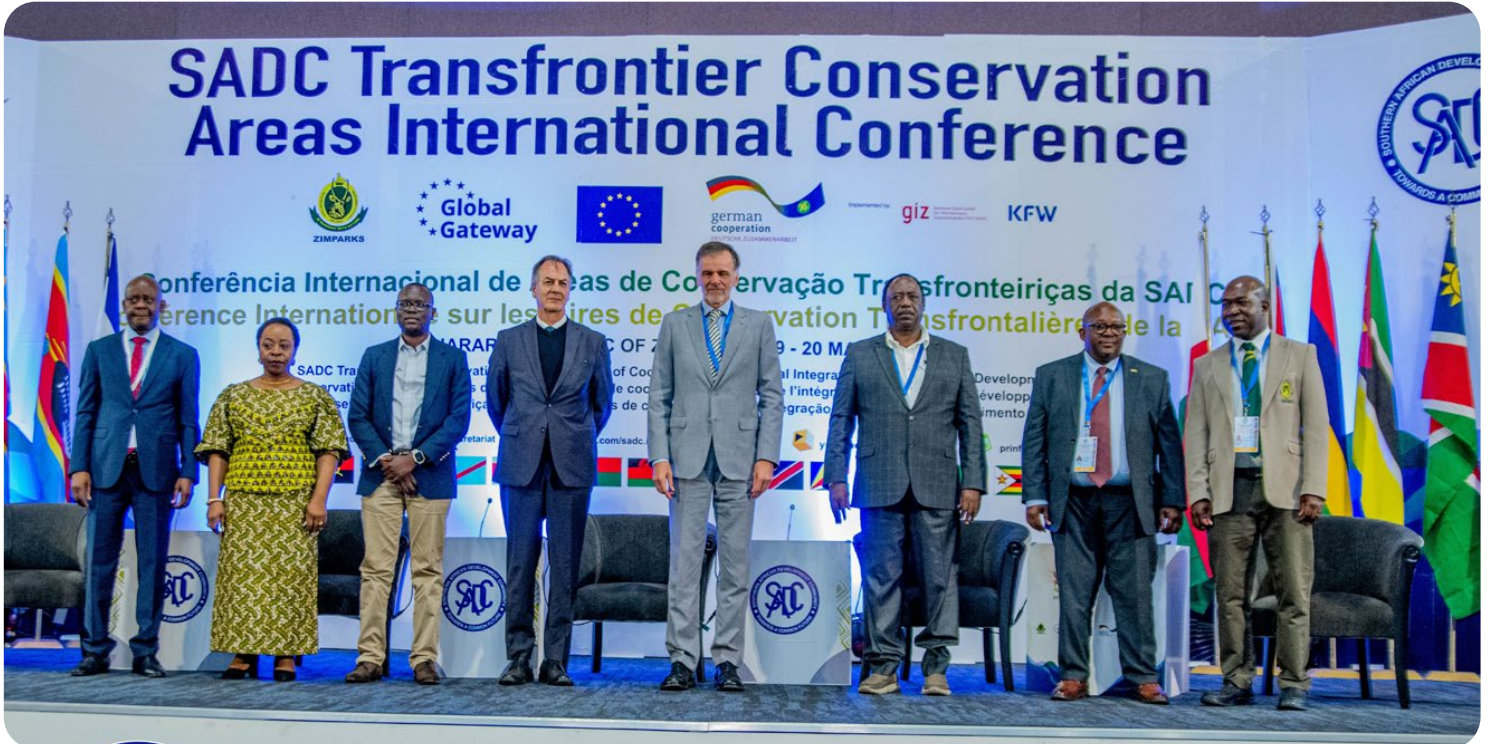
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Harare Hosts Inaugural SADC Transfrontier Conservation Summit

By Wallace Mawire



The Southern African Development Community (SADC) held its first-ever Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCA) conference starting 19 May 2025 at the Harare International Convention Centre. The weeklong summit running under the theme “SADC TFCAs: 25 Years of Cooperation for Regional Integration and Sustainable Development” drew over 500 delegates including government ministers, conservation experts, traditional leaders and community representatives. Opening ceremonies emphasized that the conference marks a quarter-century of cross-border conservation collaboration in southern Africa and serves as a prelude to a SADC Heads-of-State summit on TFCAs scheduled for 23 May. The gathering underscores the SADC region’s commitment to managing shared ecosystems – parks and wildlife corridors that span national borders – as engines of biodiversity protection, tourism and rural development.

In his keynote address, Zimbabwe’s Environment Ministry Permanent Secretary Tadeous Chifamba urged greater cooperation among partner countries and warned that “there can be no conservation without local communities” who have long protected the region’s natural resources. Speakers from the European Union and Germany praised the TFCA programme as a global model, noting that linking parks across borders is vital for both ecological resilience and regional integration. For example, EU cooperation chief Franck Porte hailed the conference as a “significant milestone,” emphasizing that cross-border parks “safeguard the planet’s rich natural heritage while driving regional integration”.

Key figures on the first day included WWF-Zimbabwe Director Itai Chibaya, who described TFCAs as “corridors of connectivity, linking nations, cultures, ecosystems, and economies”. Chibaya noted that when African nations unite to

manage nature together, “prosperity follows,” highlighting how integrated conservation zones can drive economic opportunity for border communities. Germany’s Ambassador Udo Volz also addressed delegates, noting that SADC’s transboundary parks contribute directly to global biodiversity goals like the “30 by 30” target of protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030.

Overall, ministerial officials from Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and others joined the conference, reflecting broad political backing for the 25-year-old TFCA initiative. A centerpiece of the summit was the announcement of concrete commitments and next steps. SADC Secretariat officials said the conference will produce an action plan to guide the TFCA Programme (2023–2033) and strengthen the legal and financial frameworks for park management. Attendees expect Heads of State to sign new agreements and joint management plans to establish additional TFCAs.

The Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Authority (ZimParks), one of the summit co-hosts, confirmed that outcomes will include binding accords on sustainable financing and expanded conservation areas.

In a related development, international donors reaffirmed their support: Germany noted that it has invested over €270 million in SADC TFCAs over 25 years, while the European Union announced a €33 million NaturAfrica programme to accelerate park development and community livelihoods in the region. These resources aim to leverage public-private partnerships and engage local people, addressing issues like human-wildlife conflict and ensuring rural communities benefit from tourism and ecosystem services.

As ZimParks spokesperson Tinashe Farawo noted, the summit is expected to “reinforce partnerships among member states” and integrate conservation into sustainable development planning. Indeed, Zimbabwe’s hosting of the conference,

under the leadership of President Emmerson Mnangagwa (also SADC chair), highlights the country's role in championing SADC-wide commitments to preserve wildlife and promote cross-border tourism.

The summit's discussions highlighted the regional impact of TFCAs on integration, climate resilience and local development. By linking thousands of square kilometers of protected areas, SADC's TFCAs aim to create ecological networks that buffer climate change and secure wildlife migration routes. The combined TFCA estate now exceeds 1.0 million km² – about 7% of the SADC land area – and includes terrestrial and marine parks across 16 countries. Such networks enhance freshwater security and biodiversity:

for example, the Kavango–Zambezi (KAZA) TFCA spans five countries and includes the KAZA UniVisa, a single-entry permit that facilitates tourism growth in the Zambezi basin.

Delegates noted that expanding eco-tourism is a priority, since many world-class tourist sites (from Victoria Falls to Gorongosa) are already in or near TFCA zones. Developing parks as unified destinations creates jobs and reduces poverty in rural areas. Cross-sector themes like forestry, fisheries and renewable energy also



featured on the agenda, reflecting the 2023–2033 TFCA strategy's emphasis on integrating blue and green economies, aligning with global goals (SDGs, AU Agenda 2063) and building climate-resilient landscapes. Overseeing all of this is a 25-year history of collaboration. The SADC TFCA initiative began with the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (Botswana–South Africa) in 2000, and today the region has formalized 13 TFCAs. These include famous conservation areas like the Great

Limpopo (Mozambique–Zimbabwe–South Africa), Lubombo (Eswatini–Mozambique–South Africa), and the KAZA TFCA (Angola–Botswana–Namibia–Zambia–Zimbabwe).

Over the years, SADC reports more than 15,000 animals translocated, joint anti-poaching patrols deployed, community co-management committees formed, and tourist infrastructure (airstrips, lodges and visa systems) opened within TFCAs. The Harare conference celebrated these successes and looked ahead

to the next phase of cooperation. Ministers said they will push for additional TFCAs, including new marine corridors and seek innovative financing to make the TFCA network self-sustaining. The summit also reaffirmed SADC's alignment with global targets: delegates connected the TFCA vision to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework's call for 30% conservation coverage by 2030.

In sum, the Harare summit underscored that transfrontier parks are much more than nature preserves. They are instruments of regional unity and development, tools for integrating economies, protecting climate-vulnerable ecosystems, and advancing sustainable tourism across borders. As SADC Environment officials put it, TFCA cooperation has become “a prime example to the rest of the world” of how African nations can “unite for nature” while lifting rural communities out of poverty. The gathering closed with firm pledges: SADC heads of state will meet in late May to endorse new binding agreements, action plans and financing mechanisms for TFCAs. Looking ahead, the conference set a clear course, through stronger integration, local empowerment, and international partnerships to expand the legacy of transboundary conservation in southern Africa for the next 25 years and beyond.



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Equatorial Guinea Secures Sovereignty Over Oil-Rich Islands in Landmark ICJ Ruling

By Badylon Kawanda Bakiman



In a significant development for West African geopolitics, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has ruled in favor of Equatorial Guinea in its longstanding territorial dispute with Gabon over three strategically located islands in the Gulf of Guinea. The decision, announced on May 19, 2025, grants Equatorial Guinea sovereignty over the islands of Mbanié, Cocotiers, and Conga, areas believed to be rich in oil reserves.

Historical Context of the Dispute

The contention over these islands dates back to the early 20th century. In 1900, colonial powers Spain and France signed a treaty delineating their respective territories in West Africa, assigning the disputed islands to Spanish control. Upon gaining independence from Spain in 1968, Equatorial Guinea inherited sovereignty over these islands. However, in 1972, Gabonese forces occupied Mbanié, leading to a protracted dispute between the two nations.

Gabon based its claim on the 1974 Bata Convention, an agreement that

purportedly transferred the islands to Gabon. Equatorial Guinea contested the validity of this document, arguing that it was neither signed nor original, and therefore lacked legal standing. The dispute intensified in the early 2000s following the discovery of potential oil reserves in the surrounding waters, prompting both countries to seek a resolution through the ICJ in 2016.

The ICJ's Ruling

After nearly a decade of deliberations, the ICJ concluded that the 1900 treaty between Spain and France remains the authoritative legal instrument governing the sovereignty of the islands. The court found that Equatorial Guinea, as the successor state to Spanish colonial holdings, holds rightful sovereignty over Mbanié, Cocotiers, and Conga. The 1974 Bata Convention was deemed not to constitute a binding treaty, primarily due to the absence of an original, signed document.

As a result of the ruling, Gabon is required to withdraw its military presence from Mbanié, which it has maintained since 1972. The decision is

final and binding, setting a precedent for the resolution of similar territorial disputes in the region.

Economic and Strategic Implications

The islands lie in an area of the Gulf of Guinea believed to be rich in hydrocarbons. Both Equatorial Guinea and Gabon have economies heavily reliant on oil revenues, and control over these islands could significantly impact their respective energy sectors.

Equatorial Guinea has experienced a substantial decline in oil production, with output dropping by 79% since its peak in 2015. The acquisition of these islands could provide new opportunities for exploration and development, potentially revitalizing the nation's oil industry.

Gabon, whose oil production has plateaued since 2016, faces the loss of potential future revenues from the disputed territories. The ruling may prompt the country to seek alternative avenues for economic diversification and energy development.

Diplomatic Reactions and Future Outlook

Equatorial Guinea has welcomed the ICJ's decision, viewing it as a validation of its longstanding claim. Vice Minister of Mines and Hydrocarbons, Domingo Mba Esono, emphasized the importance of the ruling in fostering peaceful relations and regional stability.

Gabon has yet to issue a comprehensive response to the verdict. Observers suggest that the country may seek to engage in diplomatic negotiations to address the implications of the ruling and explore potential collaborations in the Gulf of Guinea.

The ICJ's decision underscores the role of international legal institutions in resolving complex territorial disputes. It also highlights the enduring impact of colonial-era treaties on contemporary geopolitics in Africa. As Equatorial Guinea moves to assert its sovereignty over the islands, the region will be closely watching how both nations navigate the post-ruling landscape.

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