



The **Top 10** African Leaders to Watch in **2010**

1) President Umaru Yar'Adua (Nigeria): Can He Solve the Niger Delta Crisis?

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) exploded onto the scene in 2006, boldly declaring to the oil companies operating in Nigeria, “Leave our land while you can or die in it.” Due to its preoccupation with the simultaneous outbreak of sectarian religious violence across the country, the administration of then President Olusegun Obasanjo was woefully slow to respond to what should have been a more than familiar crisis. Similar militant groups had operated in the Nigeria Delta before MEND, including the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) led by Ateke Tom. However, there was more to MEND than what the world had seen in the past. Known for its use of sophisticated public relations campaigns (i.e. e-mailing press releases to local and international media to coincide with attacks), MEND was more organized, brazen and pronounced in its aggression, perhaps emboldened by the Nigerian government’s feeble attempts at squelching similar insurrections in the past.

Since 2006, attacks by MEND and other militant groups have slashed Nigeria’s oil output by an estimated 20 percent, with each major attack and mere threat stalling the country’s economic engines and unsettling global oil prices. All this damage and uncertainty has been caused by what a widely distributed photograph showed to be a hardscrabble militia of young men and women armed with a smattering of small-engine boats, a few grenade launchers and Kalashnikov rifles so old that one member was pictured with his cartridge taped to the barrel of his gun to keep it from falling off. No image better captured how hopelessly vulnerable and unprepared the Nigerian government was and still is to this menace.

In response to previous threats and kidnappings, the Nigerian government formed the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000 to join forces with oil companies in developing the Niger Delta area. Many in the Ijaw community (Nigeria’s fourth-largest ethnic group) have criticized the NDDC as being a flimsy appeasement front, claiming that the commission has achieved little since its inception, a charge that is difficult to deny considering the Niger Delta remains acutely underdeveloped, even by Nigerian and African standards.

Upon being elected in 2007, Nigerian President Umaru Yar'Adua placed the Niger Delta crisis highest on his agenda, even selecting then Bayelsa State Governor Goodluck Jonathan, a Niger Delta native, as his Vice President. In 2007, as demanded by MEND in exchange for a ceasefire, Yar'Adua authorized the release of Niger Delta leaders Mujahid Dokubo-Asari and former Bayelsa State Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, who had been incarcerated during the Obasanjo administration for treason and corruption respectively. However, these efforts at peace fell on deaf ears as violence in the Niger Delta subsequently increased.

In May 2009, the Yar'Adua administration launched a shock-and-awe-esque military operation against MEND operatives in the Niger Delta, leading to hundreds of civilians fleeing their homes and depressing local businesses. Sensing failure, the government announced, in June 2009, a 60-day weapons-for-peace amnesty program through which militants willing to disarm by October 1st would be afforded membership of a full rehabilitation program, replete with education and job training. In July 2009, the government agreed to release MEND leader Henry Okah, who had been charged with treason and gun trafficking since his arrest in 2007. In exchange, MEND began a 60-day ceasefire in mid-July, which, remarkably, resulted in Nigeria increasing its oil production from 1.2 million barrels a day to 1.7 million in September 2009.

MEND recently announced it would extend its ceasefire by another 30 days (until October 16th), allowing time for more negotiations. However, the group has vowed not to participate in the government's amnesty program, and the Nigerian government has not shown any willingness to cede to the group's more ambitious demands.

After meeting with and convincing two top Niger Delta militant commanders Ateke Tom and Government Ekpemupolo to accept the amnesty, Nigerian Defense Minister and former Niger Delta governor Godwin Abbe has been lauded for his diplomacy skills. So far, MEND, the most powerful of the militant groups, has shunned Abbe's advances. B&M projects that MEND will resume its activities at the conclusion of this new 30-day ceasefire. There is nothing in the ongoing negotiations between MEND and the Nigerian government that suggest otherwise. In fact, we forecast that MEND will be more forceful upon its return and in 2010 as it attempts to fill the notable void created by militant leaders who have accepted the government's amnesty disarmament program. Will President Yar'Adua devise a winning strategy to address this certain increase in MEND militancy?

2) President Jacob Zuma (South Africa): Can He Keep the African National Congress (ANC) from Falling Apart?

By most accounts, the ANC has been slowly losing its invincibility in South African politics since former President Nelson Mandela stepped down in 1999. Mr. Zuma's controversial rise to the summit of the ANC (at the expense of Thabo Mbeki's early resignation as both ANC leader and president in 2008) has led to the disaffection and departure of several influential ANC party leaders that had once been loyal to Mr. Mbeki, including Mosiuoa Lekota, Mbhazima Shilowa and Mluleki George, who split away from the ANC in October 2008 to collectively form the Congress of the People (COPE). Mr. Lekota had been defense minister under Mr. Mbeki, while Mr. Shilowa and Mr. George served as Gauteng Province premier and deputy defense minister respectively.

While COPE has yet to win any major elections (and remains a negligible threat), its spin-off still represents the first mass schism from the ANC since the breakaway of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania in 1959. All indications point to the possibility that there will be more such schisms, thus introducing potentially destabilizing uncertainties into South Africa's immediate political future. Other members of South Africa's swelling opposition include: the United Democratic Movement (UDM), co-founded by former ANC Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism Bantu Holomisa in 1997 after

being expelled from the ANC the year before; the Inkatha Freedom Party, led by erstwhile ANC member Mangosuthu Buthelezi since its formation in 1975; and the Democratic Alliance, founded in 2000 by Premier of the Western Cape Helen Zille. This increasingly competitive political landscape means diminishing political capital and “market share” for the ANC and the Zuma administration.

The ANC, which defines itself as a “disciplined force of the left,” has a longstanding pact with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) called the “Tripartite Alliance.” Under this setup, the SACP and COSATU promise not to directly contest any elections in exchange for being able to field their candidates through the ANC. The Tripartite Alliance was repeatedly tested and enfeebled during the Mbeki administration as the SACP and COSATU often took aggressive exception to Mr. Mbeki’s more pro-capitalist stance.

Observers have long noted the widening and increasingly caustic divisions between the “left” and the “right” of the Tripartite Alliance, especially during the Mbeki administration. Proof of these divisions was evident in Mr. Mbeki’s long-running and very public spat with SACP Secretary General Blade Nzimande, who repeatedly and openly lambasted the Mbeki administration’s market-friendly economic policies as detrimental to many poor blacks. And then there was the infamous public spat between Mr. Mbeki and his former ally and then Deputy President Mr. Zuma that ultimately led to Mr. Mbeki’s sudden fall from grace. While intra-ANC tensions have always existed, such public displays of asperity between ANC principals had been unheard of in the history of the ANC, which once had a reputation for keeping a fiercely disciplined and united front.

Mr. Zuma, whose young presidential career has already been blemished with accusations of corruption and rape, has publicly declared himself an economic populist and socialist, and has so far received SACP and COSATU support, thus, at least temporarily, undergirding the ANC’s Tripartite Alliance. He has also sought to reassure the private sector that his populist rhetoric will not result in a shift away from Mr. Mbeki’s market-oriented economic policies. The shape of South Africa’s immediate future depends on whether Mr. Zuma has the political capital and skill to pull off this seemingly deft double stroke of political genius. This remains to be seen.

3) President Joseph Kabila (Democratic Republic of the Congo): Can He Reenergize DRC’s Ailing Post-War Development Plan?

President Joseph Kabila took office in January 2001 ten days after the assassination of his father and then Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa) president Laurent-Désiré Kabila during an attempted coup. He was only 29, and would subsequently lead a transitional government until the UN-arranged and internationally applauded July 2006 general election, which Kabila won. Despite being experienced beyond his age, Mr. Kabila, who had been Army Chief of Staff under his father and had previously participated in the guerilla warfare that toppled Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997, was widely seen as too green to lead the country out of a protracted civil war.

However, Mr. Kabila proved to be the nimble political negotiator, overseeing the 2002 Sun City Agreement, which nominally ended the Second Congo War. He also began instituting comprehensive economic reforms, including reengaging international financial institutions, donors and investors.

Mr. Kabila encouraged several foreign businesses that had fled the war to return by successfully forcing the withdrawal of invading foreign troops. This led to a reinvigorated mining sector, which resulted in notable GDP growth from 2006 to 2008. However, the global financial crisis and the associated fall in the price of mineral commodities crucial to the DRC's economy slowed growth considerably, putting a dent in Mr. Kabila's reform and post-war development plans.

Upon being sworn into office in November 2006, Mr. Kabila inherited a country that had witnessed the deadliest war since World War II and the largest in modern African history. The Second Congo War (aka "Africa's World War" or the "Great War of Africa") involved eight African countries and 25 armed groups and killed 5.4 million people mostly through disease and starvation. The war left the country's economy in ruins with skyrocketing external debt and diminished national output. Mr. Kabila also inherited a country plagued with near ungovernable civil war-era regional factions, which are a source of continued conflict and increasing instability particularly in Eastern Congo-Kinshasa where renewed fighting in late 2008 displaced thousands of civilians. In 2010, Mr. Kabila must prove he has developed the political maturity to tame these new threats before they consume him and his country's fledgling democracy.

4) President John Atta Mills (Ghana): Can Ghana Fend Off the "Resource Curse"?

Whether or not Ghana dodges the natural resource curse that often plagues other African oil and gas producers will depend largely on the foundations that Mr. Mills builds today. He has a solid opportunity to show the rest of the world that this trick can be done in Africa. He certainly has several excellent examples to learn from, including West African next door neighbors Nigeria. Notably, in July 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama chose Ghana as the sole destination of his first trip to sub-Saharan Africa, citing Ghana's model democracy and sound macro-economic management as the reason for this visit. This set off howls of envy in many other African countries, especially in Obama's ancestral home country of Kenya, and justifiably so. Will Dr. Mills, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of London and was once a Fulbright Scholar at Stanford University Law School, pull off what may very well be Africa's trick of the century?

5) President Ian Khama (Botswana): Will He Keep Botswana Stable in the Face of the Global Financial Crisis?

Botswana has long enjoyed a reputation for being one of the most political stable and best managed countries in Africa and the developing world. Notably, the small landlocked country of about 1.9 million people boasts the distinction of having an uninterrupted democracy since its independence from Great Britain in 1966. It went from being one of the poorest countries in Africa at independence (with a GDP per capita of \$70) to being one of the fastest growing economies in the world just four decades later.

Today, Botswana is a middle-income country with a GDP per capita of \$14,882, fuelled largely by diamond mining, which accounts for more than one-third of Botswana's GDP. Ian Khama, a retired commander of the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) and former vice president, became Botswana's fourth president in April 2008, immediately faced with the daunting challenge of how to craft Botswana's response to the global financial crisis, which disproportionately affects Botswana due to its overreliance on the diamond sector. The fall in the demand and price of diamonds resulted in several diamond mines being shut in 2009. As a result, the World Bank projects Botswana's GDP growth from 2008-2011 will decline substantially from the 3.3 percent posted in 2007/2008.

Armed with sufficient reserves accumulated over decades of good governance, Botswana is better prepared to fend off the ongoing global financial current crisis than most African countries. Nevertheless, despite the fiscal prudence of his predecessors, weathering the ongoing economic crisis will prove an exigent task for Mr. Khama as it has been for all leaders. However, Mr. Khama has the rare opportunity to use the lessons learned during the current economic crisis to generate the needed political capital to accelerate Botswana's moribund plans to diversify away from the diamond sector. Botswana's long-term stability depends on this.

6) The Coalition of President Mwai Kibaki and PM Raila Odinga: Can They Heal the Wounds of the 2007 Election?

Under the banner of the National Rainbow Coalition (Narc), President Mwai Kibaki won a landslide election victory in 2002, unseating Daniel arap Moi whose political party Kenya African National Union (KANU) had ruled Kenya for almost 40 years. Upon being elected, Mr. Kibaki pledged to tackle endemic corruption and a sluggish economy, problems that had plagued Mr. Moi's tenure. However, by the time he returned to the polls in 2007 seeking a second term, Mr. Kibaki himself had been mired in numerous corruption scandals, even though the economy had grown from .6 percent in 2002 to 6.1 percent in 2006. Some donors modestly estimate that about \$1 billion in aid was lost to graft during Mr. Kibaki's first term alone, which is notable since the bulk of Kenya's 38 million citizens live on less than a dollar a day.

So, as is the perennial custom in Kenyan politics, main challenger Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) campaigned vehemently on an anti-corruption and anti-poverty platform. Opinion polls leading up to the election showed Mr. Odinga with a slight lead, so did most early vote tallies. However, Mr. Kibaki was ultimately announced the winner by about 232,000 votes, in an election most independent observers considered flawed. Soon thereafter, violence broke out across Kenya, mostly between members of Mr. Kibaki's ethnic Kikuyus and ethnicities supportive of Mr. Odinga (i.e. the Luos and Kalenjin). The fighting killed 1,500 people and displaced more than 300,000.

In February 2008, the rivals entered into a power-sharing peace agreement under which Mr. Kibaki retained the presidency and Mr. Odinga became Prime Minister. Also, the two camps agreed to evenly split Kenya's 40 cabinet positions. However, Mr. Kibaki's party controversially kept the crucial finance and internal security ministries, a source of current acrimony between the increasingly disagreeable camps. Mr. Odinga has accused Mr. Kibaki of sidestepping ODM ministers in decision-making, and, in April 2009, led a boycott of cabinet meetings in protest.

Meanwhile, the country is in a political and economic deadlock, with both Mr. Kibaki and Mr. Odinga already embroiled in new corruption scandals. The promises that both agreed to under the peace deal in February 2008 (i.e. constitutional change, land reform and tackling youth unemployment and ethnic tensions), have yet to be addressed or fulfilled. And, those responsible for the election violence have yet to be brought to justice as at August 2009.

A February 2009 opinion poll concluded 70 percent of Kenyans believe the Kibaki-Odinga administration achieved “nothing” in its first year, a sobering indication of heightened public angst and disaffection. Events in 2010 will likely determine whether or not this unnatural union between foes works. So far, the Kibaki-Odinga administration has shown neither the maturity nor the foresight needed to handle these coming tests.

7) President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (Liberia): Can She Keep her Once Promising Presidency from Sliding?

The First Liberian Civil War erupted on December 24, 1989 when a then little-known Charles Taylor and his rebel group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), launched an offensive against government security posts in Nimba County, Liberia. Taylor, who had been involved in a failed coup attempt to oust incumbent Liberian President Samuel Doe, escaped to Libya, where he trained members of his newly founded rebel group before launching one of the bloodiest civil wars in modern African history. The First Liberian Civil War culminated with Mr. Taylor’s election in 1996. A Second Liberian Civil War from 1999-2003 ended with Mr. Taylor being sent on exile to Nigeria. Both wars devastated the country and claimed more than 250,000 lives, a remarkable number given Liberia’s population of about 3 million.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a Harvard-educated former World Bank technocrat, won the first post-conflict presidential elections in November 2005, ushering in a new era of peace and hope. Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf, a former finance minister under President William Tolbert, became the world’s first elected black female head of state and was subsequently named (in 2006) the 51st most powerful woman in the world by Forbes Magazine. In November 2007, President George W. Bush awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award bestowed by the U.S. government. Empowered by this rush of international goodwill, President Johnson-Sirleaf secured millions in international aid, fought corruption and reopened Liberia to foreign investors.

However, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf’s once impervious popularity took an embarrassing hit in June 2009 when Liberia’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which she set-up to investigate Liberia’s civil wars, called for her to be banned from holding public office for 30 years for supporting Mr. Taylor during the early months of his insurrection against the highly unpopular and dictatorial Mr. Doe, a charge she does not entirely deny. In February 2009, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf, who was incarcerated in the 1980’s for criticizing Mr. Doe’s brutal military regime, told the commission she initially backed Mr. Taylor believing his rebellion against Mr. Doe was necessary but soon thereafter changed her mind, having realized she had been deceived by Mr. Taylor. Notably, after becoming president, Mr. Taylor charged Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf with treason.

Remarkably, the commission's recommendations could become law if Liberia's parliament, which is currently dominated by the opposition, elects to adopt them. The problem is the opposition is also filled with former followers of Mr. Taylor, including his wife Jewel Howard Taylor and the notorious former warlord Prince Johnson, both of whom are influential sitting senators. In other words, President Johnson-Sirleaf's political survival in 2010 could very well rest in the hands of political figures like Mr. Johnson, whose horrid torture and assassination of Mr. Doe in 1990 was recorded on a widely-distributed videotape.

8) Dr. Donald Kaberuka (President, African Development Bank): Can His AfDB Help Africa Weather the Global Financial Crisis?

In the last decade, Africa underwent an economic and political resurgence, underscored by impressive growth rates, an increasingly stable political climate, improvements in the continent's macroeconomic and institutional framework and a surge in foreign direct investment (FDI). Between 2001 and 2008, Africa recorded a remarkable average annual GDP growth rate of 5.9 percent. During this period, the flow of FDI into the region nearly doubled as international investors became increasingly optimistic of Africa, labeling the continent "the last investment frontier."

All that seemed to change when the global financial crisis erupted in 2007/2008, threatening to undo a decade of substantial progress in the continent's long fight against chronic poverty. Unfortunately, while less linked than other parts of the world to global financial markets, African economies have not been entirely spared the brunt of this ongoing financial crisis. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects a decline in Africa's GDP growth to 2 percent in 2009 and 3.9 percent in 2010. The IMF also notes that, since the onset of the global economic downturn, many African countries that primarily rely on the export of commodities (i.e. oil and gas, diamonds and cash crops) to developed countries have witnessed notable declines in their terms of trade and GDPs due to the fall in the demand (and price) for these commodities. Additionally, B&M forecasts a substantial reduction in international development aid and remittances to Africa, coupled with increasing protectionism in developed countries as the crisis wears on.

Founded in 1964, the African Development Bank (AfDB) is mandated to "reduce poverty and promote sustainable development in Africa." Dr. Donald Kaberuka, a Rwanda native who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Glasgow, has been AfDB president since 2005. As Rwanda's Minister of Finance from 1997-2005, Dr. Kaberuka was widely credited with stabilizing the Rwandan economy after the 1994 genocide. Notably, the largest share of AfDB lending has traditionally been devoted to Africa's infrastructure sector, including the transportation, communications and power supply sub-sectors. Dr. Kaberuka's term has been marked by an even stronger emphasis on infrastructure, with the percentage of the bank's portfolio tied to infrastructure projects increasing from 40 percent in 2005 to 60 percent in 2007. Dr. Kaberuka's extra emphasis on infrastructure in a continent sorely lacking such may prove to be the key to Africa's ultimate survival of this and future crises.

9) Gamal Mubarak (Egypt): The Next President of Egypt?

For the last decade, persistent international and local speculation (both popular and scholarly) has been that long-serving Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who will turn 82 in May 2010, has been grooming his younger son Gamal Mubarak for succession to the presidency, a claim both have vehemently denied. However, Gamal's cookie-cut resume and his rising profile within the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) are more than telling indications of the increasing inevitability of this.

In 2002, President Mubarak appointed Gamal, a former investment banker who holds an MBA from the prestigious American University in Cairo, to be Chair of the NDP's Policy Planning Committee, perhaps Egypt's most influential political body. This makes Gamal the third most powerful figure within the NDP. And, since Egypt is a de facto single-party state with the NDP holding an overwhelming majority of seats in parliament, Gamal's position gives him vast powers in setting national policy. Gamal is also NDP deputy secretary-general. Furthermore, Gamal's profile has tellingly soared in Washington D.C., where he visited in 2003 as leader of an official Egyptian delegation that met with Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. Gamal, who is neither an elected or appointed government official, also paid a private visit to the White House in May 2006, an honor rarely afforded even elected presidents.

Gamal, who turns 47 in December 2010, is primarily credited with recruiting a new generation of neo-liberals into the NDP and Egyptian government with his reformist vision for Egypt's future. As such, he is popular with many, especially younger, Egyptians, who see him as a clear break from the old guard. However, Egypt's political climate is already overheated with widespread opposition to hereditary succession and President Mubarak's rule in general. And any serious talk of Gamal taking power could prove the tipping point for widespread public protest and instability.

The longest-serving president in Egyptian history, President Mubarak first came to power in 1981 soon after the assassination of Anwar Sadat. He is currently serving his fifth term, having been re-elected in 1987, 1993, 1999 and 2005 in elections that many independent observers consider questionable and undemocratic. Prior to 2005, President Mubarak was re-elected by majority votes in a yes-no referendum in which no other candidate was allowed to participate, due to a constitutional restriction requiring Egypt's NDP-controlled parliament (the People's Assembly) to nominate presidential candidates.

In February 2005, under pressure from the international community, President Mubarak passed a constitutional amendment permitting other parties to run against him for the first time in the September 2005 elections, which he won amid widespread election fraud and rigging. After contesting the election results, fellow presidential candidate Dr. Ayman Nour of the Al-Ghad Party was subsequently convicted of forgery and sentenced to five years in prison. Less than 25 percent of the country's 32 million registered voters (out of a population of more than 72 million) voted in the 2005 elections, a clear indication of Egyptians' lack of faith in President Mubarak's democratization process. Many observers insist that the constitutional change is President Mubarak's deft way of ensuring Gamal's inheritance of power in 2011 is done in a manner that appears to be democratic and legitimate, replete with an election involving several, albeit weakened, opposition candidates. As was evident in the last elections, the 2005 amendments set draconian rules that prevent real competition from emerging.

If indeed Gamal is being groomed to succeed President Mubarak, 2010 will certainly be his official coming out year as the next presidential elections are slated for 2011. Given his advanced age and declining health, it is highly unlikely that President Mubarak will contest the 2011 elections. And, since there is no other heir-apparent in sight (President Mubarak has never appointed a vice president), Gamal's profile will certainly rise in 2010, as it did in the run-up to the 2005 elections.

Will the Egyptian people, who have suffered decades of failed promises under President Mubarak, accept his son Gamal? Or, perhaps even more importantly, will the military, which still wields considerable power and influence in Egyptian politics, permit someone without military credentials (i.e. Gamal) to lead the country for the first time in its history? It is widely believed that the military's preferred successor is 73-year-old Lieutenant General Omar Suleiman, the longtime director of Egypt's General Intelligence Service (EGIS). Will President Mubarak, who commands substantial influence within the military, live long enough to see Gamal through to the presidency?

10) African Union Chairperson: Can the AU Deliver On its Promises in 2010?

The African Union (AU) was founded in 2002, succeeding the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which had come under heavy criticism for becoming a mere "talking shop" and "dictators club." Upon its inception, founding AU Chairman Thabo Mbeki promised to imbue the new organization with a sense of heightened purpose in tackling Africa's many problems. The AU introduced several new bodies as part of this renewed sense of urgency, including the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an economic development blueprint, and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a self-monitoring mechanism encouraging member African countries to conform to political, economic and corporate governance codes and standards. In 2004, the AU also established the Peace and Security Council, which allows the AU to directly intervene in conflicts, thus replacing the old OAU principle of "non-interference" with one of "non-indifference." The AU has since sent peacekeeping forces to Burundi, Sudan, Somalia and Comoros, albeit with little success. Despite the proliferation of new bodies, the AU, like other international multilateral organizations, has yet to fulfill its potential, often bogged down by a sluggish bureaucracy and lack of funds.

The AU faces many challenges in 2010. Two new political crises sprouted in Guinea-Bissau and Madagascar in 2009, while Guinea and Mauritania fell to coup d'états in late 2008. Only two of these conflicts have been fully resolved. And, of course, there are long-unresolved political and economic crises in Zimbabwe, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan and Somalia. Elections are scheduled in the highly volatile Sudan, Guinea and Madagascar. The continent is also faced with the challenge of fending off the delayed effects of the global financial crisis, which threatens to destabilize some African countries.

The current AU chairperson is Col. Muammar al-Gaddafi of Libya, whose one-year term began in February 2009. Mr. Gaddafi has made the realization of the highly ambitious United States of Africa (USA), a proposed federation of all African sovereign states, the centerpiece of his term, thus devoting considerable resources, including the bulk of his bully pulpit, to a plan that many view as unrealistic and premature. The 2010 AU chairperson will be inheriting arguably the fullest slate of challenges ever presented to an incoming chairperson, many of which will be unresolved carry-overs from 2009.



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