

Over 60 years of partnership

INTERVIEW WITH HON. DR STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX M.P.

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STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX holds a Doctorate in International Development from the University of Tsukuba, Japan. She served as the Permanent Secretary in Tanzania’s Ministry of Industry, Trade and Marketing from 2006 to 2008, and the Ministry of East African Cooperation from November 2008 to 2013. After that served as the Executive Secretary of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) from September 2013 to 2021, Tanzania’s Minister for Defense from September 2021 to October 2022, and now Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation.

Please comment on the relationship – political and economic – between the United Kingdom and Tanzania and what more you wish for from this relationship?

Tanzania and the United Kingdom enjoy friendly bilateral relations stretching back to 1961, when Tanganyika gained independence, and before uniting with Zanzibar in 1964. Since then, our bilateral relations and cooperation have grown from strength to strength. The United Kingdom has been among the most significant bilateral strategic partners, with the second-largest development program after the World Bank.

In 2022, Tanzania and the United Kingdom are marking 61 years of partnership. Tanzania appreciates the bond of friendship, cooperation, and collaboration with the United Kingdom. Our two countries often work together in international fora such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth on important issues of mutual interest such as combating climate change, sustainable development, and peace and security.

The exchange of visits continues to increase; from 2021 to 2022, Tanzania and the United Kingdom had the highest level of exchange of visits. These visits have continued to consolidate and enhance the friendship and cooperation between Tanzania and the United Kingdom.

In terms of economic relations between Tanzania and the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom supports Tanzania through development programs in various sectors, such as education, water, health, energy, infrastructure, and anti-corruption. The support is of great importance as it complements government efforts in the reduction of poverty, improving people’s welfare, and spurring development. The United Kingdom has also been supporting Tanzania in implementing reform programs, including the Public Finance Management Reform Programme (PFMRP), which is the point of excellence in public finance management.

Our two countries also have been good trading partners for many years. Tanzania’s exports to the United Kingdom increased by 33.3 per cent in 2022, and exports of goods to Tanzania increased by 5.9 per cent. In addition, the United Kingdom is among the top three investors in Tanzania, with a 35 per cent share of foreign direct investment. UK companies invested around US\$5,568.49 million in Tanzania from 1990-2021, creating about 275,938 jobs.

We are confident that Tanzania-UK relationship will

continue to flourish through stronger partnerships in industrialisation, science and technology, trade and investment, digital economy, blue economy and green economy, and measures to address the impacts of climate change.

Has the passing of HM Queen Elizabeth II impacted this relationship and Tanzania’s links to the Commonwealth?

Allow me to start by once again expressing Tanzania’s condolences on HM Queen Elizabeth II’s demise. While saddened by the passing of the Queen, our relationship and historical bond will continue to flourish, noting that our relationship is built on strong institutions.

How has the relationship evolved positively under the Presidency of Samia Suluhu Hassan?

Tanzania is a peaceful, democratic, and politically stable country. We uphold the tenets of good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law. The 6th Phase Government under the able leadership of Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, has seriously endeavoured to put in place an enabling environment for investments by reducing the cost of doing business to promote both foreign and local investment. Our government upholds an investment regime that is fair, transparent and equally applied across all prospective investors, irrespective of their nationality.

Our doors are wide open to anyone interested in bringing in capital, and doing business with us. We offer a wide range of investment incentives just like several other popular investment destinations in the world. The business reform measures undertaken places the private sector at the centre, and as the key player in Tanzania’s economic activities.

Where do you see the opportunities for further British involvement in the Tanzanian economy?

Like other vital partners, the UK can tap investment opportunities in Tanzania, which offers a wide range of opportunities in various sectors. As one of the largest investors in the country, the UK can take advantage of the improved business environment in areas of interest such as mining, energy, tourism, the blue economy, and agriculture. The British can also take advantage of Tanzania’s strategic location, which allows Tanzania

to provide connectivity and logistical support to eight countries that border us namely: Burundi, DRC-Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia. As a member of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and the East Africa Community (EAC), and through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Tanzania offers access to an integrated market of over 1.3 billion people across the continent, and a combined GDP of approximately US\$1 trillion, guaranteeing a high return on investment.

What are the priorities of Tanzania diplomacy, and how successful is Tanzania's diplomatic service at economic diplomacy?

Tanzania's Foreign Policy outlines the priorities of Tanzania's diplomacy, emphasising economic diplomacy, relationships, and partnerships for mutual benefits. These priorities include market opportunities for Tanzanian goods and services, investment attraction, tourism promotion, Kiswahili's commercialisation, and the marketing of blue economy opportunities. Since independence, the salient preoccupation of Tanzania's Foreign Policy is to encourage cooperation, while avoiding confrontation and resolving global challenges in the spirit of multilateralism.

Tanzania's diplomacy has yielded a number of benefits, including hosting regional and multilateral meetings, effective participation in multilateral engagements, effective participation in the United Nations and sub-regional organisations, and effective participation in peace and security initiatives. Tanzania has been instrumental in supporting and participating in peacekeeping missions in the United Nations missions; in September 2021, it had a total of 1,483 peacekeepers in Lebanon (UNIFIL); South Sudan (UNMISS); Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI); Abyei State (UNISFA); Darfur State (UNAMID); Central African Republic (MINUSCA), and DRC-Congo (MONUSCO).

What were Tanzania's priorities for the UN COP27 Summit in Sharm El Sheikh?

In addressing climate change, Tanzania usually aligns itself with African and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) positions because we face similar climate change challenges. These countries contribute the least to Global Greenhouse Emissions (GHG), yet they suffer the brunt of climate change impacts due to their low mitigation and adaptive capacities. For instance, Africa contributes less than 4 per cent of the GHG emissions but is the most vulnerable. Therefore, in COP27, Tanzania highlighted the following priorities:

1. Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) – Adaptation is the topmost priority for Tanzania and all developing countries. We all speak with the same voice calling


for establishing a global goal on adaptation that should consider Africa's vulnerability and other Least Developed Countries. The demand is for the international goal to be linked to means of implementation and support for national initiatives addressing climate change impacts.

2. Implementation of Adaptation and National Adaptation Plans (NAP) – In this aspect, developing countries, including Tanzania, have prepared National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and have conducted technology needs assessments to implement identified plans. However, we still face financial, technical, and technological constraints towards implementation. Thus, during COP27, Tanzania's priority areas for adaptation were identified in the national strategies searching for finance to implement identified plans.

3. Climate Finance (Long Term Finance, Adaptation Fund, GEF, GCF) – Finance issues continue to be the most contentious between developed and developing countries. So, during COP27, Tanzania continued to emphasise the importance of ensuring predictability and transparency of climate financing and timely disbursement/delivery of financial resources.

4. Loss and Damage – Addressing loss and damage has always been one of Tanzania's and Africa's top priorities in all COPs. During COP27, Tanzania continued to emphasise that support should be provided to countries with domestic measures to address loss and damage. This should include the urgent need to establish a dedicated fund for addressing loss and damage.

5. Carbon Markets and Non-markets Approaches – Carbon markets have become an essential alternative to climate finance in addressing climate change challenges. The idea is that the countries that have taken measures to care for carbon sinks such as forests should receive a just reward for their efforts. Tanzania, which has more than 48 million hectares of forests, stands an excellent chance to benefit from carbon trade/markets. So, during COP27, Tanzania appealed for support in quantifying its carbon sink potential and compensation.

6. Investment in Renewable Energy Potential – Energy is one of our priorities. Therefore, on the margins of COP27, Tanzania hosted a high-level event on powering the Southern African Region with renewables to attract investors in this area. Member countries and other stakeholders deliberated on and adopted an investment compact for renewables generation and transmission infrastructure in the Southern African region to connect the national power grids, thereby creating a common electricity market. 

We are confident that the Tanzania-UK relationship will continue to flourish