

## Africa calls for map to show continent's true size

21st August 2025



The African Union (AU) has called for an end to a widely used map that shrinks the African continent. The map is called the Mercator projection. It was created by mapmaker Gerardus Mercator in 1569. In the 18th century, it became the international

standard for sailors. It is now the world's most widely used map. However, it does not show the true size of different nations. Countries farther away from the Equator look larger than they really are, whereas countries closer to the Equator appear smaller. The AU is supporting a campaign called Correct the Map. It is also calling for a design that shows the correct size of Africa, and of other continents and countries.

The deputy chairperson of the AU spoke about the Mercator map. She told Reuters: "It might seem to be just a map, but in reality, it is not." She said the Mercator gave the impression that Africa was less important. She said Africa is the world's second-largest continent by area and has more than one billion people. The executive director of the non-profit organization Africa No Filter agreed. She said the Mercator map was "the world's longest misinformation and disinformation campaign and it just simply has to stop". The group Speak Up Africa wants people to use the 2018 Equal Earth map, on which "Africa appears 14 times larger than Greenland, as it actually is".

**Sources:** theguardian.com / cnn.com / correctthemap.org / wikipedia.org / equal-earth.com

### Writing

Map-reading should be a subject taught in schools. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

Africa / maps / mapmakers / sailors / nations / the Equator / design / continents / chairperson / reality / important / misinformation / disinformation / campaign / equal

### True / False

- 1) The African Union wants people to stop using a map that shrinks Africa. T / F
- 2) The world's most widely used map was created in 1569. T / F
- 3) On the widely used map, northern countries look smaller than they are. T / F
- 4) On the widely used map, countries on the Equator look larger. T / F
- 5) The article says Africa has the world's second largest population. T / F
- 6) The Africa No Filter group said the widely used map misinformed people. T / F
- 7) The Speak Up Africa group wants people to use a gender equality map. T / F
- 8) Greenland is 14 times smaller than Africa. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                         |             |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1. <b>map</b>           | a. feeling  |
| 2. <b>created</b>       | b. accurate |
| 3. <b>international</b> | c. region   |
| 4. <b>true</b>          | d. chart    |
| 5. <b>supporting</b>    | e. really   |
| 6. <b>seem</b>          | f. global   |
| 7. <b>impression</b>    | g. backing  |
| 8. <b>area</b>          | h. plainly  |
| 9. <b>simply</b>        | i. made     |
| 10. <b>actually</b>     | j. appear   |

### Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you think of Google Maps or Apple Maps?
- c) Why is it important to get the size of continents right?
- d) Do you think the Mercator map is misinformation?
- e) What do you think of the Equal Earth map?
- f) How much do you like the map of your country?
- g) When was the last time you used a map?
- h) What questions would you like to ask a mapmaker?

## Phrase Match

1. In the 18th century, it became the international
  2. It is now the world's most widely
  3. Countries farther
  4. countries closer to the Equator
  5. a design that shows the correct
  6. the impression that Africa
  7. Africa is the world's second-largest
  8. The executive director of the non-
  9. misinformation and disinformation
  10. Africa appears 14 times
- a. used map
  - b. campaign
  - c. size of Africa
  - d. was less important
  - e. larger than Greenland
  - f. away from the Equator
  - g. profit organization
  - h. appear smaller
  - i. continent by area
  - j. standard for sailors

## Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think of maps?
- b) Do you prefer online maps of maps on paper?
- c) What do you think of the map that shrinks Africa?
- d) Should all maps show the true size of countries?
- e) Are you good at reading maps?
- f) How often do you use a map?
- g) How well do you know the map of the world?
- h) What changes would you like to see on the world map?

## Spelling

1. a wiedly used map
2. the African notecnitn
3. the international standard for lsarsio
4. the true size of different sanntio
5. The AU is supporting a pgacainm
6. a sdnieg that shows the correct size
7. The deyutp chairperson of the AU
8. but in ayrieti, it is not
9. gave the nsisipemro that Africa was less important
10. director of the non-ifrtop organization
11. Africa No Filter aegdre
12. Africa pperasa 14 times larger than Greenland

### Answers – Synonym Match

|      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. d | 2. i | 3. f | 4. b | 5. g  |
| 6. j | 7. a | 8. c | 9. h | 10. e |

## Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.  
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1.  | What is the name of the world's most widely used map?                      |
| 2.  | When was the world's most widely used map created?                         |
| 3.  | Who used the world's most widely used map in the 18 <sup>th</sup> century? |
| 4.  | What does the world's most widely used map not show?                       |
| 5.  | How do countries far from the Equator look on the widely used map?         |
| 6.  | Who spoke to the Reuters news agency about the map?                        |
| 7.  | What is the world's second-largest continent by area?                      |
| 8.  | What is the population of Africa?  |
| 9.  | What map does the Speak Up Africa group want people to use?                |
| 10. | What is Africa 15 times larger than?                                       |

## Speaking – Maps

Rank these with your partner. Put the best maps at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Road map
- Physical map
- World map
- Time zones map
- Tourist map
- Political map
- Weather map
- Historical map

### Answers – True False

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | T | 2 | T | 3 | F | 4 | F | 5 | F | 6 | T | 7 | F | 8 | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.