



MEDIA RELEASE

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AFRICANS APPLAUD GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S VISIT TO AFRICA

The main peak body representing African Migrants in Australia, The African Think Tank, today applauded the visit of Australia's Governor-General, Ms Quentin Bryce AC, to few African countries including Ethiopia, South Africa, Zambia, Botswana etc. In the first visit to those countries by an Australian Head of State, Ms Bryce thanked them for their support and sympathy to victims of the Australian bushfires. Ms Bryce also pledged 'unstinting support' to fight human rights violations in Africa. Ms Bryce's visit follows visits by the Foreign Minister, the Hon. Stephen Smith M.P. to the African Union Summit.

"The Governor-General's visit is a further very welcome sign of the deepening ties between Africa and Australia," said Dr Berhan Ahmed, chairperson of the African Think Tank. **"Australia has very substantial resources invested in Africa and strong financial and educational ties. The willingness of Australia to engage with both the strengths and the problems in Africa is building a strong and prosperous future for both continents."**

"This is a way that the position of Governor-General can be of real utility and can be an excellent resource in the development of substantial ties."

The Governor-General's visit is part of a twenty-day tour to Mauritius, Namibia, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and the Seychelles. Most of these states are countries where there is substantial Australian investment connected with Resources industries. However, there is a wide range of economic realities. In Zambia, for example, about half of the population of approximately fourteen million are in economic need and immediate danger of famine. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has recently announced that owing to financial shortfalls, it is having to cut food aid per head to half present levels – which is below the amount needed to survive. The Rudd government recently announced additional food aid which goes some way to making up the shortfall. Australia has heavy involvement with Zambia as a major exporter of copper, the price of which has fallen in real terms in recent years. Zambia is also at risk because it is bordered by Congo and Zimbabwe, both facing human rights violation and social unrest.

Botswana, on the other hand, has one of the fastest-growing economies in the world with a stable government and well-run economy. Australia's interests are mainly in exploration for gold, uranium, copper, oil and diamonds, which are Botswana's biggest export.

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