

Commentary

THE G7'S AFRICAN AGENDA: PROMISES UNMET

During the 50th G7 summit in Italy, Africa took centre stage in the development discussions, with the G7 committing to align its initiatives with the African Union's Agenda 2063. Noteworthy efforts included the 'Energy for Growth in Africa' project, which focuses on advancing clean energy and providing technical assistance. However, doubts remain due to the G7's history of unmet commitments. Despite numerous promises concerning infrastructure, debt relief, and health security, the G7's aid to Africa has often been insufficient. Over the years, a significant gap has emerged between the G7's pledges and their actual implementation, with aid levels declining since the 1970s and worsening challenges like food insecurity and health crises across the continent. To regain trust, the G7 must ensure that its promises are fully and promptly fulfilled, adopt a comprehensive approach to debt relief, prioritize sustainable agricultural practices and resilient health systems, and support African-led initiatives that empower local communities and strengthen governance.

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At the 50th G7 summit, held in Italy in June 2024, Africa was a central focus in the development agenda, reflecting a significant commitment to the continent's growth and sustainability. Under the Italian presidency, the G7 pledged to align its efforts with the African Union's Agenda 2063, prioritizing improvements in infrastructure, trade, agricultural productivity, and food security.¹ A key outcome of the summit was launching the 'Energy for Growth in Africa' initiative, aimed to foster the development of clean energy projects and to enhance financing through technical assistance and capacity building.² This strategic alignment highlights the G7's recognition of Africa's pivotal role in the global economy and its potential for future growth.

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However, the G7's track record of supporting Africa's development has often fallen short, raising questions about the credibility and sincerity of their commitments. Previous initiatives have frequently been criticized for lacking substantial follow-through, insufficient funding, and disconnect between promised goals and actual outcomes. This skepticism is compounded by historical patterns of unmet pledges and the perceived prioritization of G7 member states' strategic interests over genuine developmental needs in Africa.

G7 and Africa: A History of Pledges and Inaction

Historically, the G7 has positioned itself as a leader in addressing global challenges, including those affecting Africa. Over the years, the G7 has made numerous pledges, including commitments to infrastructure development, debt relief, and aid for sustainable development. However, many of these promises have remained unmet or only partially

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fulfilled. This gap between pledges and outcomes highlights a significant issue in the G7's approach to Africa's development.

To support Africa's economic transformation, the G7 has made several important commitments. For instance, a decade ago at the Lough Erne Summit in 2013, the Group pledged to enhance trade and infrastructure in Africa.³

This commitment was reaffirmed at several subsequent summits, including the 2021 Carbis Bay Summit, where the G7 announced the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII). This initiative aims to mobilize up to USD 600 billion for quality infrastructure projects in emerging economies.⁴ Additionally, the G7 promised USD 100

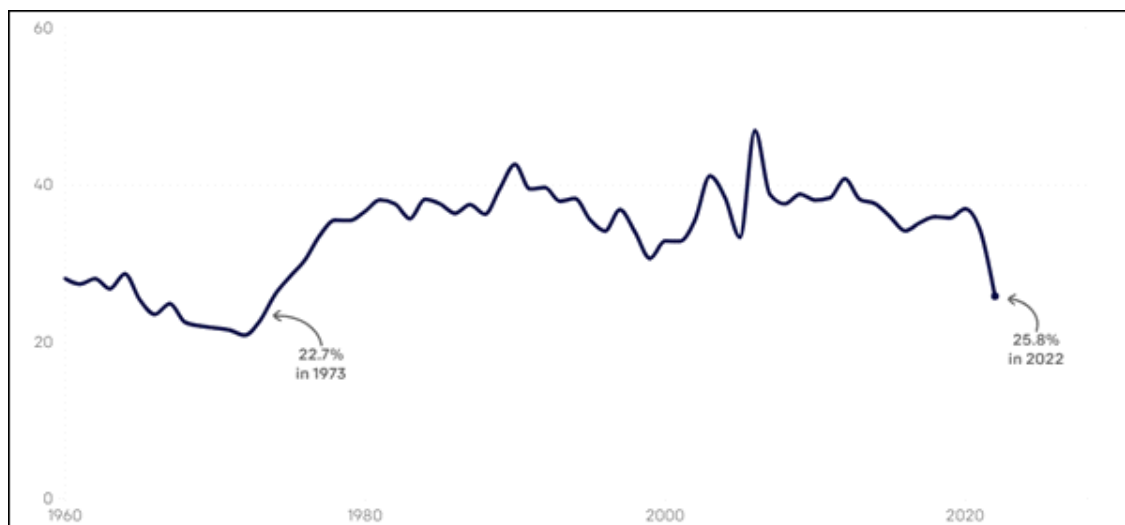
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billion in drawing rights for African countries⁵ and over USD 80 billion in private-sector investment over the next five years.⁶

Despite these promises, the G7's aid to Africa fell to its lowest level since the 1970s by 2022, representing a significant shortfall compared to the pledged amounts. In 1970, developed countries committed to allocating 0.7 percent of their gross national income (GNI) to Official Development Assistance (ODA). By 2023, they had only

provided 0.27 per cent. Between 1970 and 2022, G7 countries contributed a total of USD 2.8 trillion in ODA, resulting in a cumulative shortfall of USD 4.49 trillion.⁷ Aid to Africa decreased from 46.7 per cent in 2006 to 25.8 per cent in 2022. The OECD and WTO-led Aid for Trade (AfT) initiative revealed that from 2009 to 2019, G7 countries disbursed 19 per cent less than committed, with Japan disbursing 32 per cent less, resulting in a shortfall exceeding USD 33 billion.⁸

Figure 1: Share of G7 and EU institutions' ODA to Africa (%), 1960-2022



Source: <https://devpolicy.org/global-development-finance-outlook-and-prospects-part-1-20240729/>

Though total G7 aid to Africa increased by 1.8 per cent in real terms from 2022 to 2023, aid as a share of national income (ODA/GNI) has barely risen over the last decade, going from 0.31 per cent in 2010 to 0.37 per cent in 2023.⁹ Moreover, no major G7 economy, except the UK, has reached the 0.15 per cent target in the last decade. The UK exceeded 0.2 per cent for nine of ten years from 2011 to 2020, but aid cuts in 2021 reduced its ODA to LDCs from 0.21 per cent in 2020 to 0.14 per cent in 2021, failing to meet even the lower target.¹⁰ Between 2002 and 2019, G7 countries disbursed nine per cent less bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) than initially committed. EU institutions provided 24 per cent less development finance than promised, resulting in an USD 84 billion shortfall.¹¹

These resolutions, which called for an immediate ceasefire and did not condemn Hamas, faced opposition from Israel and its allies.

Table 1: G7 countries' ODA in 2023 as a share of their national income

Country	ODA as % of GNI in 2023
Germany	0.79%
France	0.50%
United Kingdom	0.50%
Italy	0.30%
Japan	0.30%
Canada	0.30%
United States	0.17%

Source: <https://focus2030.org/Slight-increase-in-Official-Development-Assistance-in-2023>

The G7 has also made several health-related commitments, including efforts to support African health security. In 2015, the group pledged to end child deaths, improve maternal health, and lift 500 million people from hunger and malnutrition by 2030.¹² While progress

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was made through initiatives like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, significant gaps remain. In 2020, the G7 emphasized equitable vaccine distribution, but initiatives like COVAX faced significant challenges, with the G7 at the center of vaccine nationalism.¹³ In 2021, the G7 pledged 1 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses to low and middle-income countries, however, failed to deliver even 50 per cent by the following year.¹⁴ G7 countries prioritized

their own vaccination programs, disregarding the urgent requests from African governments for vaccine supplies. This neglect significantly undermined vaccination efforts across Africa.

Similarly, G7 leaders have also repeatedly committed to enhancing global food security and nutrition, focusing on Africa, across several summits. In 2015 under the German presidency, the G7 emphasized the need for increased investments in agricultural development and improved nutrition programs to address hunger, especially in vulnerable regions like Africa.¹⁵ The 2017 summit in Taormina reaffirmed this commitment, focusing on boosting agricultural productivity, supporting smallholder farmers, and fostering sustainable food systems.¹⁶ In 2022 summit, the G7 had further highlighted the importance of international cooperation to tackle the root causes of food insecurity, such as climate change, conflict, and economic instability, underscoring the need to support African nations in developing resilient food systems and improving nutrition.¹⁷

Despite these high-profile commitments, food security in Africa has worsened over the years. Since 2015, food insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa has escalated significantly. In 2015,

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approximately 52.3 million people faced severe to moderate food insecurity. By 2017, this number had increased to 56.7 million. The situation deteriorated further by 2020, with around 66.2 per cent of the population experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity, including 30 per cent with severe food insecurity and nearly 37 per cent with moderate food insecurity.¹⁸

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This historical pattern of unmet pledges undermines G7's credibility in Africa. Despite recent initiatives like the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and the 'Energy for Growth in Africa' initiative, aid to Africa often falls short in both financial support and tangible outcomes. Persistent challenges in health and food security highlight the need for

a more robust and transparent aid approach. To effectively support Africa's sustainable development, the G7 must ensure that commitments lead to substantive, long-term progress.

Way Forward

The G7's broken promises to Africa reflect broader challenges in the international community's approach to development assistance and global cooperation. To restore credibility and make a meaningful impact, the G7 must take concrete steps to bridge the gap between its commitments and actions.

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First, the G7 should ensure that aid pledges are met in full and on time. This requires transparent mechanisms for tracking commitments and disbursements, as well as accountability measures to hold member countries to their promises.

Second, the G7 must adopt a holistic approach to debt relief that addresses both traditional and emerging sources of debt. This includes engaging with new creditors and supporting debt restructuring processes that prioritize sustainable development goals.

Third, timely and effective responses to health and humanitarian crises must be prioritized. Building resilient health systems and ensuring equitable access to medical resources, including vaccines, are critical steps in this direction.

Fourth, the G7 should invest in sustainable agricultural practices and local farming infrastructure to enhance food security. Supporting agricultural research and development to improve crop yields, pest resistance, and climate adaptability is essential.

Finally, the G7 must support African-led initiatives and partnerships that empower local communities and governments. This support should include not only financial assistance but also capacity-building efforts that strengthen institutions and promote good governance.

¹ G7 Leaders' Statement on Energy for Growth in Africa, European Council, 14 June 2024.

² Ibid.

³ 2013 LOUGH ERNE, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, June 2013.

⁴ Carbis Bay Summit Communique, The White House, 13 June 2021.

⁵ Summit on the Financing of African Economies Paris, European Investment Bank, 18 May 2021

⁶ G7 partners to invest over \$80 billion in Africa's private sector, African Development Bank, 14 June 2021.

⁷ G7 owes huge \$13 trillion debt to Global South, Oxfam International, 17 May 2023.

⁸ Cynthia Liang and Theo Beal, The role of the G7 in mobilizing for a global recovery, Chatham House, June 2022.

⁹ n.7.

- ¹⁰ G7 Countries Not Fulfilling their Own Commitments to Least Developed Countries, Centre for Global Development, 3 March 2023.
- ¹¹ n.8
- ¹² Leaders' Declaration G7 Summit 7-8 June 2015, G7, 8 June 2015.
- ¹³ Rajeesh Kumar, The Perils of Vaccine Nationalism, IDSA Issue Brief, 04 January 2021.
- ¹⁴ A Year on, the G7 Is Failing African Countries on Its Covid-19 Vaccine Promises, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 28 June 2022.
- ¹⁵ Leaders' Declaration G7 Summit 7-8 June 2015, G7, 8 June 2015.
- ¹⁶ G7 Taormina Leaders' Communiqué, European Council, 27 May 2017.
- ¹⁷ G7 Statement on Global Food Security, European Council, 28 June 2022.
- ¹⁸ Wudil AH, et al. "Reversing Years for Global Food Security: A Review of the Food Security Situation in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)". *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(22) 2022, p.7.
- ¹⁹ The Global Report on Food Crises, FSIN and Global Network against Food Crises, April 2024.