

No voice, no choice

To what degree are African priorities and concerns reflected in global agreements and policies? Not nearly enough, most would say, whether in trade, finance, food security, climate change, intellectual property, migration, security or other areas.

Is Africa to blame for this deficit? No. The IFIs and various economic and financial global fora have been crafted by, and for, the powerful. The emergence of the G20 is not necessarily going to help LDCs; it might even do the opposite. Big emerging economies, including South Africa, have their own interests.

But is Africa doing enough to claim its place? And when it has one, does it exploit this to full advantage? These are trickier questions, and the picture is mixed.

At Copenhagen, Africa's voice was strong, a result of high level political consultation, coordination among negotiators and many technical and policy meetings. Yes, there were problems, leading some to question whether Africa really had a common position – an ambitious goal in the first place. Hiccups are inevitable, and no different to what happens elsewhere – in Europe, for example. But the outcome included ambitious financial commitments in the Accord, and strong African representation in the newly formed [high level panel on climate change](#).

But often, when Africa has, wins or is offered a seat at the top tables, its positions and 'asks' of the international community are muddled, muffled or mired in politics – as the story around the third seat on the World Bank board illustrates.

Representation issues overshadow the imperative of using opportunities to advance an Africa agenda. The politics will not go away, and the AU and other regional bodies exist to manage them. Global economic, financial and development policies will continue to be crafted by the powerful and rich. But Africa can increase its chances of influencing global decisions, whether at G8/G20 meetings, on IFI boards and at issue specific summits, by having its own policy agenda and the means to communicate it.

Africa needs greater capacity to shape these economic and governance policies – whether at the national, continental or global level. Far more investment is needed in its own research capacity, and in mechanisms for translating evidence-based research into policy. That is the best basis for a stronger African voice.

News Overview

[Niger's new military leader, Salou Djibo promises to return the country to democracy](#) without a preset date while appointing an interim government consisting of five soldiers and five women.

[Dispute over the recent re-election of Faure Gnassingbe as Togo's President](#) demonstrates all the traits of what is emerging as a typically African experience of elections that have left nagging questions over the outcome, such as recent polls in Gabon, Congo Republic and Equatorial Guinea.

[Sudanese president reiterates NCP commitment to carry out the Comprehensive Peace Agreement](#) and that it will recognize results of the referendum on self-determination for South Sudan scheduled for Jan 2011; "...whether it is separation of the south or its unity with the north."

Nigeria's security forces are on high alert following the [attack that has claimed more than 300 lives in the northern city of Jos](#). The once popular tin city is fast becoming Nigeria's riot city as this is the second deadly attack since the beginning of this year. [The debate on the exact triggers of the conflict continues](#).

During his visit in Rwanda after restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries, [French President Sarkozy failed in voicing an apology for France's alleged role in the genocide](#) but recognized that France made mistakes and misjudged the situation. Almost simultaneously, [Agathe Habyarimana, the long wanted wife of the former Rwandan President, was arrested and put under judicial control after her asylum request failed to succeed](#).

[Bob Geldof calls for director of BBC World Service to be dismissed](#) following their investigation report that from 1984-85, [millions of dollars in western aid donated to fight famine in rebel-held northern Ethiopia was diverted to purchase weapons](#).

At the end of a high level conference on the development of agribusiness & agro industries in Africa convened in Abuja, [representatives from 44 African countries agree on an ambitious plan to generate employment, income and food security across the continent through agribusiness](#).

[A ground-breaking surgical process has been successfully performed on two Kenyan sisters](#), the first surgery of its kind in Africa, signals a bold new direction for patients with kidney failure.

The 4th world Conference for the Abolition of Death Penalty in Geneva revealed that [Africa's political leaders and populations are moving towards the abolition of death penalty](#). After Togo and Burundi which abolished it in 2009, Bénin will be the next one probably before June 2010. Assumptions are that DRC will follow (Article in French).

“Africa missed the industrial revolution, we can't afford to stand aside and let the communication revolution go by too.”

Felix Houphouet Boigny, first President of Côte d'Ivoire

G20 Update

AUSTRALIA

[The Australian government will partner with Human Assistance Initiative to help to train Sharia judicial officers in Nigeria](#)

CANADA

[Canadian government says it will freeze foreign-aid spending next year](#)

FRANCE

[France will assist Senegal in building a nuclear power plant for the generation of electricity](#)

[The French government has given \\$30m \(about Shs60 billion\) to Stanbic Bank Uganda, to enable it offer credit to the private sector](#)

GERMANY

[Germany and Cameroon sign bilateral agreements totaling nearly €50m](#)

[Germany will provide funding of more than \\$6m to help finance projects aimed at strengthening the food security of smallholders in Africa](#)

[The German government pledges assistance to southern African states in the fight against AIDS](#)

SPAIN

[Spain gives \\$150m loan offer to the largest wind power project in Africa that will provide clean power to Kenya's national electricity grid](#)

UNITED KINGDOM

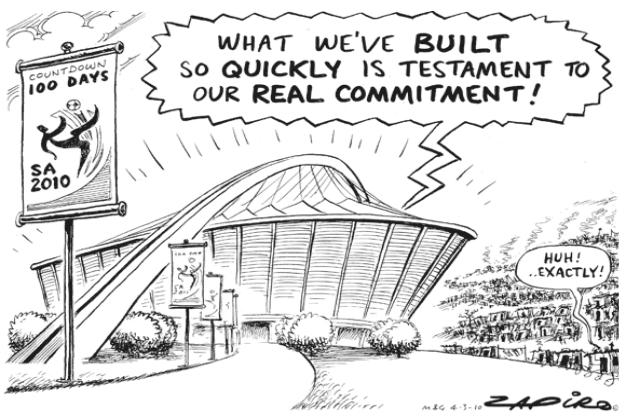
[DFID launches new education strategy to invest half of all bilateral education spending in the developing world](#)

[The UK government launches a "Business Innovation Facility" that aims to support the role of business in developing countries](#)

[DFID launches a £50m Climate & Development Knowledge Network to drive adaptation and mitigation policy development in developing countries](#)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

[The US to extend sanctions on Zimbabwe for another year due to the government's failure to resolve its ongoing political crisis](#)



Zapiro as featured in Mail & Guardian (South Africa): 4 March 2010

Multilateral Organizations

AfDB

[Outcome statement of the Joining up Africa \(African Regional Integration\) conference](#)

AU

[AU and the Australian Government review the AU Draft Guidelines for the Protection of Civilians in conflict zones and the steps taken to protect civilians in the African context](#)

EAC

[East Africa strikes free trade deal with the EU](#)

ECOWAS

[ECOWAS call on the sub-regional leaders to join the numeric Information, Communication and Technology revolution](#)

IFAD

[IFAD signs grant agreement of \\$8m to Gambia to support rural women and youth for agriculture production](#)

IMF

[IMF proposes insurance for low-income countries against global volatility and the effects of climate change](#)

[Africa is recovering from the global economic crisis and could see growth of 4.5% in 2010, says IMF Managing Director](#)

UN

[Outcome of the second All Africa Forum- Africa source of growth, focus of interest for international emissions offset market](#)

[UNEP and partners launch a "Facility" to support African carbon projects through a combination of technical assistance and preferential access to corporate finance](#)

[UNIDO and Ecobank Transnational Incorporated \(ETI\) sign an agreement to promote economic growth in Africa, particularly in the area of agribusiness](#)

WB

[World Bank approves \\$40m for housing finance project in Tanzania](#)

Opinions

[The New York Times \(USA\): Shower of aid brings flood of progress: 8 Mar. 2010](#)

The author affirms there are signs of prosperity in rural Africa and that if aid projects are tightly focused and relatively straightforward, it could rapidly lift people out of poverty.

[Guardian \(UK\): How food and water are driving a 21st century African land grab, 7 Mar. 2010](#)

An observer investigation reveals how rich countries faced by a global food shortage now farm an area double the size of the UK to guarantee supplies for their citizens, while local citizens go hungry.

[The World Today \(Chatham House Magazine\): Bought by Beijing, 3 Mar. 2010](#)

The author argues that the international companies jostling for control of the Guinea's enormous reserves of bauxite could deter the country's path to democracy.

[Guardian \(UK\): Africa begins to make poverty history, 3 Mar. 2010](#)

US economists challenge conventional view that the continent is a basket case and that in fact, since 1995, African poverty has been falling steadily.

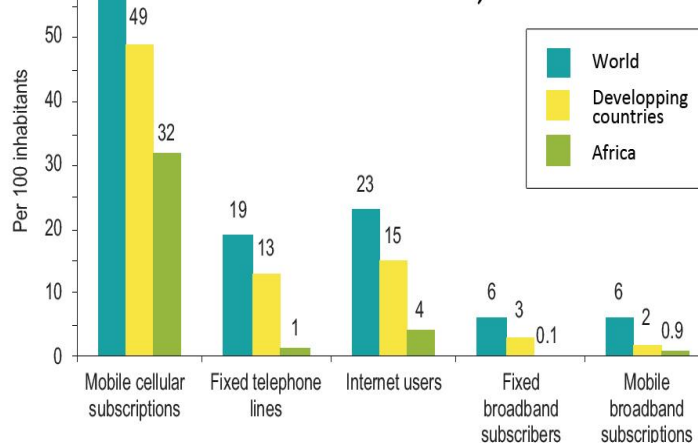
[Pambazuka News: Ghana's 2010 oil boom: Ensuring public interest over private gain, 25 Feb. 2010](#)

With Ghana on the verge of an oil boom in 2010, the author considers the steps and measures needed to ensure the country derives full and equitable benefit from the resource.

[FANRPAN: Africa's land and family farms- up for grabs? 22 Feb. 2010](#)

The writer calls on Africa to utilize their own histories, knowledge and resources to solve the problem of food insecurity and stop welcoming land-grabbing investors, who claim to offer wondrous opportunities that have "helped to make Africa poorer and even more dependent on foreign donor and investor capital."

ICT uptake in Africa, developing countries and the world, 2008



Source: ITU World Telecommunications/ICT Indicators database.

In the blogs...

[World Bank Blog: Africa is Back, 10 March 2010](#)

IMF Managing Director Dominique Strauss Khan assesses the impact of the global economic and financial crisis on Africa.

[GEG Blog: A Manifesto for Aid Reform: Changing the Way We Think About and Give Foreign Aid](#)

On the dead aid debate, author argues that the central concern should not be whether to give more or less aid, but about the objectives of aid and how it is given.

Calendar

- 15-18 Mar** International African water and sanitation summit: Kampala, Uganda
- 16 Mar** [Conference- the African Development Indicators 2010](#) (World Bank's Report): Paris, France
- 17 Mar** Public event organized by the Overseas Development Institute on ["China in Africa: the new role of BRICS in Low Income Countries:"](#) London, United Kingdom
- 18-19 Mar** Pan Africa Media Conference: Nairobi, Kenya
- 18-20 Mar** African Women's Economic Summit co-organized by AfDB and New Faces, New Voices Network: "Investing Differently in Women:" Nairobi, Kenya
- 19 Mar** [The University of Sydney International Forum:](#) "Australia's re-engagement with Africa:" Sydney, Australia
- 20 Mar** Tunisia: Independence Day
- 21 Mar** [International Donors Conference for the Development and Reconstruction of Darfur:](#) Cairo, Egypt
- 21-23 Mar** Tokyo International Conference on African Development: Botswana, Gaborone
- 22 Mar** World Water Day
- 23-24 Mar** 4th High Level Dialogue on Financing for Development: New York, U.S.A
- 24-25 Mar** AfDB Partnership Forum: Tunis, Tunisia
- 25-26 Mar** AfDB Seminar on "China's increasing engagement in Africa in the aftermath of the financial crisis:" Tunis, Tunisia
- 25-28 Mar** [International Conference on ICT for Africa:](#) Yaounde, Cameroon

For more information, contact:

Temitayo Omotola

Africa Progress Panel

9-11 rue de Varembe, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Tel + 41 22 919 7520;

E: Info@africaprogresspanel.org