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African Civil Society Call for the Support of Israel in the AU

Sep 2021

Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika - Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

We, the undersigned, including prominent progressive International African organisations, companies, leaders, activists, youth movements, the African diaspora, businesspeople, Trade Unions, and civil society support the decision to admit Israel to the African Union (AU). The admission of Israel is in line with the history and protocol of the AU and seeks to enhance the work of Israeli African cooperation on development programmes both at the bilateral and multilateral levels. The admittance is in the interests of peace and dialogue. As such, we affirm the following:

Status of Israel at the AU

The recent decision to grant Israel observer status in the African Union is of vital importance. Israel is one of Africa's closest neighbours, with connections between the African continent going back to the bible and Israel has been operating productively throughout the African continent at the state level since 1958. As it stands, Israel has diplomatic relations with 46 of the 55 member states in the African Union and was an observer in good standing at the former Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

Israel was granted official observer status at the AU on the 22nd of July 2021. Israeli Ambassador to Ethiopia, Burundi, and Chad, Aleli Admasu, presented his credentials to Moussa Faki Mahamat, chairman of the African Union Commission. The decision was based on the recognition of Israel and the restoration of diplomatic relations with it by a majority of more than two-thirds of AU member states and at the express demand of many member states. Observer status is granted at the discretion of the head of the African Union and does not require a vote. In fact, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was granted observer status in 2013 under the same process and procedure when Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma was the Chairperson of AU Commission. The decision is fair, correct, and in line with dozens of other observers at the AU being given such status.

Israel's contribution to the continent

From the beginning of the African states' liberation from colonial rule in 1957-1960, and at the initiative of then Foreign Minister, Golda Meir, the State of Israel was among the first countries to extend substantial assistance to the newly independent countries and their awakening peoples. This was manifested in every possible field - from agriculture, medicine and defence to infrastructure projects such as the construction of airports, the establishment of shipping companies, educational and professional training institutions.

Current projects span the entire continent, including:

In Health Care:

- An Israeli-built emergency room at Kisumu East District Hospital in Kenya, serving a region of six million people was established.
- A circumcision clinic for Zulu men in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa to treat HIV.
- A volunteer Corp of Ophthalmologists and heart surgeons that use their surgical time and training to over 1,000 patients for free treatment.



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- IsraAID - a social-worker training programme on sexual violence that supports more than 400 abused, abandoned, or at-risk girls from South Sudan.
- Israel provided the University of Ghana with a loan to construct a 600-bed teaching hospital at Legon.

In Energy:

- An Israeli company secured \$23 million in financing and about \$710,000 in grants for an 8.5-megawatt solar energy plant in Rwanda, which will be East Africa's first utility-scale solar field.

In Agriculture:

- Student exchanges with Israel are increasingly popular, with 50 Ghanaian students recently receiving an internship on training in modern agricultural practices.
- The Israeli Embassy in Senegal inaugurated a drip irrigation farm project in Senegal, Fatick.
- Israeli fish-farming technologies and training have aided millions of Ugandans, Kenyans, and Tanzanians whose livelihoods depend on the catch from Lake Victoria.

These are just some of the many examples of ways in which Israel contributes to saving the lives of Africans all over the continent, not to mention the importance of Israeli interventions on the continent to assist with Covid.

Support of Israel for multilateral programmes affecting the AU

Israel has worked on a number of multilateral programmes that affect and are endorsed by the AU. The UN has adopted an Israeli sponsored resolution in support of the utilisation of "Agricultural Technology for Sustainable Development" in Africa, as well as a resolution in support of "Entrepreneurship for Development" in Africa. There is a joint *Declaration of Intent* between MASHAV (Israel's Agency for International Development) and ECOWAS, to promote bilateral agricultural cooperation in accordance with the UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. ECOWAS chose Israel as the site of their agricultural summit.

In 2014, the State of Israel was applauded by the United Nations for the country's significant per capita contribution to the fight against Ebola in African countries. In appreciation of Israel's solidarity and contribution to the fight against Ebola in African countries, the African Union presented a plaque to the Israeli Ambassador to Ethiopia, Rwanda and Burundi, Mrs Belaynesh Zevadia, in February 2016.

AU resolutions and contribution to dialogue & peacebuilding initiatives

Admittance to the AU is in line with the organisation's stance on peace and dialogue. Moussa Faki Mahamat (African Union Chairperson) said the AU's position over the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reiterating the bloc's stance that a two-state solution was "necessary for a peaceful co-existence". Other states operating within conflict situations have also been admitted to the organisation. The entry of Israel assists the AU to support engagement in dialogue initiatives, such as in 1971 when Israel hosted a delegation of conciliation composed of the presidents of four African states (Senegal, Nigeria, Zaire, and Cameroon), sent by the OAU as part of the international efforts and initiatives to advance the peace process between Israel and its neighbours. Israel is also being sought out as a mediator of disputes among African states and its accreditation will assist in this process.



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Conclusion The admittance to the African Union of Israel is part of the continent's drive towards a better future. We call on all those with a vision for this future to support the Israeli African cooperation for the benefit of all the peoples of our beloved continent.

Organisations and supporters have already started signing. Add your name on the Google form by following the link below:

<https://forms.gle/XbWod3sahfgYRdz5>

Organisations Already Signed:

- Africa Leadership Summit (Cross Continental)
- Africa - Israel Chamber of Commerce (Cross Continental)
- Africa Agency (Cross Continental)
- African Diaspora for Development (DRC)
- Africa Bless Israel (DRC)
- La Nouvelle Société Civile Congolaise (NSCC), (DRC)
- Agir pour les Élections Transparentes et Apaisées (AETA), (DRC)
- MOZION (Centro Cultural Moçambique-Israel), (Mozambique)
- BETH-EL- Associação Cristã Amigos de Israel, (Mozambique)
- Câmara de Comércio e Indústria Moçambique-Israel (Mozambique)
- South African Friends of Israel (South Africa)
- Zionist Movement (South Africa)
- Africa the Dream Land International Foundation, (Nigeria)