

AFRICA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from Africa

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South Korea Steps Up Strategic Engagement with Africa

On 1 June 2026, [South Korea](#) hosted its first Korea–Africa Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, bringing together representatives from 50 of Africa’s 54 countries and four regional organisations, including the African Union (AU) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). Held under the theme “Partnership for Joint Responses to Global Challenges,” the meeting reflects Seoul’s growing efforts to deepen diplomatic and economic engagement with Africa amid geopolitical uncertainty, supply-chain disruptions and increasing competition over critical minerals.

Opening the meeting, South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun highlighted Africa’s growing geopolitical and economic importance. He noted that instability in the Middle East, uncertainty surrounding major maritime routes and disruptions to energy, food and industrial supply chains have increased the need for closer Korea–Africa cooperation. Africa’s strategic relevance has grown particularly because of its critical mineral reserves, expanding markets and location along major maritime routes connecting the Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden.

The meeting also reflects an effort to move Korea–Africa relations beyond traditional development cooperation towards a more strategic and mutually beneficial economic partnership. Ghanaian Foreign Minister Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa emphasised the importance of partnerships based on trust, mutual respect and shared interests. Discussions covered trade, investment, infrastructure, technology, education, food security and supply chains, alongside

cooperation on climate change, health, peace and security.

[Critical minerals](#) emerged as an important dimension of this evolving relationship. African countries possess many of the minerals needed for batteries, electric vehicles, clean energy and advanced manufacturing, sectors in which South Korea has significant technological and industrial capabilities. South Africa, for instance, has emphasised that cooperation should not be limited to the export of raw minerals. Instead, African countries are seeking greater beneficiation, local processing, value addition, technology transfer and skills development. South Africa’s ambassador to South Korea argued that Korean technology and industrial expertise could help create jobs and strengthen African manufacturing while providing Korean companies with reliable access to strategic resources.

This approach also reflects Africa’s wider effort to build more resilient and diversified supply chains. South Africa has presented the continent as an alternative location for supply chains amid current geopolitical disruptions, while stressing that partnerships should contribute to industrial development within Africa. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), with a market of more than 1.4 billion people, further provides South Korean companies with an opportunity to approach Africa not merely as a source of raw materials but as an integrated production and consumer market.

The ministerial gathering builds on the inaugural Korea–Africa Summit held in June 2024, where both sides agreed to establish further institutional mechanisms for advancing their partnership. On 2 June

2026, President Lee Jae Myung is scheduled to meet more than 20 African ministers and senior officials, alongside bilateral engagements and the Korea–Africa Business Forum, indicating Seoul’s intention to translate political engagement into concrete economic partnerships.

The [inaugural](#) ministerial meeting therefore marks another step in South Korea’s expanding engagement with Africa. While Seoul is seeking greater supply-chain resilience, access to critical minerals and new markets, African countries are increasingly demanding partnerships centred on industrialisation, technology transfer and local value creation. The future of Korea–Africa relations may consequently depend on Seoul’s ability to align its economic-security interests with Africa’s aspirations for structural transformation and greater participation in global value chains.

Israel–Somaliland Relations: From Diplomatic Recognition to Strategic Partnership

On 14 June 2026, Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi made a historic state [visit](#) to Israel, marking the first state visit by a Somaliland president to a foreign country. The visit came months after Israel became the first country to formally recognise Somaliland since it declared the restoration of its independence from Somalia in 1991. The visit therefore represented an important diplomatic breakthrough for Somaliland and highlighted the rapid development of ties between Hargeisa and Jerusalem.

During the visit, President Abdullahi met Israeli President Isaac Herzog and underlined the importance of Israel’s recognition after Somaliland had spent more

than three decades seeking international acceptance. In an interview given during the visit, Abdullahi described the occasion as historic, noting that it was his first state visit abroad and that the opening of Somaliland’s first embassy in Jerusalem further demonstrated the growing relationship between the two sides. He also argued that Israel’s recognition had laid the foundation for a broader partnership and recalled that Israel had been the only country to respond positively to Somaliland’s earlier diplomatic outreach for recognition.

The [interview](#) also revealed Somaliland’s broader diplomatic ambitions. Abdullahi said that Hargeisa maintains open channels with several countries and suggested that further recognition could follow. The United States, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and Kenya remain important partners in Somaliland’s diplomatic calculations. For Hargeisa, Israel’s decision is therefore not seen as an isolated development, but potentially as the beginning of a wider shift in international attitudes towards Somaliland.

At the same time, the emerging partnership extends beyond diplomatic recognition. Abdullahi identified agriculture, water, healthcare and security as key areas in which Somaliland expects to benefit from cooperation with Israel. He also referred to future collaboration in mineral resources, livestock, maritime resources and trade. Israeli expertise in agricultural technology and water management could be particularly relevant to Somaliland’s developmental needs. Both sides also appear interested in improving connectivity, with Abdullahi indicating that direct flights between Israel and Hargeisa could begin in the future.

The strategic dimension of the relationship is equally important. Somaliland is located along the Gulf of Aden, close to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints. Its Berbera Port has gained increasing attention as a regional logistics hub and as a gateway to landlocked Ethiopia and other inland African markets. Abdullahi himself highlighted Berbera's strategic location and its growing importance for regional trade routes.

Security and maritime cooperation could therefore emerge as an important pillar of Israel–Somaliland relations. In the interview, Abdullahi stated that Somaliland was seeking assistance from its partners to strengthen the capabilities of its coast guard. Significantly, when asked about the possibility of an Israeli military base in Somaliland, he said that while there were no such plans at present, he could not rule out the possibility in the future. Such a development would attract considerable regional attention, particularly given Israel's concerns regarding Houthi activities in Yemen and insecurity in the Red Sea.

However, the relationship is also likely to generate diplomatic tensions. Somalia has strongly opposed Israel's recognition of Somaliland, while other regional actors may remain cautious about developments that could alter political and security dynamics in the Horn of Africa.

For Somaliland, Israel's recognition nevertheless represents a significant diplomatic opening. Abdullahi's interview makes clear that Hargeisa sees the relationship not only as a symbolic victory but also as a pathway towards wider recognition, economic cooperation and enhanced maritime security. The central

question now is whether Somaliland can convert this diplomatic breakthrough into broader international acceptance and a durable strategic partnership with Israel.

DRC Returns to the ICJ: Can the Third Attempt Overcome the Jurisdictional Hurdle?

On 26 June 2026, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) [initiated](#) fresh proceedings against Rwanda before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), alleging responsibility for prolonged violence in eastern Congo, including killings, sexual violence, forced displacement and torture. The case marks Kinshasa's latest attempt to use international adjudication to address a conflict that has remained deeply intertwined with the consequences of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the continuing presence of armed groups in eastern Congo.

This is not the first time the DRC has [approached](#) the ICJ over Rwanda's alleged involvement in the conflict. Earlier proceedings were either discontinued or dismissed on jurisdictional grounds. In 2006, the Court concluded that it lacked jurisdiction to hear the DRC's claims against Rwanda, demonstrating that even allegations involving serious violations of international law cannot proceed without a valid jurisdictional basis.

The latest case must therefore be understood against the DRC's broader experience before the ICJ. Its proceedings against Uganda over military activities in Congolese territory resulted in one of the Court's most significant decisions on the use of force, occupation, state responsibility and natural resources. The ICJ found Uganda responsible for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and for

the exploitation of Congolese resources. In 2022, [Uganda](#) was ordered to pay US\$325 million in reparations.

The DRC's renewed case against Rwanda seeks to place the eastern Congo crisis within a similar framework of state responsibility. By approaching the ICJ, Kinshasa is attempting to shift international attention from the activities of rebel movements and militias towards the alleged involvement of a neighbouring state. The proceedings could also increase diplomatic pressure on Kigali by providing the DRC with an international legal forum to place evidence on record and strengthen its position in parallel diplomatic processes.

However, jurisdiction remains the central challenge. Kinshasa appears to be drawing on Rwanda's own official references to the "disengagement of forces" to strengthen its argument. The DRC may contend that such language implies some form of Rwandan military engagement in eastern Congo. Rwanda, however, is likely to reject this interpretation and argue that its security posture is defensive, linked particularly to the threat posed by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Kigali has also accused the DRC of failing to fulfil commitments to neutralise the group.

The case thus reflects competing security narratives. Rwanda views armed groups operating from Congolese territory as a direct threat, while the DRC considers Rwanda's alleged support for M23 and other armed actors a violation of its sovereignty.

Ultimately, the [proceedings](#) also demonstrate both the importance and limitations of international adjudication. The ICJ can establish legal responsibility and

award reparations, but it cannot disarm militias, restore state authority or rebuild political trust. Nevertheless, the case provides Kinshasa with an important legal avenue to internationalise its claims against Rwanda. Whether the DRC's third attempt succeeds will depend first on overcoming the same obstacle that defeated its earlier case: establishing the Court's jurisdiction. Only then can the substantive allegations at the heart of the eastern Congo conflict be judicially examined.

Egypt–Eritrea Convergence and the Shifting Balance in the Horn of Africa

President [Isaias Afwerki](#) of Eritrea visited Egypt from 7 to 9 June 2026 and held talks with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Cairo on 8 June. The discussions focused on bilateral relations, economic cooperation, Red Sea security and regional stability. However, the timing of the visit gives it wider strategic significance. Relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea have deteriorated since the initial optimism generated by the 2018 peace agreement. Egypt, meanwhile, continues to differ with Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), while Addis Ababa's repeated calls for greater access to the Red Sea have generated concern in neighbouring Eritrea.

The growing Egypt–Eritrea understanding should therefore be viewed as part of a wider realignment in the Horn of Africa. While it may be premature to describe their engagement as a formal anti-Ethiopia alliance, Cairo and Asmara increasingly share concerns over Ethiopia's regional ambitions. For Egypt, the principal issue remains the GERD. Cairo considers the Nile central to its water security and has repeatedly sought a binding agreement

governing the operation of the dam. With negotiations failing to produce an acceptable settlement, Egypt has sought to strengthen its diplomatic and strategic presence around Ethiopia. Eritrea's geographical location, Red Sea coastline and difficult relationship with Addis Ababa make it an important partner in this context.

For Ethiopia, however, the GERD represents more than an infrastructure project. It has become a symbol of development, sovereignty and national pride. Consequently, external pressure over the dam is often viewed in Addis Ababa as an attempt to constrain Ethiopia's developmental ambitions. This divergence in perceptions continues to complicate prospects for compromise.

Eritrea's concerns arise primarily from Ethiopia's search for maritime access. As a large, landlocked country, Ethiopia has legitimate economic interests in securing reliable access to ports. Nevertheless, the manner in which the issue has been articulated has generated anxiety among neighbouring countries. Eritrea is particularly sensitive because the port of Assab has frequently featured in discussions surrounding Ethiopia's maritime ambitions. For Asmara, the issue therefore carries potential territorial and security implications. By strengthening relations with Egypt, Eritrea is signalling that it is not strategically isolated, while Cairo gains a partner located along Ethiopia's northern flank.

The situation becomes more complicated amid reports of Eritrean contacts with internal Ethiopian actors, including Tigrayan factions and FANO-linked groups in Amhara. Given the historically adversarial relationship between Eritrea and the TPLF,

any renewed engagement would demonstrate the highly tactical nature of regional politics, where former adversaries can reconsider their positions when strategic interests converge.

[Ethiopia's](#) domestic instability further sharpens these concerns. Despite the Prosperity Party's strong electoral position, insecurity in parts of Amhara and Oromia and continuing political and ethnic tensions reveal the fragility beneath the central government's institutional strength. For Addis Ababa, closer Egypt–Eritrea coordination combined with possible Eritrean engagement with internal actors could reinforce perceptions of strategic encirclement.

At the same time, [Somalia's](#) recalibration following the Turkish-mediated Ankara Declaration with Ethiopia demonstrates that regional alignments remain fluid. The Horn of Africa is therefore unlikely to witness a fixed anti-Ethiopia bloc in the immediate future. Nevertheless, the convergence between Egypt and Eritrea, Ethiopia's maritime ambitions, unresolved Nile tensions and growing Red Sea insecurity point towards an increasingly competitive regional order. The principal danger is that strategic rivalry could evolve into proxy competition, further complicating efforts to address the GERD dispute, Ethiopia's access to the sea and the wider security architecture of the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa.

Ebola Outbreak in the DRC: From a Health Emergency to a Regional Development Crisis

The [ongoing](#) Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is emerging as a serious public health and development challenge for Central and East Africa. The outbreak, involving the

Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus, was declared on 15 May 2026 and has since spread rapidly. According to reported figures, more than 1,300 people have been infected and hundreds have died in the DRC. A smaller number of cases have also been reported in neighbouring Uganda, raising concerns about the possibility of further cross-border transmission to countries such as South Sudan, Rwanda and Angola.

The nature of the current outbreak makes containment particularly difficult. Unlike some other Ebola strains, there is presently no tested vaccine or established treatment specifically targeting the Bundibugyo strain. The outbreak is also unfolding in eastern DRC, a region that has been severely affected by prolonged armed conflict, displacement and weak state institutions. Large populations of internally displaced people, porous borders and frequent cross-border movement associated with trade and mining activities further complicate efforts to trace infections and interrupt transmission chains.

The late detection of the outbreak has added to these challenges. By the time the disease was identified, infections had reportedly spread across a wider geographical area. Although the DRC has considerable experience in responding to previous Ebola outbreaks, controlling the current epidemic requires fundamental public health measures, including early identification of cases, isolation of infected patients and extensive contact tracing. These efforts, however, depend heavily on functioning healthcare infrastructure and sustained international assistance.

Public mistrust and misinformation also pose significant obstacles. Ebola carries considerable social stigma, while public

health practices surrounding the handling and burial of victims can conflict with traditional cultural practices. Attacks on medical facilities and the destruction of health supplies can further weaken response operations. Effective containment therefore requires not only medical intervention but also sustained engagement with local communities and culturally sensitive communication aimed at building public trust.

The [implications](#) of the outbreak extend beyond the immediate health emergency. The United Nations Development Programme has warned that failure to contain the disease could transform the outbreak into a wider regional development crisis. Under a worst-case scenario involving further regional spread and additional economic pressures, the outbreak could reduce Africa's GDP by as much as US\$3.6 billion and lead to approximately 328,000 job losses. Even if the epidemic remains geographically contained, the economic consequences for the DRC could remain substantial.

The Ebola outbreak therefore highlights the interconnected nature of health, security and development challenges in conflict-affected regions. Containing the epidemic will require stronger regional coordination, adequate international financing and support for already fragile healthcare systems. More importantly, the crisis demonstrates that health emergencies in politically unstable and highly interconnected border regions cannot be addressed solely as domestic challenges. A timely and coordinated response will be critical to preventing the current outbreak from developing into a broader humanitarian and economic crisis across the region.