



**Congressional
Research Service**

Informing the legislative debate since 1914

Kenya: In Brief

Updated June 24, 2024

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

R48072



R48072

June 24, 2024

Lauren Ploch Blanchard
Specialist in African Affairs

Kenya: In Brief

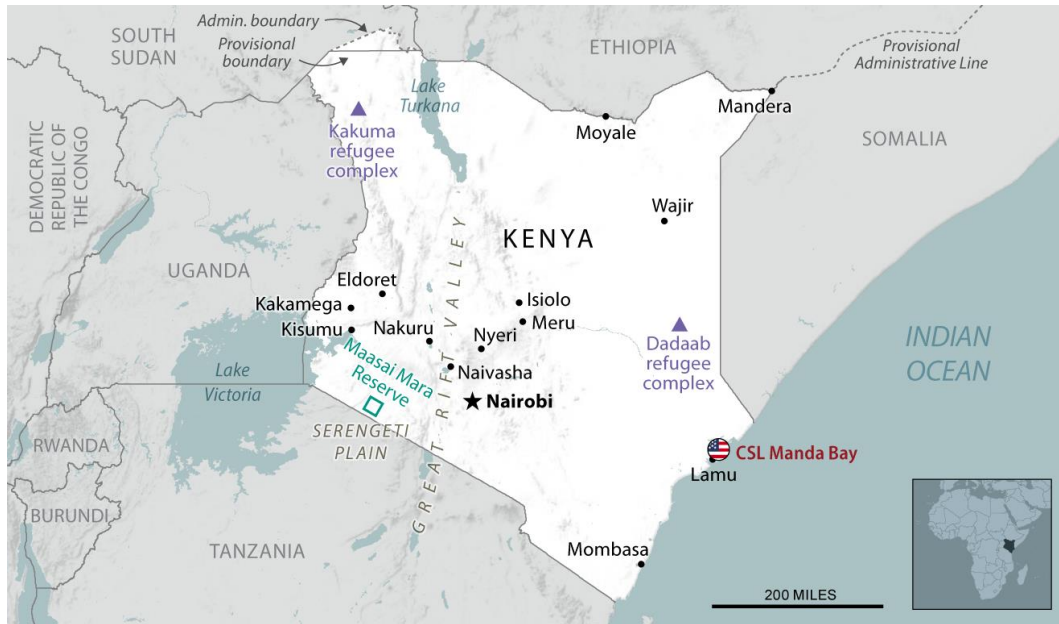
President Joe Biden hosted President William Ruto of the Republic of Kenya for a State Visit on May 23, 2024. The event marked the 60th anniversary of the U.S.-Kenya diplomatic relationship, established after Kenya's independence from the United Kingdom. (The last African leader invited for a State Visit was Ghana's president in 2008; Kenya's third president, Mwai Kibaki, preceded him in 2003.) Ruto's visit followed a series of visits to Kenya by senior Biden Administration officials. The country was the initial stop on Secretary of State Antony Blinken's first official trip to Africa, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin also visited Kenya on his first Africa tour. First Lady Jill Biden traveled there in 2023. A regional hub and an anchor state in East Africa, Kenya is a frequent destination for congressional travel.

The State Visit highlights Kenya's importance to the United States as a strategic partner, not only as a key diplomatic, economic, and security actor in East Africa, but as an African counterpart on shared global priorities. The country, which served on the U.N. Security Council in 2021-2022, is one of the only African members of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group. Kenya participates in Operation Prosperity Guardian, a maritime taskforce launched by the United States in response to Houthi attacks against vessels in the Red Sea. With U.S. support, the country is preparing to lead the Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti, where gangs have taken over much of the capital.

The U.S.-Kenya relationship took on a new dimension after Al Qaeda's 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, as Kenya emerged on the frontline in the struggle against international terrorism. In 2011, Kenya launched military operations in neighboring Somalia against a regional Al Qaeda affiliate, Al Shabaab, and subsequently joined the U.N.-authorized African Union stabilization mission in Somalia. Al Shabaab attacks against soft targets frequented by foreigners, including American citizens, in Kenya's capital raised the group's international profile. In 2020, Al Shabaab killed a U.S. servicemember and two U.S. contactors in an attack on Manda Bay Airfield, a Kenyan base used by the U.S. military near the Somali border. Al Shabaab, which U.S. officials have described as Al Qaeda's largest and wealthiest affiliate globally, continues to pose a threat in Kenya and the broader region.

Kenya hosts the largest U.S. embassy in sub-Saharan Africa and regularly ranks among the top recipients of U.S. foreign aid globally, a majority of it focused on health programs. Conservation efforts are another area of longstanding U.S. engagement. Kenya hosts U.S. forces supporting counterterrorism efforts in the region at Cooperative Security Location (CSL) Manda Bay. The country is a leading beneficiary of tariff benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA; P.L. 106-200, as amended) and is in negotiations with the United States under a Strategic Trade and Investment Partnership (STIP).

During the State Visit, President Biden announced his intent to designate Kenya as a Major Non-NATO Ally. Kenya would be the first country in sub-Saharan Africa granted that status, which conveys defense trade and security cooperation benefits. The two governments made commitments and announced new initiatives on a range of issues, including with respect to technology, clean energy, and carbon management. They revealed a new partnership on semiconductor manufacturing in Kenya to strengthen the global supply chain. They launched the Nairobi-Washington Vision, which calls on the international community to help developing countries manage debt while investing in economic growth. The Biden Administration pledged new funding for police professionalization, prison reforms, health, education, agriculture, and civil society in Kenya. The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) also announced new investments that bring its portfolio in the country above \$1 billion. Two resolutions introduced during the visit, S.Res. 704 and H.Res. 1254, recognize Kenya's strategic importance to the United States and celebrate the 60th anniversary of bilateral relations.



Contents

Overview	1
Politics.....	2
The Economy	5
Humanitarian Issues	6
Security Concerns	7
Selected Foreign Relations Issues	8
Wildlife and Environmental Conservation.....	10
U.S. Relations and Assistance	11

Contacts

Author Information.....	13
-------------------------	----

Overview

Successive U.S. Administrations have viewed Kenya as an anchor state and strategic partner in East Africa, and as critical to counterterrorism efforts in the region. The country is sub-Saharan Africa's fourth-largest economy and a regional hub for transportation and finance. It hosts the U.N. headquarters in Africa, one of four major U.N. offices globally. A major tourism destination known for its biodiversity and conservation efforts, Kenya is a regional leader in clean energy, drawing over 90% of its electricity from renewable sources.¹ The country has a vibrant tech scene that has been dubbed the "Silicon Savannah." Kenya's government has pursued opportunities to speak on behalf of Africa in global forums, including on climate change and debt relief.

Kenya hosts the largest U.S. embassy in sub-Saharan Africa as well as U.S. forces supporting counterterrorism operations in the region. The country regularly ranks among the top U.S. foreign aid recipients globally and is among the largest recipients of U.S. counterterrorism assistance in Africa. Health funding comprises the largest share of U.S. bilateral aid; the United States has provided over \$7 billion in assistance to combat HIV/AIDS in Kenya since 2004. Congressional interests in Kenya are wide-ranging, and it is a frequent destination for congressional travel; legislative action has focused predominately on democracy, human rights, and terrorism concerns.

Economic frustration, historical land disputes, corruption, and police abuses have fueled domestic grievances, and election-related violence has threatened Kenya's reputation as an anchor state in a volatile region several times. Perceived impunity for state corruption and other abuses has been a trigger for protests and periodic violence and a source of tension with donors. Corruption has hindered economic development. Freedom House ranks Kenya "Partly Free" in its *Freedom in the World* index, noting that despite regular multiparty elections, pervasive corruption and police brutality remain serious problems, and while Kenya's media and civil society are vibrant, journalists and human rights defenders face restrictive laws and intimidation.

Kenya's 2022 elections were the latest in a series of polls that have tested its democratic institutions. With incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta term limited, the race was a close contest between his deputy, William Ruto, and longtime opposition leader and five-time presidential candidate Raila Odinga. In a twist, Kenyatta backed his formal rival, Odinga, over Ruto. When Ruto, who led a populist, anti-establishment campaign, was declared the winner with just over 50% of the vote, Odinga challenged the result, alleging fraud. The court upheld Ruto's victory.

Shadows from previous election-related violence and corruption allegations hang over Ruto, as they did over Kenyatta; both once faced charges of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (ICC).² After Ruto took office, Kenyan courts dropped corruption cases against his running mate and several of his cabinet appointees at the request of the director of public prosecutions, whom Ruto later appointed as intelligence chief.³

President Ruto has sought to court foreign investment and position Kenya as a global voice on climate change and an advocate, on Africa's behalf, for climate finance and reforms to the international financial system.⁴ Politics at home, however, compete with his agenda. His

¹ *Washington Post*, "Kenyan president aims to attract green investment during U.S. visit," May 17, 2024.

² *The Economist*, "Who is William Ruto?," August 16, 2022 and "Will William Ruto serve the people or himself and his pals?" October 25, 2022; and *The New York Review*, "The Political Education of William Ruto," March 8, 2023.

³ On Kenyan civil society concerns, see, e.g., Kenya Human Rights Commission, "Nomination by President William Ruto of Mr. Noordin Haji for appointment of spy chief is an affront to the constitution of Kenya 2010," May 21, 2023.

⁴ President of the Republic of Kenya, "Kenya will protect investors," July 13, 2023; *Financial Times*, "Kenyan leader says World Bank and IMF are 'hostage' to rich nations," June 23, 2023; Jaysim Hanspal and Nicholas Norbrook, "Ruto wants 'fair conversation' over climate finance for Africa," *The Africa Report*, June 20, 2023.

administration inherited major economic challenges, including a large debt burden, inflation, and high unemployment. After promising to transform the economy and cut the cost of living, he began his term with some controversial decisions, including cutting a costly fuel subsidy that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) deemed unsustainable. The resulting spike in gas prices sparked public anger, prompting the government to partially reinstate the subsidy. Tax hikes, cost of living concerns, and discontent have fueled anti-government protests. Police reportedly killed at least 35 people during protests in 2023, prompting a warning that Kenya risked becoming “a police state.”⁵ Ruto appeared to mend ties with Odinga in early 2024 and is supporting Odinga’s bid to be the next chair of the African Union (AU) Commission. The rapprochement between the politicians did not deter protests led by young people, dubbed “Gen-Z,” in June 2024 against legislation to impose new taxes, and the heavy police response again drew a media spotlight.⁶

Several court rulings against government initiatives have spurred tensions between Ruto’s administration and the judiciary.⁷ Among them was a ruling blocking the planned deployment of Kenyan police to lead a U.S.-backed, UN-authorized multinational security support mission in Haiti. The government appealed the decision and worked to resolve the legal dispute. Kenya paused deployment planning in March 2024 after Haiti’s prime minister resigned, but the U.S. and Kenyan governments have since moved ahead on the mission. The deployment of police to Haiti amidst competing domestic security concerns is controversial among Kenyans.

Kenya—where 213 people were killed and over 4,000 injured in the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy by Al Qaeda (AQ)—continues to grapple with terrorist threats, most notably from the Somalia-based AQ affiliate Al Shabaab. While attacks near the Somali border are more common, high-profile mass-casualty attacks in Nairobi—on the Westgate mall in 2013 and the DusitD2 hotel in 2019—underscore Al Shabaab’s reach in Kenya. A U.S. citizen was among 21 people killed in the Dusit attack; several Americans were wounded in the Westgate mall attack, in which at least 67 people died. Al Shabaab killed a U.S. servicemember and two U.S. contractors in a 2020 attack on Manda Bay Airfield, a Kenyan base used by the U.S. military near the Somali border. The United States has offered rewards for information on those responsible for the Dusit and Manda Bay attacks through the Rewards for Justice program, and leaders of the attacks have been designated for sanctions as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs).

Kenya contributes troops to the African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), the UN-backed AU stabilization operation previously known as AMISOM. Al Shabaab says its attacks in Kenya are retaliation for Kenya’s military role in Somalia and characterizes U.S. and Kenyan operations there as part of a Western crusade against Muslims. The group draws recruits from Kenya’s minority Muslim population (Kenyans comprise Al Shabaab’s largest foreign fighter contingent); security force abuses have reportedly contributed to radicalization in parts of the country.

Politics

Background. Kenya was essentially a one-party state from 1964 to 1991. After the transition to a multiparty system, ethnic identity, rather than ideology, became the primary line of political cleavage. No ethnic group in Kenya has a large enough voting bloc for its political leaders to gain or maintain power alone, however, so politicians form cross-ethnic alliances, which periodically shift. This fluidity has helped fuel electoral violence and corruption.

⁵ BBC, “William Ruto: The ‘tax collector president sparking Kenyan anger,’” December 13, 2023; Kenya Human Rights Commission, “Kenya marching slowly into a police state,” July 21, 2023.

⁶ *Al Jazeera*, “At least 200 injured, 100 arrested in Kenya tax protests: Rights groups,” June 21, 2024.

⁷ *Al Jazeera*, “Why is President Ruto in a row with Kenya’s judiciary? A simple guide,” January 5, 2024.

For almost 40 years after independence, the ethnic groups of Kenya's first and second presidents, the Kikuyu and Kalenjin, were seen to benefit disproportionately from the allocation of state resources, namely land, government jobs, and state contracts. The heartlands of these two groups (the central highlands and adjacent central Rift Valley) received the greatest state investment in schools, roads, and health services. Western Kenya (home to the country's second and fourth largest ethnic groups, the Luhya and Luo) and the predominantly Muslim coast and northeast remained comparatively underdeveloped. The perception of ethnic favoritism fostered divisions.⁸

Daniel arap Moi, Kenya's long-ruling second president (1978-2002), dominated politics through repression, patronage, and electoral manipulation until, under donor and domestic pressure, he retired. The country's opposition parties came together, briefly, to defeat his chosen successor, Uhuru Kenyatta (son of first president Jomo Kenyatta), in the 2002 elections. The crisis that followed the next elections, in 2007, remains important for understanding Kenyan politics today. Political realignments prior to the 2007 polls created a particularly volatile ethnic dynamic, and when the incumbent president, Mwai Kibaki (a Kikuyu), was declared the winner of a close race amid allegations of rigging, protests followed and violence ensued, largely along ethnic lines. Some of the worst violence was between Kikuyu and Kalenjin (Kalenjin political leaders backed Kibaki's main opponent, Odinga, a Luo). Over six weeks, some 1,300 people were killed and 600,000 displaced; over 100,000 private properties and almost 500 government properties were destroyed. The crisis hit the economy hard. Kenya was effectively paralyzed for two months before Kibaki and Odinga reached a power-sharing deal brokered by former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, with U.S. support. Kibaki formed a coalition government with Odinga in a new prime minister post, agreeing to draft a new constitution and address sensitive land issues.

The ICC cases

An international commission of inquiry concluded that some of the worst of the 2007-2008 post-election violence was organized by politicians and business leaders and called for a special tribunal to prosecute those crimes. When Kenya's parliament failed to create one, the commission gave a list of key suspects to Kofi Annan, who provided it to the ICC Prosecutor. The ICC confirmed charges in 2012 against four people, including then-deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta and leading Kalenjin politician William Ruto—two former Moi protégés on opposing sides in 2007. Kenyatta and Ruto were accused of being criminally responsible for crimes against humanity. Among other crimes, the Prosecutor accused Ruto of involvement in the burning of a church where hundreds of people, mostly Kikuyu, had sought refuge; at least 28 died in the attack. Kenya's government (an ICC state party) objected to the cases. The cases were prominent in the 2013 elections, when Kenyatta and Ruto ran together on a presidential ticket. They portrayed the cases as an international conspiracy and emblematic of racial bias by the ICC. The race was extremely close: Kenyatta avoided a runoff against Odinga by less than 1% of votes.

Political interference and witness intimidation reportedly plagued the subsequent ICC trials. The ICC Prosecutor withdrew the charges against Kenyatta in 2014, and the judges declared a mistrial in the Ruto case in 2016, citing witness intimidation and political meddling. "There was a relentless campaign to identify individuals who could serve as Prosecution witnesses in this case and ensure that they would not testify," per the Prosecutor.⁹ Neither Kenyatta nor Ruto were acquitted, leaving the possibility of future prosecution but allowing them to run for reelection in 2017. The ICC opened a new trial in 2022 against a Kenyan lawyer accused of witness tampering "for the benefit, and in coordination with" Ruto; that case was closed when he died weeks after Ruto took office.¹⁰

The 2017 Election Overturned, Shifting Alliances. Violence, rigging allegations, and police brutality marred the Kenyatta-Odinga rematch in 2017. When Kenyatta was declared the winner, the opposition brought a challenge to the Supreme Court, which nullified the presidential result in a landmark ruling, citing "irregularities and illegalities in the transmission of results that affected

⁸ For more see Michela Wrong, *It's Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle-Blower*, Harper Perennial: 2010.

⁹ Statement of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, regarding Trial Chamber's decision to vacate charges against Messrs William Samoi Ruto and Joshua Arap Sang, April 6, 2016.

¹⁰ The Prosecutor v. Paul Gicheru, Document Containing Charges, ICC-01/09-01/20-125-Conf-AnxA, March 12, 2021.

the integrity of the poll.” The court ordered a fresh election, but the opposition boycotted it. After Kenyatta’s victory, the opposition contested his legitimacy and held a mock inauguration to name Odinga “the people’s president.” The government declared it treasonous, shutting down media outlets and arresting opposition figures. Authorities ignored court orders over the crackdown, leading the chief justice to warn that the government’s disregard for the judiciary threatened the rule of law.¹¹ Some Members of Congress and former U.S. diplomats raised alarm.¹²

When Kenyatta and Odinga announced a surprise deal—endorsed by the United States—to end the standoff, Ruto treated it as a betrayal, and a major political reconfiguration followed.¹³ Ruto’s supporters characterized Kenyatta’s deal with Odinga (known as “the Handshake”) as intended to prevent Ruto from succeeding him, and when Kenyatta launched an anti-corruption drive, Ruto’s allies said it disproportionately targeted politicians linked to him.¹⁴ Kenyatta and Odinga’s effort to make constitutional changes, ostensibly to make politics more inclusive, was blocked by the judiciary. Ruto characterized the initiative as intended to extend Kenyatta’s power.

The 2022 Elections. The 2022 polls occurred amid public frustration with high living costs, disillusion with the political class, and fear of another post-election crisis. Veteran opposition leader Odinga had gained the support of the incumbent president, but that alienated some opposition voters.¹⁵ For some Kenyans, Kenyatta epitomized “the establishment.” Ruto capitalized on economic frustrations and, with a Kikuyu running mate and political allies, divided the Kikuyu vote.¹⁶ Odinga also had a Kikuyu running mate—Kenya’s first female candidate on a major ticket—and Kenyatta’s endorsement, but that support was not enough to secure victory.

Ruto is reportedly among Kenya’s richest men and served for years in government, but he emphasized his humble upbringing during the race, casting himself as a champion for the poor and an outsider running against the establishment. He ran on a “bottom up” economic plan, and as an evangelical Christian, elevated religion in his campaign. His alleged role in organizing violence against Kikuyu after the 2007 elections appears not to have worked against him with many Kikuyu voters. Kenyatta’s inability to deliver more Kikuyu votes to Odinga may reflect a combination of factors. Some analysts note that political leaders in Central Kenya had long branded Odinga as a destabilizing force, and some suggest that economic frustration and grievances against the Kenyatta family may have factored into votes for Ruto.¹⁷

Ruto garnered 50.5% of the votes in the 2022 election, narrowly passing the threshold to avoid a runoff against Odinga, who gained 48.9%. Lower turnout hinted at voter apathy, particularly among young Kenyans. Reviews of the polls were mixed—observers described them as more peaceful and transparent than the three preceding, but like past processes they were marred by rigging allegations and other controversies. Beyond the tight presidential race, the elections were notable in other ways. A record number of women ran, and more women won parliamentary seats than ever before. Seven female governors were elected. The elections were reported to be among

¹¹ *The Nation*, “Maraga defends Judiciary, says court orders must be obeyed,” February 7, 2018.

¹² Sen. Cory Booker and Chris Coons, “Statement on Current Political Situation in Kenya,” February 7, 2018; Mark Bellamy and Johnnie Carson, “How and why the US should intervene in Kenya,” *African Arguments*, February 2018.

¹³ *Daily Nation*, “Ruto: Handshake between Uhuru and Raila was a stab in the back,” March 6, 2022.

¹⁴ Macharia Gaithe, “All you need to know about the clash between Kenyatta and Ruto,” *Al Jazeera*, August 18, 2019.

¹⁵ See, e.g., *Deutsche Welle*, “Kenya’s disillusioned youth shun election,” August 5, 2022; and Nanjala Nyabola, “The Kenyan Kakistocracy,” *The Nation*, August 17, 2022.

¹⁶ Ruto’s running mate, Rigathi Gachagua, faced corruption and money laundering charges during the 2022 elections. Before the polls, a court ordered him to forfeit \$1.7 million in state funds it determined he had illicitly acquired.

¹⁷ Eromo Egbejule, “Courting the Kikuyu: Kenyan politicians split biggest voting bloc,” *Al Jazeera*, August 6, 2022; and Nic Cheeseman et al., “Three critical questions will determine the Kenyan election,” *The Elephant*, July 26, 2022.

Africa's most expensive, both in terms of campaign costs and election administration.¹⁸ Kenya invested heavily in election technology, including a biometric registration system, to improve the credibility and transparency of the process; whether that improved public trust is debated.¹⁹

LGBTQ Rights. Some human rights groups assert that Kenya could follow Uganda in passing strict anti-LGBTQ legislation.²⁰ While a colonial-era law criminalizes “acts against the order of nature,” Kenya has been a relative refuge for LGBTQ persons in East Africa fleeing persecution. Its Supreme Court ruled in 2023 that the government’s refusal to register an LGBTQ rights group discriminated against the community’s rights and was unconstitutional; the court later reaffirmed that the community has the freedom to associate. The rulings prompted a backlash, led by conservative politicians and evangelical churches, and anti-gay protests.²¹ Ruto, who has said there is “no room” for homosexuality in Kenya, expressed respect for the decision, but added, “it doesn’t mean we have to agree with it.”²² The Family Protection Bill, introduced in 2023, echoes Uganda’s anti-LGBTQ law: it would criminalize “promoting” homosexuality and punish same sex relations with 10-50 years in jail and “aggravated homosexuality” (same sex relations with a minor or disabled person or when a terminal disease is passed on) with the death penalty.

The Economy

Kenya is East Africa’s second-largest economy and one of the fastest growing and most diverse in Africa. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy, but manufacturing and real estate also drive growth. The services sector leads in job creation. The telecommunications industry is a global pioneer in mobile banking technology. With almost 40% of its population under age 14, a coming surge in the labor force will present both challenges and opportunities. Kenya ranks as a lower-middle income country, but a third of the population lives in poverty, per the World Bank, and a COVID-19-related recession in 2020, Kenya’s first since the 1990s, caused added hardship. Efforts by the government to slow the pandemic’s spread, including a curfew, school closings, restrictions on movement, and social distancing measures, also had negative impacts on livelihoods. The economy has rebounded, but many Kenyans are struggling due to inflation.

Former President Kenyatta sought to improve Kenya’s business environment and attract foreign investment. The People’s Republic of China (PRC, or China) financed and constructed major infrastructure projects, including a railway and a port near the coastal town of Lamu, a UNESCO World Heritage site.²³ The railway cost a fifth of the national budget; 90% of it was funded with loans from China’s Export-Import Bank.²⁴ The port in Lamu is part of a large transport corridor project with South Sudan and Ethiopia that envisions a road network, railway, airports, resort cities, an oil pipeline, and industrial areas. Environmentalists have expressed concerns with the project, and with plans for Kenya’s first coal-fired power plant. In 2019, a Kenyan court ruled

¹⁸ *The East African*, “Polls body on the spot as Kenyans prepare for region’s most expensive election,” May 6, 2022.

¹⁹ Rose Mosero, “In Kenya’s 2022 elections, technology and data protection must go hand-in-hand,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 8, 2022; Gabrielle Lynch, “Kenya’s elections are proof of change since 2007 violence, but more reform is needed,” *The Conversation*, September 6, 2022.

²⁰ Reuters, “Kenya could follow Uganda as East African nations wage war on LGBTQ rights,” June 23, 2023.

²¹ *The Guardian*, “Kenya’s LGBTQ community wins bittersweet victory in battle for rights,” March 3, 2023.

²² Reuters, “‘No room’ for gays in Kenya, says deputy president,” May 4, 2015; and Reuters, “For LGBTQ Kenyans, court win prompts backlash as threats escalate,” April 20, 2023.

²³ See, e.g., Abdi Latif Dahir, “The troubles of Kenya’s China-funded train,” *New York Times*, August 9, 2022.

²⁴ Jonathan Kaiman, “‘China has conquered Kenya’: Inside Beijing’s new strategy to win African hearts and minds,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 2017.

that authorities had failed to do a thorough environmental impact assessment and suspended the coal project. Another Chinese-financed project, an offshore oil terminal, was completed in 2022.

The IMF has warned Kenya to contain its debt, which stood at 68% of GDP when Ruto started his term, up from 42% when Kenyatta took office.²⁵ Ruto pledged to cut government spending and signed up for a new IMF package to reduce debt risks. (The IMF has since offered additional funding, bringing its total commitment to over \$4.4 billion.) Ruto publicly promised greater transparency on loans from China.²⁶ Kenya asked China for another \$1 billion to finish stalled road projects in late 2023, and for a slower repayment schedule. The IMF has lauded Ruto's economic reforms, but his new taxes, intended to help avert debt distress, have been publicly unpopular.²⁷ Ruto has been outspoken in calling for international finance system reforms, asserting that African nations pay more on average to borrow than wealthier countries, and debt burdens leave many struggling to meet development goals and deal with climate change effects.²⁸

Climate Change and “Green Growth.” Kenya generates most of its electricity from geothermal and hydroelectric sources. The country is developing its wind power capacity, with U.S. support, and is home to Africa's largest wind farm. Ruto has pledged to phase out the use of fossil fuels for electricity by 2030 and urged other African leaders to embrace renewables.²⁹ (Ruto has, meanwhile, continued to express support for mining Kenya's coal deposits.³⁰) As chair of the Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change, he has led Africa's negotiating group at the U.N. Climate Conference of the Parties (COP) talks, highlighting climate impacts that he calls a “living nightmare for millions of Kenyans, and hundreds of millions of Africans.”³¹ Kenya hosted a continental summit on climate action in 2023, and 17 African leaders signed the Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change, Africa's first joint position on the issue. Ruto is pushing a new Africa Green Industrialization Initiative, seeking investment in renewable power projects, and he wants to attract investment from companies seeking to build factories powered by renewable energy to reduce their carbon footprint.³² Kenya is also developing carbon capture facilities.

Humanitarian Issues

Drought, Floods and Food Insecurity. Recurrent drought and high food prices have driven food insecurity in Kenya. Alongside Ethiopia and Somalia, Kenya suffered five successive below-average rainy seasons from 2020 through 2022. Pastoral communities were hit hard—almost three million livestock reportedly died, destroying livelihoods. Cattle raids in the north and Al Shabaab threats have also disrupted livelihoods and affected humanitarian access. El Niño-driven rains in 2024 are facilitating drought recovery, but they have also caused devastating flooding. Over 300 people have been killed by floods and mudslides, and government-ordered demolitions

²⁵ Per the IMF's 2023 Debt Sustainability Analysis, multilateral creditors account for 47% of Kenya's external debt and bilateral creditors 28%. Almost 65% of Kenya's bilateral debt is to non-Paris Club members, mainly loans from China.

²⁶ Reuters, “Kenya publishes loan documents for Chinese-built railway,” November 7, 2022.

²⁷ *Deutsche Welle*, “Kenya: Bumpy first year in office for William Ruto,” September 12, 2023.

²⁸ William Ruto, “If you want our countries to address climate change, first pause our debts,” *New York Times*, October 8, 2023.

²⁹ Antony Sguazzin, “Kenya's Ruto breaks ranks, says Africa must leapfrog fossil fuel,” Bloomberg, October 4, 2022; William Ruto, “Walking Our Talk on Climate Action,” Project Syndicate, May 2023.

³⁰ *Business Daily*, “Treasury targets coal excise duty as President Ruto backs local mining plans,” January 1, 2024.

³¹ For Ruto's speech, see <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/full-speech-read-ruto-s-stinging-message-at-cop27-4012092>.

³² President of the Republic of Kenya, “Green growth is the answer to climate change,” December 2, 2023; and Bloomberg, “Africa's self-appointed climate champion makes the hard sell,” December 8, 2023; Katharine Houreld, Kenyan president aims to attract green investment during U.S. visit, *Washington Post*, May 17, 2024.

of homes and businesses near river banks have caused additional hardship.³³ Some experts say poor urban planning and land management have contributed to the country's flooding problems.³⁴

Refugee Issues. Kenya hosts over 770,000 refugees and asylum seekers, 86% of whom live in camps.³⁵ This total includes over 430,000 Somalis and over 180,000 South Sudanese. In 2016, the Kenyatta government declared that Kenya would no longer host refugees, citing security concerns. Officials later clarified that the aim was to close Dadaab, the largest camp complex, which at the time hosted over 340,000 refugees, most from Somalia. Kenya's High Court blocked Dadaab's closure, ruling it discriminatory and unconstitutional. Authorities again threatened to close Dadaab in 2019 and in 2021 told the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that camp residents would be expelled if UNHCR did not devise a plan to close the Dadaab and Kakuma complexes by 2022. UNHCR developed a plan, but humanitarian activists, arguing returns to Somalia and South Sudan were not sustainable, urged the government to offer refugees durable solutions within Kenya.³⁶ The country has since adopted a law that provides new opportunities, rights, and protections for refugees within Kenya, but it has yet to be implemented. Over 380,000 refugees reside in the Dadaab complex as of May 2024 UN reporting.

Security Concerns

Terrorist activity and conflict in neighboring countries have led Kenya to take an increasingly active role in regional security, but banditry, cattle rustling, poaching, urban crime, and communal disputes place competing domestic demands on Kenya's security resources. Kenya has suffered multiple international terrorist attacks, and the concentration of potential international and domestic targets in Nairobi is a serious concern for Kenyan and foreign security officials.

Northeast Kenya faced a surge in Al Shabaab attacks in 2023, with 279 reported fatalities.³⁷ The uptick occurred in parallel with a Somali offensive against the group, and followed Kenya's declaration that it would reopen its border with Somalia, which Kenya closed when it launched operations in Somalia against Al Shabaab in 2011. Kenya has since postponed the reopening. Ruto has pledged to maintain troops in Somalia after ATMIS's planned withdrawal at the end of 2024 if needed; ATMIS troop contributors and donors are discussing a new mission. Fresh tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia, which contributes the largest number of foreign forces to the fight against Al Shabaab, add to Kenya's regional concerns, as does instability in Ethiopia.

Alongside terrorist threats, Kenya faces pastoralist militia activity in the northwest.³⁸ Military operations to curb bandit attacks and stem small arms proliferation reduced banditry in 2023, but raids and resulting displacement remain an issue. Kenya's Chief of Defense Forces, Gen. Francis Ogolla, died in an April 2024 helicopter crash while visiting troops deployed in the operation.

³³ AP, "Poor Kenyans feel devastated by floods and brutalized by the government's response," May 11, 2024.

³⁴ Sean Avery, "Kenya's devastating floods expose decades of poor urban planning and bad land management," *The Conversation*, May 1, 2024.

³⁵ UNHCR, *Kenya: Registered Refugees and Asylum-Seekers, as of 30 April 2024*.

³⁶ Médecins Sans Frontières, *In Search of Dignity: Refugees in Kenya Face a Reckoning*, December 6, 2021. See also Joshua Craze, "Why the return of displaced people is such a thorny issue in South Sudan," *The New Humanitarian*, January 5, 2022.

³⁷ ACLED, "Assessing Al Shabaab's threat to the region as Somalia joins the East Africa Community," December 8, 2023 and "Kenya-Somalia border: Rising Al-Shabaab threat in the wake of ATMIS drawdown," September 1, 2023.

³⁸ For more on pastoralist and ethnic militia activity, see, e.g., ACLED, "Increasing Security Challenges in Kenya," March 2, 2023 and "Kenya: Government operation brings calm to North Rift region," August 4, 2023.

Police Abuses and Calls for Reform

Police abuses and extrajudicial killings (EJKs) in Kenya have repeatedly drawn an international spotlight, including in the context of anti-terrorism efforts.³⁹ The State Department's 2023 human rights report lists security force abuses, including torture, unlawful killings, and enforced disappearances among Kenya's most serious human rights problems, noting "numerous reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings... particularly of antigovernment demonstrators in protests that took place between March and July." The report describes impunity as a problem "at all levels of government," and as a serious problem across law enforcement agencies. Accountability mechanisms such as the Independent Police Oversight Authority have been criticized for failing to prosecute misconduct. A Kenyan parliamentary report on EJKs and enforced disappearances in 2021 described the issue as a grave concern, noting the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights' documentation of over 1,000 cases since 2013.⁴⁰ Missing Voices, a coalition that tracks police killings and disappearances, has documented over 800 cases from 2019-2023, including 118 killings and 10 enforced disappearances in 2023.⁴¹

Police abuses around elections have been a recurrent problem; police were implicated in over 400 deaths after the 2007 elections and over 100 deaths after the 2017 polls. Ruto pledged to end police abuse and enhance oversight of the force in his campaign, and shortly after he took office, Kenyan prosecutors charged 12 police officers with crimes against humanity over the 2017 post-election violence.⁴² In 2023, though, when the opposition led protests, police responded with violence, which reportedly led to at least 30 deaths; senior Kenyan officials dismissed the allegations of excessive force.⁴³ A taskforce directed by Ruto to study police problems has recommended far-reaching changes to the police and prisons services, identifying underfunding, "endemic" corruption, leadership gaps, and poor human capital management as key challenges.⁴⁴ The taskforce noted that police routinely rank in polls as the country's most corrupt institution, and assessed that the failure to address the problem was fueling a culture of impunity in the force; they also recommended raising police salaries. During the Ruto State Visit, the White House announced \$7 million in new aid to advance and strengthen the modernization and professionalization of Kenya's National Police Service, as well as \$2.2 million to support prison service reforms.

Selected Foreign Relations Issues

East Africa. Kenya has played a peacemaking role in the troubled region, hosting the talks that led to Sudan's 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and facilitating negotiations on conflicts in Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and South Sudan. With U.S. support and President Ruto's approval, former President Kenyatta played a leading role in the AU-mediated ceasefire deal between Ethiopia's government and Tigray authorities in 2022; a Kenyan general leads the AU ceasefire monitoring team. Kenya deployed troops to eastern DRC in 2022 to lead an East African force to stabilize areas affected by a Rwandan-backed rebellion; the force withdrew in late 2023 after DRC authorities complained that East African troops were unwilling to confront the rebels aggressively. Ruto's 2023 offer to mediate between Sudan's warring parties was rejected by its military government, which accused him of bias toward the insurgent Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Sudan recalled its ambassador from Kenya in early 2024 to protest Ruto hosting a visit by RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, aka "Hemedti." More recently, Kenya has sought to mediate between Ethiopia and Somalia to ease tensions over Somaliland.

³⁹ See, e.g., *New York Times*, "Haiti, desperate for peace, turns to police notorious for violence," October 4, 2023; CNN, "Dozens 'disappeared' by security forces, rights group says," July 19, 2016; Al Jazeera, "Killing Kenya," September 23, 2015; and U.N. Development Program, *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, September 2017.

⁴⁰ Standing Committee on Justice, Legal Affairs and Human Rights, *Report on the Inquiry into Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kenya*, Senate, Twelfth Parliament, Republic of Kenya, October 2021.

⁴¹ Missing Voices, *End Police Impunity – 2023 Annual Report*, April 23, 2024.

⁴² AFP, "Kenyan police charged with crimes against humanity over 2017 crackdown," October 28, 2022.

⁴³ "Mudavadi says police brutality, use of excessive force do not happen in Kenya," Citizen (Nairobi), February 15, 2024; and David Njaaga, "Interior CS Indiki refutes claims of police brutality," *The Standard* (Nairobi), July 25, 2023.

⁴⁴ *Report of the National Taskforce on Police Reforms*, November 2023.

Haiti.⁴⁵ In July 2023, Kenya responded to an appeal by the government of Haiti for help with rising gang violence, offering to lead a multinational force to assist Haitian police restore order.⁴⁶ The UN Security Council authorized the Multinational Security Support mission (MSS) in October 2023. The Ruto administration plans to deploy 1,000 police officers, with other countries contributing the remainder of the planned 2,000-person force. Kenya’s parliament approved the government’s request to deploy police to Haiti in late 2023, but Kenya’s High Court blocked the deployment in January, ruling it unconstitutional. The opposition politician who brought the case argued that Kenya needs to prioritize its own security challenges; other observers raised concerns about the human rights record of the Kenyan police.⁴⁷ Per the High Court ruling, a “reciprocal arrangement” with a host government is required for a police deployment. Kenyan and Haitian officials signed that agreement in March, but when Haiti’s prime minister subsequently resigned amid escalating gang violence, Kenyan officials paused the deployment. The formation of a new government in June has paved the way for the Kenyan police, trained in French, to deploy.⁴⁸

Israel/Gaza. Kenya has long-standing ties with Israel, which Kenyan officials call a “special partnership.”⁴⁹ Ruto expressed solidarity with Israel over the October 2023 attacks by Hamas, but faces domestic pressure over Israel’s military operations in Gaza.⁵⁰ Kenya often votes in support of Israeli positions at the United Nations, but it has also voted in favor of full U.N. membership for Palestine. Kenya voted for resolutions calling for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

Russia/Ukraine. Kenya was a vocal critic of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022 when it sat on the U.N. Security Council.⁵¹ The Ruto administration took a more ambiguous stance in early 2023, hosting the foreign ministers of Belarus and Russia and announcing plans for a trade pact with Russia. (Russia-Kenya trade is limited, particularly in comparison to U.S.-Kenya trade; imports from Russia consist primarily of iron, wheat, and fertilizers; Kenya’s main export to Russia is tea.) Kenyan officials subsequently called Russia’s decision to exit the Black Sea Grain Initiative “a stab in the back” that would disproportionately harm the drought-affected Horn of Africa.⁵² Ruto did not attend Russia’s 2023 Africa Summit, and in early 2024, Kenya joined the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, an alliance of countries that supports the defense of Ukraine.

China. China is Kenya’s largest trading partner, and PRC loans—reportedly totaling \$8 billion—account for roughly 64% of its bilateral external debt and 17% of total external debt (the World Bank is Kenya’s largest external creditor).⁵³ While Ruto has sought to strengthen U.S. ties, he has also sought to maintain a “robust friendship” with China, despite anti-China rhetoric during his campaign.⁵⁴ He attended China’s 2023 Belt and Road Forum. When Ruto was Kenyatta’s deputy,

⁴⁵ For more on the situation in Haiti and the proposed mission, see CRS Insight IN12331, *Haiti in Crisis: What Role for a Multinational Security Support Mission?* and CRS Report R47394, *Haiti: Recent Developments and U.S. Policy*.

⁴⁶ Foreign Minister Alfred Mutua (@DrAlfredMutua), X Post, July 29, 2023.

⁴⁷ BBC, “Kenya court blocks police deployment to Haiti,” January 26, 2024; Luke Taylor, “Kenya’s offer to send police to Haiti sparks human rights concerns,” *The Guardian*, August 5, 2023; *New York Times*, “Haiti, desperate for peace, turns to police notorious for violence,” October 4, 2023.

⁴⁸ Abdi Latif Dahir, “Kenya rallies police officers ahead of Haiti deployment,” *New York Times*, May 14, 2024.

⁴⁹ *The East African*, “Kenya, Israel agree to enhance cooperation on health and security,” July 29, 2021.

⁵⁰ *The Star (Nairobi)*, “Kenya stands with Israel, Ruto says amidst war with Palestine,” October 8, 2023; President William Ruto (@WilliamsRuto), X Post, February 1, 2024.

⁵¹ NPR, “Kenyan U.N. Ambassador compares Ukraine’s plight to colonial legacy in Africa,” February 22, 2022.

⁵² BBC, “Russia’s grain deal exit is a stab in the back – Kenya,” July 18, 2023.

⁵³ Fergus Kell, “Kenya’s debt struggles go far deeper than Chinese loans,” Chatham House, May 31, 2023.

⁵⁴ During his campaign, Ruto pledged to deport Chinese nationals doing jobs that could be done by Kenyans. On his post-election shift, see, e.g., VOA, “After anti-China campaign, Kenya’s Ruto does about-face,” September 29, 2022.

their coalition cultivated ties with the Communist Party of China, an effort Ruto's party has continued. After meeting China's ambassador to Kenya in 2023, Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua said, "The United Democratic Alliance is the younger brother of CPC, but it is the party of the future. We want to develop it like CPC."⁵⁵ In polls, Kenyans express greater support for the United States as a model than the PRC, but a majority of Kenyans view China positively.⁵⁶

Wildlife and Environmental Conservation

Heavily reliant on tourism for foreign exchange earnings, Kenya has implemented measures to conserve its wildlife resources and is recognized as a leader in countering wildlife trafficking in Africa. It has a stringent regulatory and legislative environment around poaching and trafficking, and has enjoyed a dramatic drop in elephant and rhino poaching in the past decade.⁵⁷ Many anti-trafficking initiatives are implemented through the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), which enforces wildlife laws and regulations and manages the national parks and reserves. Despite its efforts to curb the illicit wildlife trade, though, Kenya remains a transit country. Corruption and weaknesses in enforcement and prosecution of trafficking laws are an ongoing concern.

The U.S. government has long partnered with Kenya's government and civil society to address these issues and support other conservation efforts. The United States has provided training and equipment to the KWS and supports programs to protect the country's parks and animals. Roughly 65% of Kenya's famous wildlife live outside its KWS-protected parks, and conservation groups have worked with communities to establish over 200 community conservancies to protect wildlife and promote sustainable land use. The United States has supported these conservancies, which protect over 7 million hectares of land. Tourism, much of it wildlife-related, is an important source of revenue (\$2.7 billion in 2023) and jobs.⁵⁸ Kenya lost an estimated \$1 billion in tourism-related revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ruto administration directed an end to Kenya's six-year-old logging ban in 2023, ostensibly to create jobs, but a Kenyan court suspended the decision, leaving the ban in place. Deforestation is a long-standing concern, and environmentalists have warned that lifting the ban would risk reversing the gains Kenya has made to improve its tree cover, regardless of Ruto's proposal to plant 15 billion trees over 10 years.⁵⁹ Kenya's Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to win the Nobel Prize in 2004, was recognized for her tree-planting campaign and her broader contributions to sustainable development, democracy, and peace.

Kenya has sought to stem plastic pollution, including by banning plastic bags and single-use plastics in 2017. With stiff penalties, the law was initially successful, but the smuggling of bags from neighboring countries presents enforcement challenges.⁶⁰ Kenya is part of USAID's Save Our Seas Initiative, which supports sustainable waste management and recycling on the coast.

⁵⁵ CapitalFM, "Kenya: UDA seeks support of Communist Party of China to Strengthen Structures," August 17, 2023.

⁵⁶ Afrobarometer, "Africans welcome China's influence but maintain democratic aspirations," November 15, 2021; Pew Research Center, "China's approach to foreign policy gets largely negative reviews in 24-country survey," July 27, 2023; Gallup, "U.S. loses soft power edge in Africa," April 26, 2024.

⁵⁷ Andres Schipani, "How Kenya turned the tide against ivory poachers," *Financial Times*, April 27, 2021.

⁵⁸ Bloomberg, "Kenya tourism earnings jump 32% to surpass pre-pandemic level," March 30, 2024.

⁵⁹ Lisa Fuchs, "Kenya's logging ban has been lifted – it's a political decision and a likely setback for conservation," July 22, 2023.

⁶⁰ NPR, "The toughest plastic bag ban is failing: A tale of smugglers, dumps and dying goats," August 9, 2023.

U.S. Relations and Assistance

The United States and Kenya have historically close ties. Over 100,000 Americans live in or visit Kenya every year, per the U.S. Embassy; the country is a popular destination in Africa for U.S. tourists. U.S. Embassy Nairobi is designated a high-threat, high-risk post, given terrorism concerns. Over 600 U.S. servicemembers, civilians, and contractors are in Kenya to support counterterrorism (CT) efforts in the region. Some are deployed to Cooperative Security Location (CSL) Camp Simba, a U.S. “base within a base” on the coast near the Somali border.

Governance, human rights, and corruption concerns in Kenya sometimes complicate the bilateral relationship, and abuses by Kenyan security forces have posed challenges at times for security cooperation. Successive U.S. Administrations have pushed for greater accountability for political violence and unresolved corruption cases. In 2024, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), of which the United States is a member, added Kenya to its “grey list” of countries subject to increased monitoring for money laundering and terrorism financing.

Bilateral relations have fluctuated in the past fifteen years. The ICC cases caused friction with the Obama Administration, and Kenyatta’s government looked to other international partners, such as China, for diplomatic and economic support. During the tense period after the 2017 elections, the U.S. ambassador played a role in facilitating Kenyatta and Odinga’s rapprochement, suggesting continued U.S. influence despite strains in the relationship. The Trump and Kenyatta administrations took steps to improve ties, and announced a Strategic Partnership when Kenyatta visited the White House in 2018. Nearly \$900 million in commercial deals were announced during the visit, and direct flights, once blocked over U.S. security concerns, started later that year. The Trump Administration launched a Bilateral Strategic Dialogue with Kenya in 2019 and free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations in 2020.

Kenya was the opening stop on Antony Blinken’s first trip to sub-Saharan Africa as Secretary of State in 2021, when he attended the Bilateral Strategic Dialogue. He stressed the importance of the strategic partnership and Kenya’s regional peacemaking role during the 2022 U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, and a memorandum of understanding on civil nuclear cooperation was signed. First Lady Jill Biden visited Kenya in early 2023. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin went to Kenya on his first sub-Saharan Africa tour in 2023, during which he signed a five-year Framework for Defense Cooperation. Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns visited in early 2024.

The Biden Administration has expressed support for a range of Kenyan initiatives, including on climate action and renewable energy. During Ruto’s 2024 State Visit, the two governments made commitments on democracy, human rights, public health, security, and countering corruption, among other issues.⁶¹ They announced new initiatives on education, sustainable development, climate action, clean energy, and carbon management, and they unveiled a new partnership on semiconductor manufacturing in Kenya to strengthen the global supply chain. They launched the Nairobi-Washington Vision, which calls on the international community to help developing countries manage debt while investing in economic growth. The White House pledged new funds for police professionalization, prison reforms, health, education, agriculture, and civil society. Two resolutions introduced during the visit, S.Res. 704 and H.Res. 1254, recognize Kenya’s strategic importance to the United States and celebrate the 60th anniversary of bilateral ties.

U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Meg Whitman has focused on pitching Kenya to U.S. businesses and investors; trade and investment were top priorities for Kenya during Ruto’s State Visit.⁶²

⁶¹ White House, *Fact Sheet: Kenya State Visit to the United States*, May 23, 2024.

⁶² Nahal Toosi, “Meg Whitman’s trying to be a different kind of US ambassador. Washington is noticing,” *POLITICO*, May 22, 2024.

Microsoft and Coca Cola, among other U.S. businesses, announced major private sector deals around the visit. The U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), which has facilitated investments in renewable energy, e-mobility, digital connectivity, and infrastructure in Kenya, revealed new commitments during the State Visit that bring its Kenya portfolio to over \$1 billion. The DFC plans to open an office in Nairobi in 2025. The Biden Administration, instead of continuing the FTA negotiations, is pursuing a Strategic Trade and Investment Partnership (STIP) with Kenya, which the U.S. Trade Representative describes as an “ambitious roadmap for enhanced cooperation.” For more, see CRS In Focus IF11526, *U.S.-Kenya Trade Negotiations*.

U.S. Assistance. Kenya is routinely among the top recipients of U.S. foreign aid in sub-Saharan Africa. The United States allocated roughly \$477 million in FY2023 bilateral aid, largely focused on HIV/AIDS and other health programs, for Kenya, which also received over \$250 million in FY2023 humanitarian aid and additional Food for Peace and refugee response assistance.⁶³ The Administration’s FY2025 request of over \$496 million for Kenya is lower than the FY2024 request of over \$511 million. The decrease reflects reduced democracy and governance funding.

The United States is the largest donor to Kenya’s health sector, which saw child mortality drop by more than half and life expectancy rise by over 15 years from 2000-2020.⁶⁴ The United States donated over 12 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to Kenya and has cumulatively invested over \$8 billion there under the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The U.S. Embassy says Kenya, which has some 1.4 million people living with HIV-AIDS, is on the verge of achieving the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets (95% of people with HIV diagnosed, 95% of people who know they have HIV on anti-retroviral therapy, and 95% of those on treatment virally suppressed).⁶⁵ Kenya’s reported prevalence rate has nearly halved in the past 20 years, to 3.7% in 2023, per UNAIDS; new infections are down by 78% and related deaths by 68% since 2013. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research-Africa have long-standing partnerships with Kenya, including on disease surveillance.

The United States has supported an array of efforts to help build Kenya’s capacity to counter terrorist attacks and secure its borders. Kenya is the largest sub-Saharan African recipient of State Department-administered anti-terrorism assistance for law enforcement. News reports suggest that training and aid via the U.S. Special Program for Embassy Augmentation and Response (SPEAR) helped an elite Kenyan unit respond rapidly to the 2019 DusitD2 hotel attack in Nairobi, significantly limiting the loss of life.⁶⁶ Separately, the Department of Defense (DOD) has notified Congress of over \$400 million in CT “train and equip” support to Kenya in the past decade, including to support its role as a major troop contributor in the AU mission in Somalia. The Massachusetts National Guard is paired with Kenya in the State Partnership Program.

The Biden Administration has been a leading advocate for the MSS mission in Haiti and Kenya’s role in it. To date, the State Department and DOD have pledged over \$380 million in support for the mission to facilitate training, equipment, logistics and life support services, and salary support for participating officers. Some Members of Congress have expressed reservations about the mission; the State Department obligated \$109 million in late June, despite congressional holds, for equipment to enable the Kenyan deployment.⁶⁷

⁶³ USAID, *Kenya Assistance Overview*, April 2024.

⁶⁴ State Department, “The United States and Kenya: Strategic Partners,” November 16, 2021.

⁶⁵ U.S. Embassy Nairobi, “PEPFAR in Kenya,” August 10, 2023, available at <https://ke.usembassy.gov/pepfar/>.

⁶⁶ Reuters, “After Westgate Debacle, Quick End to Latest Kenyan Attack Shows Progress,” January 20, 2019.

⁶⁷ Senate Foreign Relations Committee, “Risch on Biden Admin’s Decision to Override Congress on Haiti MSS Funding,” June 20, 2024.

Author Information

Lauren Ploch Blanchard
Specialist in African Affairs

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.