

2026

ONE.ORG

CANADA-**AFRICA** STRATEGY AT ONE YEAR



TURNING WORDS INTO ACTION



The ONE Campaign fights for a more just world by demanding the investments needed to create healthier lives and economic opportunities in Africa.

One year ago, Canada released our first-ever Africa Strategy. The announcement marked an important milestone and signaled a new recognition that Africa is an economic and strategic partner for Canada. At the time, we celebrated this recognition, but raised concerns about implementation, investments, and other missing elements.

The world changed a lot in the past year, and Africa matters even more today. Canada is navigating what Prime Minister Mark Carney has described as a “rupture”¹ in the global economic order. Strengthening trade relationships beyond the United States is now a central goal of Canada’s economic policy.

Africa should be part of that effort.

The Prime Minister said that Africa wasn’t among his top priorities as he wanted to focus on regions with the “most immediate return”.² The reality is clear: Africa is the fastest-growing region in the world and will play an increasingly important role in the global economy over the coming decades.

- Africa is projected to **grow faster than Asia** in 2026 (4.5% vs 4.1%).³
- By 2050 **25% of the world’s population** (1 in 4) will be African.⁴
- The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is creating the **largest free trade area** in the world, connecting 1.3 billion people across 54 countries, and a combined GDP valued at US\$ 3.4 trillion.⁵

For Canada, this represents both an opportunity and a strategic necessity.

1. World Economic Forum, January 2026, [Davos 2026: Special address by Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada](#)

2. Neil Moss, January 2026, [Senate committee casts doubt on feds’ ability to move on Arica strategy without new funds, calls for action plan](#)

3. [International Monetary Fund, 2026, Real GDP Growth Annual percentage change](#)

4. [Andrew Stanley, September 2023, African Century](#)

5. [World Bank Group, July 2020, The African Continental Free Trade Area](#)

New analysis from ONE suggests that Africa could play a meaningful role in helping Canada achieve our goal of doubling trade with non-U.S. partners⁶ over the next decade. If Canada moves our Africa Strategy from intention to action and adopts policies that expand commercial engagement:

- Canadian businesses could **double exports** to African countries over the next 10 years, reaching \$13 billion by 2035.
- Canadian importers could **double how much they source** from African countries over the next 10 years, reaching \$20.9 billion by 2035.

This growth would support economic transformation in African economies while giving Canadian businesses and consumers access to new markets and products.

One Year Later: What Has Changed?

It is still early to measure the Strategy's full impact, but several developments suggest slow progress.

Canada has restarted negotiations on a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) with South Africa. This could strengthen investor confidence and create new opportunities for Canadian businesses operating on the continent.

Diplomatic engagement has also increased. Canada has appointed a Permanent Observer to the African Union and announced plans to open a new embassy in Benin and high commissions in Zambia and Rwanda.

6. Sean Boynton & Ariel Rabinovitch, October 2025, [Carney vows to double non-U.S. exports, says Canada must 'play to win'](#)

Nairobi, Kenya



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Air connectivity is improving as well. Canada recently concluded our first Air Transport Agreement with Ghana and expanded our agreement with Senegal. As a result, new direct flights between Canada and major African cities are expected to begin in 2026, including Montreal–Dakar and Toronto–Accra. These connections will help strengthen trade, tourism, and business ties.

Canada's development finance institution, FinDev Canada, has also announced plans to open our first office on the continent in Cape Town, which could support investment in African markets.

Additionally, the new Africa Trade Hub and the Africa Trade and Development Programs at Global Affairs Canada are up and running. They provide a more coherent approach and one-stop shop for economic engagement on the continent.

These are positive steps. But Canada still has significant ground to cover.

CANADA IS STARTING FROM BEHIND

Despite the opportunities, Canada's economic engagement with Africa remains limited.

In 2024, less than one percent of Canadian exports went to African countries, a share that has changed little over the past decade.

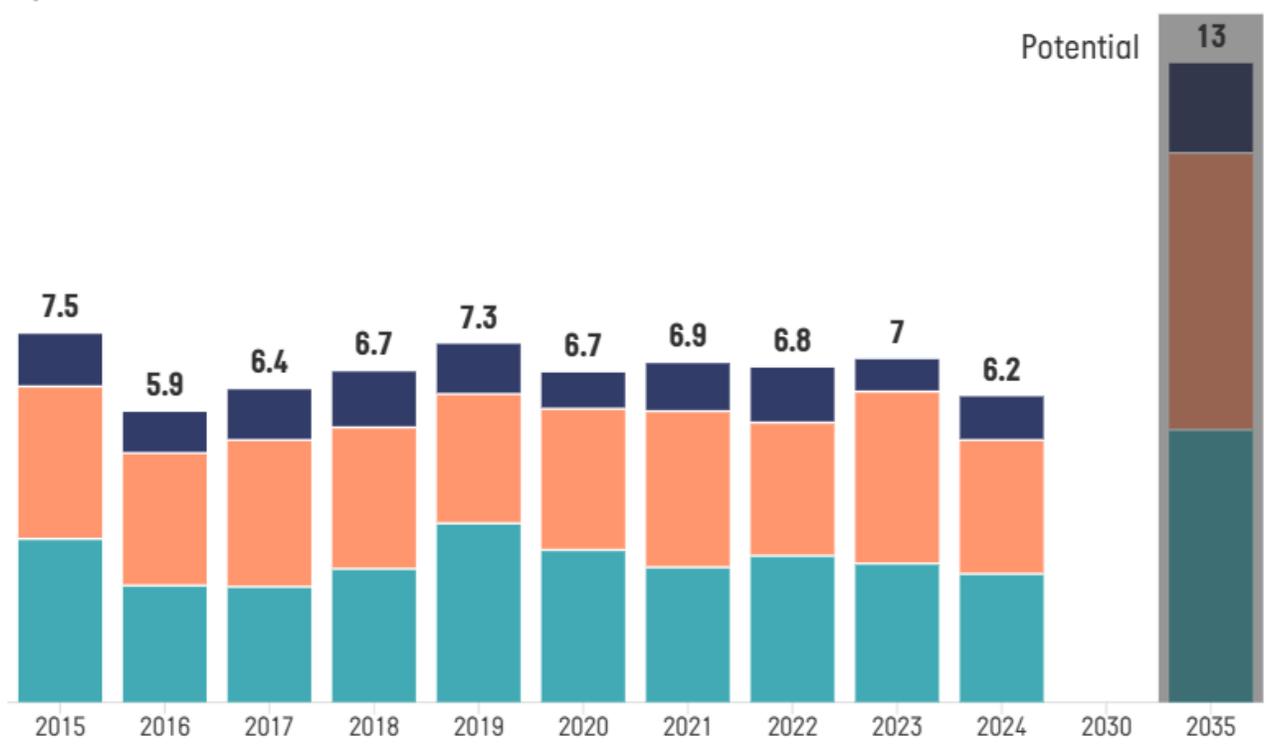
Yet economic and demographic trends suggest that this could change quickly. Rapid population growth and rising incomes across many African economies are expected to increase demand for manufactured goods, agricultural products, and services (sectors where Canadian firms are globally competitive).

If Canada increases our engagement with African economies where trading is below potential, we could reach \$13 billion in exports by 2035 - more than double the current levels.⁷ But this will require putting more focus on the continent.

CANADIAN EXPORTS TO AFRICA COULD DOUBLE OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS - IF THE GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESSES SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY.

■ Manufactured goods ■ Agri-food products ■ Mined goods

Exports



Source: BACI, 2035 potential values based ONE and Ciuriak estimates [see footnote] • All values in CA\$ billion.

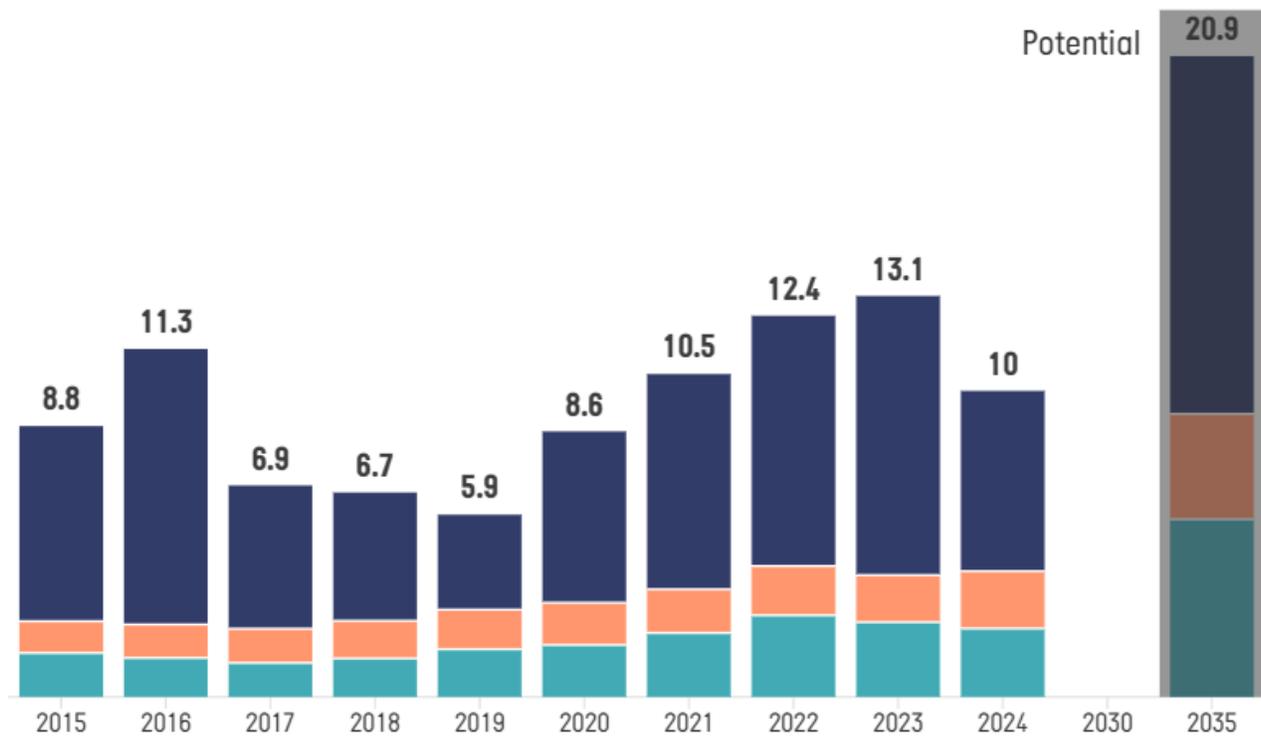
7. Potential trade with Africa in 2035 was estimated by ONE with help from Ciuriak Consulting, using data from the BACI international trade database. Estimates apply the gravity model to show how much Canada could export (and import) to African countries if it traded agricultural and manufactured goods at the level expected between countries based on distance, language, history, and economic size projected in 10 years. African countries with which Canada is already trading at potential are held constant, and trade in mined goods (minerals, fuels, and precious metals and stones) is assumed to grow in proportion with other products as these goods cannot be modeled through the gravity approach. Trade in services is not included due to limitations with data coverage.

Trade must also work in both directions. Expanding imports from African countries can help diversify Canada’s supply chains, increase consumer choice, and support economic development on the continent. With the goal to double imports from Africa over the next 10 years, they could reach \$20.9 billion by 2035. But only if Canada implements measures to facilitate African businesses selling their products here.

TRADE IS A TWO-WAY STREET: CANADA COULD DOUBLE HOW MUCH IT IMPORTS FROM AFRICAN COUNTRIES OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS.

■ Manufactured goods ■ Agri-food products ■ Mined goods

Imports

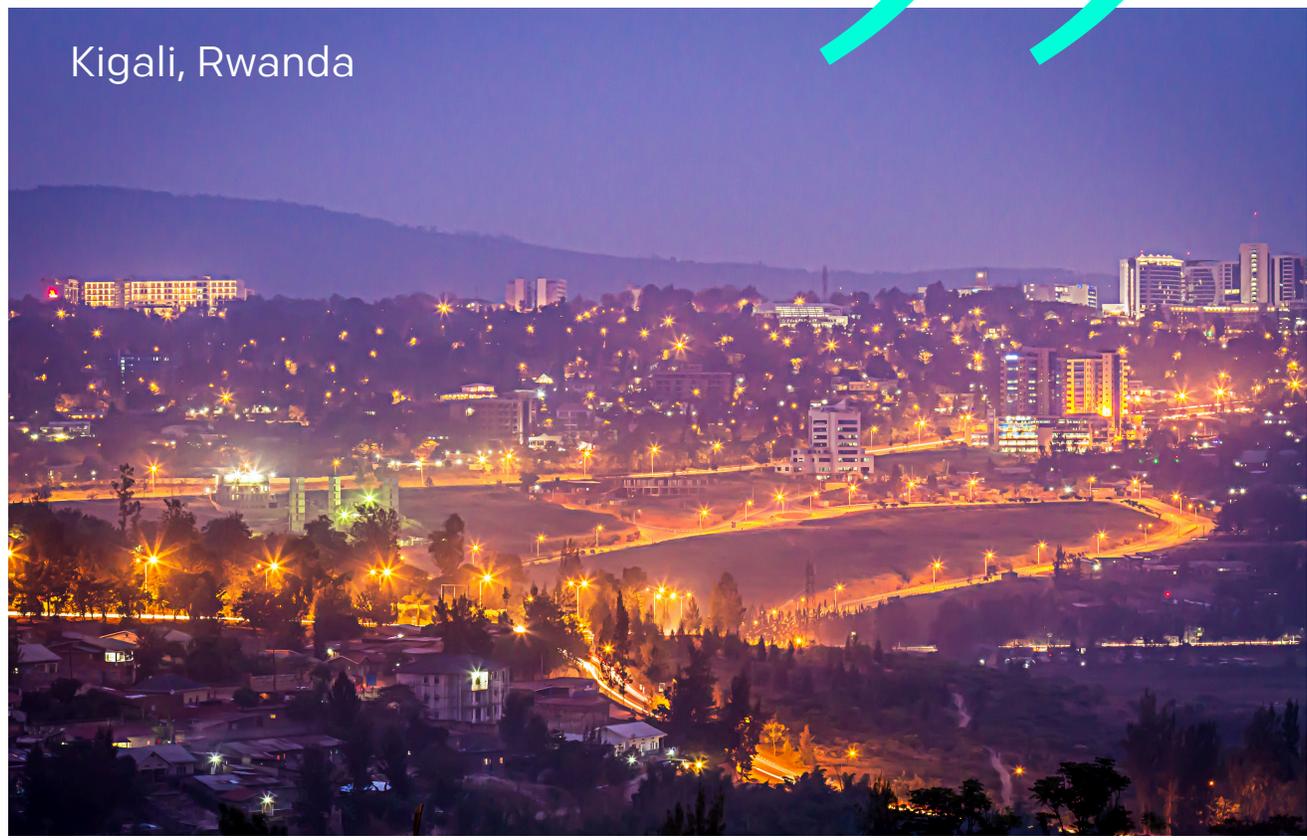


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Kigali, Rwanda



DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STILL MATTERS

Economic partnerships and development cooperation are closely linked.

Recent federal budgets announced \$2.7 billion in reductions to international assistance over four years, raising concerns about Canada's ability to fully implement our Africa Strategy. This fact cannot be considered in isolation. There will be implications for Canada's broader interests in prosperity and security.⁸

Well-targeted development programs help create the conditions that allow trade and investment to grow. Investments in health systems, infrastructure, and economic stability contribute directly to safer markets and more reliable business environments.

Protecting support for low-income and conflict-affected countries (especially for life-saving health programs) will therefore remain essential for advancing Canada's broader interests in prosperity and global security.

MOVING FROM INTENTION TO ACTION

Publishing the Canada-Africa Strategy was an important first step. The next phase must focus on implementation and must accelerate.

Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy offers a useful model. When that strategy

8. Government of Canada, March 2025, [Canada's Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security](#).

was launched, it was backed by a clear implementation plan and significant funding commitments. A similar approach could strengthen Canada's engagement with Africa.

Three actions could help move the strategy forward in the immediate future:

First, publish an implementation plan with measurable goals.

Clear targets for trade growth, investment, and diplomatic engagement would help ensure that the Strategy translates into practical results.

Second, organize a Prime Minister-led trade mission to Africa.

A high-level mission involving Canadian businesses would send a strong signal that the continent is a priority market for Canada's economic diversification strategy.

Third, establish dedicated financing to support Canada-Africa investment.

A Canada-Africa investment facility or fund could help mobilize private capital, reduce investment risks, and support partnerships between Canadian and African firms.

A Strategic Opportunity

Africa's economic importance will continue to grow in the coming decades. The Canada-Africa Strategy recognizes that reality.

But strategies only succeed when they are backed by action.

By moving quickly to implement the commitments it has already made, Canada can strengthen our economic partnerships, diversify our trade

Cape Town, South Africa



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relationships, and play a meaningful role in the next phase of Africa's economic growth.

In the medium-term, the government should create easier and more transparent trade pathways. These should empower Canadian businesses to export to African countries, and enable African businesses to sell their products here:

- Mandating Export Development Canada (EDC) to support SMEs both in Canada and in Africa like it did for Indo-Pacific Strategy.⁹
- Consider including a few selected African countries in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- Consider launching negotiations to implement a full-scale Free Trade Agreement with one or more of Africa's largest economies.

International assistance must also be protected for the lowest-income and most fragile African countries and for sectors where the impact on saving lives is the clearest, such as humanitarian assistance and health.

Lastly, Canada should leverage our influence in international institutions like the G7, the G20, the IMF and the World Bank to address the systemic barriers that impede Africa's economic transformation including high debt payments, high costs of capital, and unreliable electricity access.

The opportunity is there. The critical next step must turn ambition into results.

