

Obama, the Global Economic Crisis and Africa's Future

The central challenge facing African countries in 2009 is how they can minimize the impact of the global economic and financial crisis on their economies and people. Failure could set back steady economic and social gains over the last decade, result in human suffering as well as exacerbate political tensions.

African governments and regional organizations must lead the way; the meeting of the ['Committee of Ten'](#) in Cape Town last week is a good step forward. Africa's partners can support them by maintaining their investment and aid levels, including financing trade, their capacity to generate and collect revenues, and ability to maintain public services.

Africa needs to use the upcoming G20 meeting in London to advance a coordinated global economic stimulus package, with investment in Africa's 'real' economy, particularly infrastructure and sustainable energy, as a central plank. Africa and the world will benefit. Cooperation between Africa's traditional and 'newer' trading partners, particularly China, is the key to success.

2009 got off to a great start in Ghana. The Electoral Commission deserves credit as does the Opposition and the electorate itself for gracefully accepting the results. The contrast with Kenya exactly a year ago could not be sharper. We hope that in 2009, Africa's leaders will consolidate progress on governance and accountability, take more concerted action to prevent and end conflict, and act purposefully to curtail despotic behavior and abuse of human rights. Growth and MDG achieved are at stake.

The inauguration of a half African US President is a source of joy. Expectations in some quarters are sky high, but it may take some time before domestic priorities allow Barack Obama to focus on Africa. In the meantime, Africa can take pride in his success.



Featured in [The Daily Nation](#) (Kenya), 14 January

News Overview

President Robert Mugabe and opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai are holding talks in what could be the last chance to salvage a power-sharing agreement in **Zimbabwe**. The presidents of Mozambique and South Africa will also attend the talks. Meanwhile, in its annual report released on 14 January Human Rights Watch said the failure of African leaders to address the spiraling crisis has become a "blot on the credibility" of regional peace efforts. Physicians for Human Rights have released the report [Health in Ruins: A Man-Made Disaster in Zimbabwe](#), discussing 'the utter collapse of Zimbabwe's health system'.

The new **Ghanaian President**, Mr John Evans Atta Mills of the NDC, was sworn in to office on 7 January. Former President John Kufuor of the NPP stood down after serving two terms, facilitating another peaceful and democratic transfer of power in Ghana.

Ethiopia has started pulling its 3,000 troops out of **Somalia**, where they have been for two years, helping the Western-backed government fight an Islamist insurgency. Renewing the authorization of the AU peacekeeping force in Somalia, the UN Security Council has called for action to bolster those troops, while signaling its intention to establish a UN force

Senior officers of the main Tutsi rebel group in the east of the **DRC** have announced a ceasefire with government forces. The move is expected to increase pressure on CNDP leader Laurent Nkunda to declare a full ceasefire.

Addressing the final session on how to regulate capitalism at the **'New World, New Capitalism' Conference** held in Paris on 9 January, Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf stated that international leaders must design an economic system that better synchronizes regulations and financial sector policy across borders.

ECOWAS has suspended the Republic of Guinea from all meetings of its Heads of State and ministerial levels until constitutional order is restored to the country.

On 6 January, the **Ethiopian government passed the 'Charities and Societies Proclamation'**, restricting the activities of NGOs and aid organizations.

APP News

APP Chair, **Kofi Annan** calls for generational change at the This Day Awards 2009 Festival of Ideas held in Abuja, Nigeria where he spoke on the theme: "New Ideas for Fighting Poverty." ♦ **Robert Rubin** has stepped down as director and chair of Citigroup's executive committee, citing a desire to deepen his involvement in public policy and organizations including the APP ♦ UN Special Envoy for the Eastern Congo, **Olusegun Obasanjo**, has announced that the Government of the DRC and the rebel group have set the stage for substantive dialogue and have turned their attention to a joint cessation of hostilities ♦ **Tony Blair** hosted the 'New Capitalism' Conference in Paris with President Nicholas Sarkozy. Mr Blair highlighted the threats and opportunities within the world's economic turmoil, and called for a better system of financial regulation, and reform of the IMF and World Bank ♦

Opinions

[AllAfrica.com: Africa: Leaders Must Rethink 'African Solutions for African Problems', 14 January 2009](#)

Looking forward to the year ahead Tšoeu Petlane, researcher for the Governance and APRM Programme of the South African Institute of International Affairs argues that "pressure to change and to pursue the interests of Africans should come primarily from African leaders in their SADC, ECOWAS and AU forums, with international support doing only that – supporting. Only then will Africans and the world take African solutions seriously".

[Vanguard \(Nigeria\): ECOWAS' landmark, 14 January 2009](#)

An editorial in Vanguard states that the decision by ECOWAS to suspend Guinea "sets new standards in the region. It, to an extent, shows the abhorrence leaders in the region now have for military governments and armed usurpers of civil authorities. It seemingly echoes Nigeria's earlier decision to condemn the coup and ask for immediate restoration of civil rule in Guinea".

[Asahi Shimbun \(Japan\): Interview - Muhammad Yunus: Selfless side of humans can overcome crisis, 14 January 2009](#)

In a recent interview with Japan's Asahi Shimbun, Muhammed Yunus discusses his "social business" initiative, which aims to put human selflessness into a market long dominated by the selfish pursuit of profits. This business model puts top priority on contributions to society, instead of maximizing profits, and "could hold the key to overcoming the current global financial crisis".

[Financial Times \(UK\): Rhodes Redux, 12 January 2009](#)

An editorial in the FT makes comparisons between the colonial grab for Africa's resources, and Africa handing out its land to foreign investors, pointing out the damaging legacy that remains: "The scramble for (the control of minerals) has fuelled recent conflicts, while legal wrangling has often rendered valuable assets unproductive for years after conflicts end. It would be a tragedy for Africa if land, perhaps the greatest of all its resources, became a victim of the same dynamic".

[Daily Nation \(Kenya\): It's a triumph for Africa, 7 January 2009](#)

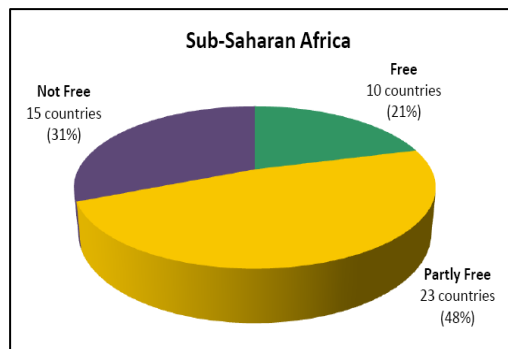
Writing on the day Mr John Evans Atta Mills was sworn in as President of Ghana, an editorial in the Daily Nation concluded that the success of the election "was a clear demonstration that Ghana has reclaimed its rightful position as a leading democracy, having pioneered, in 1956, to overthrow British colonialists and set the continent on the path to political liberation".

Featured Quote

“ We should do away with the idea of 80-year old men hanging on to power. I make a case for young people. They are intelligent and energetic ”

Kofi Annan, commenting on the election of the 47 year old Barack Obama, "New Ideas for Fighting Poverty" speech at This Day's Festival of Ideas, 15 January 2008

Freedom in sub-Saharan Africa



Freedom House: [Freedom in the World 2009 Survey](#),

G8 / G20 Update

Social sectors

[USA - Rapid SMS Child Malnutrition Surveillance has been announced as the winner of the USAID's first Development 2.0 Challenge](#)

Economic growth

[FRANCE & UK – President Sarkozy and former Prime Minister Blair initiated the 'New World, New Capitalism' conference in Paris](#)

Governance and accountability

[ITALY – Italy hopes to make its mark on the G8 Summit by changing the G8's image as a club for rich Western nations](#)

[GERMANY – 'Standing shoulder to shoulder': Open letter by Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier to President-elect Barack Obama](#)

[GERMANY - Statement: Federal Minister Steinmeier issued a statement congratulating the new President of Ghana on his election](#)

[JAPAN - Statement by Mr. Hirofumi Nakasone, Minister for Foreign Affairs, on the 'free, fair, and peaceful' Presidential Election in Ghana](#)

Financial flows

[CHINA - The Chinese government has offered US\\$77 million to Uganda in a renewed bid to boost the East African country's development](#)

[EU - The EIB is lending EUR 35 million to Namibia's state-owned electricity provider, for the development of a 350kV transmission line linking the Namibian and Zambian electricity networks](#)

[USA - New York Sen. Hillary Clinton made her statement at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing](#)

Opinions on the Inauguration of President Obama

[New Vision \(Uganda\): Obama's assignment is a very tall order, 13 January 2009](#)

The New Vision's Opiyo Oloya writes that "President Obama will be well served bringing to Africa tangible proposals for African countries that have demonstrated progress in three areas, notably, institutionalising democracy, eliminating corruption and showing respect for human rights".

[Mail & Guardian's Thought Leader Blog \(South Africa\): Clinton hints at Obama's policy on Africa in confirmation statement, 13 January 2009](#)

Michael Trapido discusses Hillary Clinton's recent statement at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearing. He states that "in Africa, the foreign policy objectives of the Obama administration are rooted in security, political, economic, and humanitarian interests".

[The Guardian \(Nigeria\): Man of the Year, 1 January 2009](#)

Eluem Emeka Izeze, Editor-in-Chief, states that Barack Obama has won the Guardian's 'Man of the Year' because he "brought hope at a time of great despair. He reignited our sense of common humanity. He broke barriers, he conquered prejudice, and suddenly, he is thrust forward, not just as the leader of America, but of the world".

[AP \(USA\): AIDS battle burnishes Bush's legacy in Africa, 11 January 2009](#)

AP's Schalk Van Zuydam writes that "countless Africans...will always be grateful to Bush for his war on AIDS, which has helped to treat more than 2 million Africans, support 10 million more, and revitalize the global fight against the disease".

[VOA \(USA\): Africans Await Obama Inauguration with Mixed Expectations, 8 January 2009](#)

Scott Bob writes that many Africans "believe Mr. Obama can be a bridge between races, cultures and peoples, (Hoping) he will listen and bring greater balance to relations between Africa and the US".

[WorldPress: Obama - Waiting on the Black President, 7 January 2009](#)

Jideofor Adibe, Editor of African Renaissance, warns that one of Barack Obama's biggest challenges will be to manage expectations in Africa. Jideofor argues that "the problem here is that American foreign policy, like the foreign policy of any nation, is fundamentally driven by national interest, not altruism".

[The Boston Globe \(USA\): "A Clear Vision for US and Africa", 12 December 2008](#)

Donald Steinberg, deputy president of the ICG, argues that there will be immediate pressure on Obama's administration to address the conflicts on the African continent. But the administration also needs a clear vision of Africa – "recognising that America has multiple interests there".

Multilateral & Policy

African Union

- [Extraordinary Conference of African Ministers of Economy and Finance \(CAMEF\)](#) - to discuss the acceleration of Africa's regional and continental integration and development

AfDB

- ['Committee of Ten' Discusses Financial Crisis in Cape Town - Donald Kaberuka](#) said the continent expected the developed world, where the current financial crisis originated, to do everything it could to stimulate world growth
- [The AfDB has been mandated to lead Africa's Regional Participation at the 5th World Water Forum in March 2009](#)

United Nations

- [Ban Ki-moon backs extension of UN force in Cote d'Ivoire for another 6 months](#)
- [UN fund allocates US\\$5 million to help rising number of Somalis fleeing to Kenya](#)
- [UNICEF's latest State of the World's Children report](#)
- [UN Security Council to strengthen African force in Somalia, signals eventual UN deployment](#)

World Bank

- [World Bank's Global Economic Prospects for 2009](#) - Sub-Saharan Africa's economy expanded by 5.4% in 2008
- [Ethiopia and the World Bank Sign US\\$50 million Education Loan Agreement](#)
- [Education for All Fast Track Initiative](#) - 52% more pupils have been enrolled into school in 22 African countries

IMF

- [IMF Executive Board Completes Fifth Review under PRGF with Rwanda and Approves US\\$1.7 Million Disbursement](#)
- [IMF Executive Board Completes Final Review Under PRGF with Cameroon and Approves US\\$4.1 Million Disbursement](#)

Calendar

26 Jan- 3 Feb	12th African Union Summit of Heads of States and Governments: Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia
27 Jan-1 Feb	World Social Forum 2009, Belém-Pará, Brazil
28 Jan-1 Feb	World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2009: Davos-Klosters, Switzerland
3-4 Feb	WTO General Council, Geneva, Switzerland

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