

Economists estimate, for example, that imports from one African nation to another, for many goods, are more than 6% more costly at present, than importing these goods from outside the continent—partly because of tariffs between African nations, but also from lack of good transportation and other physical limitations.

At present, African exports within the continent are only about 14% of total African trade, in contrast with exports of Asian countries at 55% within Asia; exports within North America are 49%; and 63% within Europe.

Moving in many ways on Agenda 2063 puts an end to this legacy. As the AU website [describes](#) it, “Agenda 2063 is Africa’s blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It is the continent’s strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. The genesis of Agenda 2063 was the realization by African leaders that there was a need to refocus and reprioritize Africa’s agenda from the struggle against

apartheid and the attainment of political independence for the continent which had been the focus of The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the precursor of the African Union; and instead to prioritize inclusive social and economic development, continental and regional integration, democratic governance, and peace and security amongst other issues aimed at repositioning Africa to become a dominant player in the global arena.”

It is an ambitious and optimistic plan. Its “[Flagship Projects](#)” include:

- An integrated high speed train network that would connect all African capitals and centers of commerce.
- Completion of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
- Implementation of the Grand Inga Dam Project, which is expected to generate 43.2 GW of electricity.
- Its Africa Outer Space Strategy, to bolster the development of Africa’s space technologies, to be applied to agriculture, disaster management, remote sensing, climate forecast, and banking and finance, as well as defense and security.

*David Cherry and Gretchen Small contributed to this article.*

## Lula to Western Political Elites: Treat Us as Human, or Human Beings Will Replace You

by Gretchen Small

*Feb. 24—In his Feb. 18 press conference in Addis Ababa at the end of his five-day trip to Egypt and Ethiopia, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil took up again, even more forcefully, key themes he had raised in his address Feb. 17 to the opening of the African Union summit. The first theme addressed was Africa’s role in the new economic world order now coming together around the BRICS and the Global South, an order which not only will end colonialism—and the colonial practices of the IMF and World Bank—but will become the factor which provides much-needed growth for the entire world economy:*

.... The African continent is an extraordinary space of the future for those who believe that the Global South will be the novelty of the 21st century in the new world economy....

I said today at a meeting with an African president



Ricardo Stukert/PR (Agência Brasil)

*Brazil’s President Lula pledged more funds for UNRWA, the UN agency on which hundreds of thousands of Gazans depend for food, after the U.S. accelerated the “final solution” by cutting off funds to UNRWA.*

that since the Berlin Conference of 1884, when Africa was divided up for the countries of the old continent, for England, for France, for Germany above all, this

continent was self-sufficient in producing its own food. After the colonization process, these countries, many of them, ceased to be self-sufficient, and today they depend on food that comes from the colonizing countries, which has no explanation....

For centuries, we looked at the map of the United States, we looked at the map of Europe and we didn't see South America behind us or the African continent in front of us. It was as if we weren't interested in the poor. And since I'm convinced that the poor are the solution for the contemporary world, we just need to give them the opportunity they need to realize the middle-class society we can create on this planet.

A society without war, a society without banality, a society without fake news, a society without xenophobia, a society without any kind of prejudice, in which we are all treated equally.

Well, that world has yet to be built and I think Africa is an extraordinary space for that....

We were once known around the world as poor countries, then as third world countries, then as countries on the way to development, then semi-developed countries. And now we are the developing countries.

No sir, we are now the economy of the Global South, and we want to give ourselves a chance, so that the Global South, which has part of what the world needs today, can take its place in the world economy, politics and culture. Obviously, the BRICS is an exceptional opportunity. We think it's possible to bring other African countries into the BRICS. We think it's possible for other African countries to participate in the G20....

[At the G20], one of the things we want to discuss is the financial institutions that have existed since the UN was created, like the IMF and the World Bank. Whether these institutions will serve to help finance the development of poor countries or whether these financial institutions will continue to exist to suffocate poor countries.

The African continent, I don't have a precise figure, but the African continent's debt is on the order of 860 billion dollars. In other words, a debt that is practically unpayable for several countries.

Our suggestion is that the funds that lent this money, or the financial institutions, should take into account the need to transform part of this debt into a productive asset so that this money, instead of going back to the institution that lent it, goes back into building a railroad, a highway, a hydroelectric plant, a thermoelectric

plant—in other words, into something that means development for the continent, that goes back into education, into a university, into a research institute....

So we want to discuss this at the G20, we want to have this discussion. We're going to invite the most important economists in the world to have this discussion, because we need it.

*President Lula's comparison in this press conference of what Israel is doing in Gaza today to what Hitler's Nazis did against the Jews made headlines around the world. Few media, however, covered his accompanying message, which warned Western leaders who are protecting Israel's actions that the people of the world will hold them accountable, too. His remarks, which follow, were made in answer to a question from Radio France International's Lúcia Müzell as to why he had promised new aid for the Palestinian refugee agency in Gaza [UNRWA], when countries are suspending aid because of suspected links between agency officials and the Hamas group.*

... When I see the rich world announcing that it is stopping its humanitarian aid to the Palestinians, I wonder how politically aware these people are? And how big is their solidarity at heart, that they can't see that it's not a war going on in the Gaza Strip, but a genocide! Because it's not a war between soldiers and soldiers. It's a war between a highly prepared army, and women and children.

Look, if there have been any mistakes in this institution that collects money, punish those who did wrong, but don't suspend humanitarian aid to a people who have been trying for so many decades to build their state....

What is happening in the Gaza Strip to the Palestinian people has not occurred at any other time in history. Actually, it occurred when Hitler decided to kill the Jews.... You fail to have humanitarian aid. Who is going to help build those houses that were destroyed? Who is going to restore the lives of the 30,000 people who have already died? 70,000 who are injured? Who is going to bring back the lives of the children who died without knowing why they were dying? Is that enough to stir the humanitarian sense of the world's political leaders?

So, frankly, either political leaders change their behavior towards human beings, or human beings will end up changing the political class.... What are we waiting for to humanize human beings? That's what's missing in the world.