

Unlocking Africa's economic potential

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There are fewer than fifty landlocked countries in the world but no less than ten form an interconnected chain across sub-Saharan Africa. Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad, the Central African Republic, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia form a band across the continent without any access to the coast.



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In a world in which 90 percent of all trade is shipped by sea, this is a major obstacle to their prosperity and development. Facing long delays and increased costs to move goods to and from global markets, these countries can struggle to meet the needs of their citizens. This, in turn, can have a damaging impact on their peace and stability.

Djibouti's strategic importance

It is not possible, of course, to alter geography. But by providing access to world-class port facilities, these countries can be connected to global trade routes and helped to provide more opportunities for their people.

This is the role that Djibouti is determined to play. We may be a small country, no larger than the American state of New Jersey, but we understand that we have a big responsibility to the wider region.

Situated at the mouth of the Red Sea and at the gateway to the Suez Canal, Djibouti is a place of huge strategic

importance. Uniquely, our country already plays host to the military forces of five members of the G7: France, Italy, Germany, Japan and the US. China will soon be added to this list. The naval forces of Spain, South Korea, the UK and many others are also frequent callers at our ports.

Our location puts us at the centre of world trade routes, connecting Asia, Africa and Europe. Port activities and related sectors already account for over 70% of Djibouti's GDP but we are investing \$15 billion more over the next five years to improve facilities and transport links to maximise the benefits of our people, the wider region and the global economy.

Investments in transport links and infrastructure

This includes two new railways which are being developed. They will link Djibouti City and Tadjourah with Ethiopia, one of the largest and fastest growing economies in Africa with a double digit GDP growth rate over the last two decades. Djibouti already handles the bulk of Ethiopia's maritime trade, transported on 1,500 trucks a day. The two new airports being built, along with the super highway to Ethiopia, will help to strengthen the links between Djibouti and its hinterland.

Even more ambitious is the Trans-African Railway project which will stretch across the continent to Dakar. This will build a corridor for goods and people, stretching from the east to the west and providing the countries it crosses with access to a world-class port.

Our strategic location and world-class facilities have also seen Djibouti's importance as a trade hub recognised globally. China has selected Djibouti to be a key part of its maritime Silk Road project. This links Asia to Europe and the Middle East and will give a new boost to global economic growth. And it is easy to see why China wants to strengthen its trade routes with Africa. Our continent's GDP is predicted to double by 2035, with the population expected to reach 2.5 billion over the next thirty years.

Djibouti is ready to play its part in unlocking Africa's vast economic potential.

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