

## FPC CALLS ON TONY BLAIR TO FUND AN AFRICAN AL-JAZEERA

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The Foreign Policy Centre (FPC) today called on the UK and the EU to fund an 'Al Jazeera for Africa'. A new pamphlet by Philip Fiske de Gouveia, director of the FPC's Public Diplomacy programme, examines the idea first raised by Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa.

In *An African Al-Jazeera? Mass media and the African Renaissance*, the author argues that, just as Al-Jazeera has raised the bar for reporting in the Middle East, so an indigenous, multi-media, Africa-wide broadcaster would contribute much to good governance and development across the continent. The report makes practical recommendations for setting up the broadcaster. As a first step, the report calls on the UK government, in partnership with stakeholders in Africa and the EU, to announce funding for a feasibility study, to establish a working group (with a majority African element), and to convene a conference to draw up a plan of action.

'African countries need effective media because they cannot hope to democratise, prosper, or engage with the rest of the world as equals otherwise,' the author said.

'African stakeholders should work together to establish an effective, independent pan-African broadcaster. Such an entity would do much to improve the continent's political and economic prospects over the medium to long-term.'

'At a cost of around £1 million, a series of UK-sponsored working groups and a small conference would comprehensively examine both the feasibility and design of an indigenous pan-African broadcaster. Ultimately, such a broadcaster could be established at a cost of around £70 million per year, over a five year period.'

The FPC's Director of Research, Dr Greg Austin, said that 'this is exactly the sort of initiative that would help Tony Blair meet his ambitious goal of trying to support a quantum leap in Africa's political and economic development. It's an African idea that Africans can implement, but which the UK can easily support, especially using the BBC World Service as a model since it broadcasts in many languages.'

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