

# POLICY UPDATE

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Spotlight on Africa | Turkey–Africa Relations

Turkey Marks Africa Day

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The 55<sup>th</sup> Africa Day marking the day the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU) was formed was celebrated across the African continent on 25 May 2018. The OAU now AU was formed on 25 May 1963 to promote the unity and solidarity of African nations; coordinate and intensify their co-operation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa; defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence; eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa; promote international cooperation, give due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and coordinate and harmonize members' political, diplomatic, economic, educational, cultural, health, welfare, scientific, technical and defense policies (Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of South Africa, OAU History, 2003).

As part of activities marking the celebration in Ankara, Turkey; the Deputy Chairperson of the AU, His Excellency Ambassador Thomas Kwesi Quartey was hosted as the keynote speaker by the Ankara University and the African diplomatic corps in Turkey. He delivered a speech titled “Africa Rising” where he emphasized the need for African countries to work together in order to ensure that borders do not hinder free movement across the continent. Essentially, he bemoaned the fact that demarcations orchestrated by European colonial powers still remain within the continent.

Ambassador Quartey also commented on Turkey-Africa relations so far and indicated the former's determination to cooperate with the AU in reaching its Agenda 2063<sup>2</sup> objectives. He further added that, for African countries, “Turkey represented what was possible in education, science and technology” citing how Turkey is a model country for Africa's development vision.

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<sup>2</sup> AU's Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the African continent over the next 50 years. It builds on, and seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development (AU, 2014), to read the whole Agenda 2063 objectives see : <https://au.int/agenda2063/about>

He also indicated that Turkey has over the years since its opening up to Africa in 2005<sup>3</sup> become a strategic partner of the AU. He specifically mentioned three landmark contributions of Turkey in the areas of Turkey's assistance in establishing Ethiopia's textile industry and building airports in Ghana as well as the stabilization Somalia in the Horn of Africa.

On the other hand, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; the seat of AU headquarters, AU Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat used the occasion of Africa Day celebrations to deliver a statement on corruption on the continent. He lamented that excessive corruption on the continent was undermining gains made by Africans, adding that, "the fight against corruption was of crucial importance" to Africa. His statement is even more relevant given that illicit financial outflows from Africa amount to an estimated \$100 billion annually<sup>4</sup>. Corruption therefore is deviating the requisite resources for social amenities such as electricity, water and sanitation services on the continent.

However, irrespective of these glaring challenges corruption poses, he stated his enthusiasm in Africa's future. He alluded to the fact that, despite the "global downturn, several African countries were cited as some of the world's fastest growing economies with an increase in industrialization<sup>5</sup>.

He added that, the recently-ratified African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)<sup>6</sup> and the creation of a single aviation market<sup>7</sup> were some of the leading accomplishments of the AU in the last decade.

With regards to further activities in Turkey too, its Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a strategic Africa Day press statement as it has done over the years since the country's opening up to Africa, thus, signifying the importance Turkey attaches to its Africa relations.

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<sup>3</sup> See Özkan and Akgün, December, 2010, Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 48, No. 4. pp. 525-546

Turkey's Opening to Africa for what prompted Turkey's Africa approach. Access at: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/40961827?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/40961827?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

<sup>4</sup> The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa estimated that US \$319 billion was transferred illicitly from Africa during the commodity super-cycle, from 2001 to 2010. The United States was the leading single destination at US \$50 billion; but China, India, and Russia were responsible for US \$59 billion (Brazil is not recorded in the top 17 and South Africa is not included), (Bond, 2018)

<sup>5</sup> Simon Mevel, Siope Ofa, and Stephen Karingi, 'Quantifying Illicit Financial Flows from Africa Through Trade Mispricing and Assessing Their Incidence on African Economies,' United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) presentation to the African Economic Conference, Johannesburg, 28-30 October 2013, <http://www.afdb.org/en/aec/papers/paper/quantifying-illicit-financial-flows-from-africa-through-trade-mispricing-and-assessing-their-incidence-on-african-economies-945> cited in Bond, P. (April, 25, 2018). The BRICS, global governance, accumulation, class struggle and resource extractivism. Committee for the Abolition for Illegitimate Debt. Retrieved from <http://www.cadtm.org/The-BRICS-global-governance#nb33>

<sup>6</sup> AfCFTA seeks to Create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments, and thus pave the way for accelerating the establishment of the Continental Customs Union and the African customs union. See Objective of the CFTA - Continental Free Trade Area at <https://au.int/en/ti/cfta/about>

<sup>7</sup> Twenty-three African states, including South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya, launched a single aviation market in a bid to boost connectivity, reduce fares and stimulate economic growth on a continent widely considered the most expensive and inconvenient to fly around (Aglionby, 2018).

We join in celebrating “25 May Africa Day” of the African Union and the African countries. Relations between Turkey and African countries while deriving their strength through historical bonds are also linked by a common vision for the future. We fully support the development efforts of the African Continent, whose influence is progressively increasing at the global level.

Turkey will maintain efforts to further advance its cooperation with African countries, that has gained considerable momentum over the last decade while continuing to display solidarity with Africa at regional and international platforms, as well as furthering its active cooperation with the African Union on the basis of their strategic partnership (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018).

An equally significant gesture was the writing of an Op-Ed in an African newspaper, Kenya’s Daily Nation by the Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. This perhaps is the first time a Foreign Affairs minister of a country outside of Africa has written for an African newsprint, thus, further portraying the importance Turkey attaches to its Africa relations.

In his article titled: “Turkey-Africa Partnership growing”, Çavuşoğlu commented on areas such as diplomatic cooperation, education and trade between Turkey and Africa over the last decade. He emphasized that Turkey’s approach to its Africa relations is premised on lasting partnerships, essentially, Africa remains a priority area for Turkey.

Some of the progress in terms of relations between Turkey and Africa are elaborated beneath.

### **Diplomatic Cooperation**

The President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has so far paid 26 official visits to 26 African countries since his Prime Ministry term and has likewise hosted around 30 heads of state from Africa out of 54. Out of the 54 AU member countries too, Turkey now has 41 embassies and diplomatic representations with the latest being opened in Sierra Leone and Equatorial Guinea. Turkey is thus, on course to open a diplomatic office in all AU member countries, should it achieve this feat, it would be the first country to do so. Conversely, Africa has also 32 embassies and diplomatic representations operating in Turkey. This year, 2018, also marks the tenth anniversary of Turkey’s strategic partnership with the AU.

### **Development Assistance**

Turkey as an emerging donor has also contributed enormously in terms of development assistance to Africa. For instance, Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination (TIKA) – official Turkish development assistance agency currently operates 15 Programme Coordination offices in Africa. Also, in 2014, Turkey’s official development assistance to Africa was \$383.3 million with \$153.6 million going to Sub-Saharan Africa (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). TIKA also spent \$1.43 billion on supporting sustainable development efforts on the continent from 2014 to 2016.

Another key component of development is education, in this regard too, Turkey has been providing scholarships to African students. The number of African students in possession of Turkish scholarships between 1991 and 2014 stood at 4,380. In the 2015–2016 academic year, Turkey provided 1239 scholarships to African students. At the time of writing figures on the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs website indicated that there were 5437 students in Turkish higher educational institutions with 116 visiting professors and research assistants from African countries.

Various Turkish ministries and institutions also run technical training programmes. For instance, around 200 African junior diplomats have participated in the “International Young Diplomats Training Programme” organized by the Diplomatic Academy of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1992. The Academy also runs tailor-made training programs for African countries such as Somalia, Madagascar, South Sudan, Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria and Namibia. The Maarif Foundation, a Turkish government-run agency also operates schools in Africa to support governments offer affordable quality education.

### **Security Cooperation**

Turkey further assists with peace and stability efforts in Africa and currently contributes to the United Nations’ missions on the continent which currently include MONUSCO/DRC, MINUSMA/Mali, MINUSCA/CAR, UNAMID/Darfur, UNMISS/South Sudan, UNOCI/Cote d’Ivoire and UNMIL/Liberia, thus, seven of nine peacekeeping missions in Africa. The Turkish National Police also provides training in various fields to counterpart personnel in African countries. For instance, in terms of military personnel training, at the end of 2014, Turkey received and trained 2202 personnel from African countries. In 2015, a further 570 military personnel from African countries were trained in Turkey according to the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the 2018 Brussels Conference too, Turkey pledged \$5 million to support the regional G5 Sahel Security force in Africa.

In other developments, Turkey also opened its largest military base abroad in the Somalian capital of Mogadishu on 30 September, 2017 (Hussein, Coskun, 2017). The \$50 million military base adds to the solidification of Turkey’s growing partnership with Somalia and will also train over 10000 Somali soldiers to strengthen Somalia’s peace and security efforts.

### **Health Sector Cooperation**

In terms of the health sphere, Turkey has signed health cooperation agreements with around 20 African countries. Besides this, between 2007 and 2010, Turkish doctors embarked on diverse health screening campaigns organized by Turkish NGOs in cooperation with the Turkish Ministry of Health and TİKA. Information gathered from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs website indicates that approximately 500 Turkish doctors and over 100 health personnel provided health care services in around 20 African countries by 2014 with over 28000 Africans undergoing health screenings alongside 53000 cataract patients. Significantly, within the framework of the “Africa

Cataract Project” initiated by a Turkish NGO in Niger, Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan about 21600 patients were operated on in 2015.

Additionally, in line with bilateral agreements, Turkey has treated around 1000 patients through its emergency humanitarian aid program. TIKA also constructed a 150-bed Turkish-Sudanese Research and Training Hospital in Nyala. The hospital has been operational since February 2014. Per the agreement surrounding the management of the Hospital, both Turkish and Sudanese Ministry of Health would run it for five years with total control of operations being handed over to Sudanese government afterwards. Turkey also built and equipped the biggest Somali hospital in Mogadishu. The 200-bed hospital is named after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and was officially opened in January 2015. Other health institutions that have received significant Turkish contributions from the Turkish Ministry of Health include the Educational Hospital in Juba, South Sudan and the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

### **Transportation and Cultural Cooperation**

With regards to air transport, Turkish Airlines has become one of the leading airline operators with over 48 flight destinations in 31 African countries. The number of African tourists visiting Turkey too has increased from about 210000 in 2006 to over 885000 in 2015 and beyond. Turkey has also removed visa requirements for diplomatic passport holders of 17 African countries. Furthermore, African businessmen and tourists travelling with Turkish Airlines and holding a valid Schengen, US or UK visa could acquire their Turkish entry visas at the Ataturk Airport in Istanbul. The Yunus Emre Association of Turkey has also established Turkish Cultural Center in Khartoum, Sudan with plans to open new branches in other African countries to facilitate cultural cooperation

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