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From: Margaret O'Callaghan [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 28 February 2017 9:38 PM
To: White Paper
Cc: Margaret O'Callaghan
Subject: Contributions/co-operation with African countries

SUBMISSION:

I raise the following points from a background of having worked in AusAID and the UN (the latter in Zambia for over seven years and with much travelling and reading about the region), with subsequent involvement in the African studies Association, historical research, five years research into the socio-economic impact of mining and following closely recent national elections in Africa, including the role of international election monitoring teams.

I urge that Australia improves its understanding and involvement in African countries.

1. The Australian government needs to improve its knowledge and understanding of African countries and their issues by building up expertise (remembering that Africa is not a 'country') for many reasons, including political, geographic and socio-economic – if not, to be cynical, in order to more effectively garner UN votes.
2. ANU, our premier university, needs to develop a focus area for knowledge on African issues – if it is to rightly call itself an internationally focussed university and given its global significance.
 - There is individual expertise on African subjects at ANU but it is scattered around the campus, not coordinated and without internal leadership, and this knowledge/experience is dissipated. It needs to be organized and promoted in order to have more impact and play a more active role in Australia's international affairs.
3. The current Australian scholarship programme is tokenistic, self-serving to Australian educational institutions, benefits individuals rather than the country and lacks the potential for much greater impact; the real need for capacity building is lower down.
 - eg If we could put the same amount of funds and technical support into the University of Zambia and reach far greater numbers and lift the currently poor quality of local tertiary education
4. Australia's support to companies working in African countries need to be far more critical than just being swept away with enthusiasm because of their billions of dollars of investment. African countries are far from easy places to work in and many companies are naïve about the challenges, and unwilling to invest in understanding the socio-political circumstances – and in their enthusiasm for profits some are easily tempted to cut ethical corners to survive, and are transporting poor practices to the continent knowing full well that the maintenance and monitoring of standards there is often weak.
5. One of my priorities, in addition to improving education, would be to help re-institute the building of an a-political civil service capacity. Without such knowledge and skills there is no hope for many countries.
6. It is important to note that the population of African countries, as a share of world population is significant, and increasing, and that it has an increasing middle class, but also a large youth bulge which is going to seriously impact social services and employment opportunities over the next few decades.
7. Finally, but not least, I would urge Australia to contribute to the strengthening of 'good governance' in African countries, especially in regard to censoring corrupt and self-serving leadership, including instituting strong and meaningful measures against those working to the detriment of national social and economic needs. This includes ensuring that the elections monitoring system is made far more meaningful in an age of blatant manipulation.

Thank you.

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