

# Africa after the Africa Commission: What Priorities for the German G8?



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## Can Angela Merkel deliver Tony Blair's legacy on Africa?

With the trade talks failing and aid volume way below target, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's legacy on Africa is at risk. The G8 meeting in Heiligendamm, Germany, in June, provides a last opportunity to twist arms and persuade the most powerful leaders in the world to deliver on their promises. Will Angela Merkel have the muscle?

This is the key question for a High-Level Policy Forum ('Africa after the Africa Commission: What priorities for the German G8?') being convened in London on Wednesday May 2<sup>nd</sup> by the Development Studies Association of the UK and Ireland, the leading association of professionals in international development.

The meeting will bring together parliamentarians, policy-makers, researchers and NGOs, to review the lessons of the Africa Commission set up by Tony Blair in 2004, and to take concrete proposals forward to this year's G8 summit. The themes for the day are based on feedback from key African stakeholders who took part in a stakeholder questionnaire.

Commenting today, Simon Maxwell, Director of the Overseas Development Institute, one of the meeting organisers, said:

'The UK's record is exemplary. Aid is up. We have delivered on debt relief. We have promoted a deal on trade. It would be a tragedy if the commitments made at Gleneagles were not honoured by other G8 members. The latest figures on aid, issued by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, show that aid to Africa increased by only 2% last year. Italy's aid fell by 30%; US aid fell by 20%; Japanese aid fell by 10%. Germany's went up, but by less than 1%.

'The Africa Progress Panel, chaired by Kofi Annan, was right to sound a note of alarm. Pledges may or may not be met by a last minute surge as 2010 approaches - but rapid increases at the last minute are hard to manage. Africa needs a gradual and predictable scaling up.'

What did the African stakeholder questionnaire tell us about how Africans consider the success or failure of the Africa Commission and what would they like to put on the table for the G8? 'Is Africa in a better state and is progress in Africa likely to continue?' they were asked. 'Yes' came the reply. But when asked 'Is economic growth contributing to poverty reduction, and is the Africa Commission report having a lasting impact on policies of donors and African governments?' respondents felt neither was being achieved as fully as it could.

Lawrence Haddad, Director of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, another of the organising institutions, said:

'The numbers back up the sentiments of the survey respondents: incomes are growing in Africa, at last, but poverty numbers are unmoved. In 2000, 300 million Africans lived in poverty. Today, 300 million Africans still live in poverty. This growing inequality in Africa will be disastrous for Africa and for the world. It will make deals on climate and trade even harder; it will exacerbate conflict and HIV/AIDS and it will make the promotion of good governance more difficult. Coupled with China's growing interest in African resources, the incentive for the G8 to treat Africa as a partner rather than "as apart" is greater than ever.'

Cecile Jackson, President of the Development Studies Association, said:

'The UK and Ireland have the strongest community of researchers on this topic in the world. Gleneagles could not have happened without political leadership, but nor could it have happened without our understanding of Africa and our links to African researchers. Our mission is to make ideas relevant - to policy and to global efforts to reduce poverty.'

## Notes to Editors:

1. Simon Maxwell, ODI Director and Lawrence Haddad, IDS Director are available for interview. For further information please call Kirsty Cockburn, ODI Head of Communications (+44 (0)20 7922 0423 or +44 (0)7801 370991), or Anna Tublikirstykirstyn, ODI Media and Events Officer (+44 (0)20 7922 0419 or +44 (0)7799 140470) or email [a.tublin@odi.org.uk](mailto:a.tublin@odi.org.uk).
2. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is Britain's leading independent think-tank on international development and humanitarian issues. Details of its work can be found at [www.odi.org.uk](http://www.odi.org.uk).
3. The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is a leading global organisation for research, teaching and communications on international development. Details of its work can be found at [www.ids.ac.uk](http://www.ids.ac.uk).
4. The Development Studies Association (DSA) is the most coherent national platform for development research in Europe and provides a space where the producers of research can meet with users of research. For more information on their activities can be found at [www.devstud.org.uk](http://www.devstud.org.uk).
5. Conference details, including opinions, the stakeholder questionnaire findings, background reading, video clips and a podcast can be found on the two organising institute's websites: [www.odi.org.uk/events/G8\\_07](http://www.odi.org.uk/events/G8_07) and [www.ids.ac.uk](http://www.ids.ac.uk)

6. Opinions based on each of the working group themes have been specially commissioned for the event:
  - [What is China's contribution to Africa's development?](#) by John Humphrey, IDS
  - [Aid effectiveness and absorptive capacity](#) by Paolo de Renzio, ODI
  - [E-Africa and m-Africa: How can ICTs deliver?](#) by Richard Heeks, IDPM, University of Manchester
  - [Combating corruption in Africa: What can donors do?](#) by Alina Rocha Menocal, ODI
  - [Voice in international institutions](#) by Simon Burall, ODI and Lauren Philips, ODI
  - [Climate Change: An opportunity for Africa?](#) by Tom Mitchell, IDS
  - Civic engagement and accountability by Adrian Wells, ODI (forthcoming)
  - Conflict management by Funmi Olonisikan, Kings College (forthcoming)
7. The [Stakeholder consultations](#) document summarises findings from 70 respondents (based in donor, CSO, business, researcher and government roles), 55 of whom are based in Africa.
8. The 2007 G8 meeting is being held in Heiligendamm, Germany from 6-8 June. Shaping globalisation and helping Africa to develop will be key themes of the summit. The agenda can be found [here](#).