

**Ambassador Kelly presented his credentials to President Ismail Omar Guelleh this morning**

Good morning, your Excellency. My name is Tom Kelly and it is a great honor and privilege for me to meet you and to assume the role of U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti. On behalf of the President of the United States, Barack Obama, I wish to convey his warmest greetings to your Excellency and your government, and to the Djiboutian people. During the next three years, I will work with Djibouti to advance President Obama's goals to deepen the ties between our two countries. On May 5 in Washington, President Obama met with you to discuss the strategic partnership our countries enjoy, and to explore ways to further broaden that engagement. Out of those discussions came the agreement called the Implementing Arrangement.

The Arrangement is part of an effort by the United States to strengthen ties with Africa. To advance that effort, President Obama again welcomed you to Washington in August for a U.S. -Africa Leaders Summit. The Summit was the largest event any U.S. President has held with African heads of state, bringing together leaders from 50 countries to speak about trade and investment in Africa. For President Obama, the event emphasized America's commitment to Africa's security, its democratic development, and its people. President Obama put it this way: "I do not see the countries and peoples of Africa as a world apart; I see Africa as a fundamental part of our interconnected world – partners with America on behalf of the future we want for all of our children. That partnership must be grounded in mutual responsibility and mutual respect."

Mutual responsibility and mutual respect is a good way to describe the relationship between the United States and Djibouti. Today, we work closely together on regional security. Djibouti has agreed to host the U.S. military installation at Camp Lemonnier for many years to come through the Implementing Arrangement. The citizens of the United States, including President Obama, are grateful to Djibouti for welcoming our military colleagues to your country. Through our security cooperation, and together with international partners, we have made impressive gains in the fight against piracy. There has

not been a successful hijacking of a commercial ship in the Gulf of Aden since 2012.

Djibouti may be a small country, but its contribution to regional security is immense. In that regard, I would like to acknowledge Djibouti's participation in the African Union Mission in Somalia. For many years, Djibouti's leadership and people have engaged in the noble cause of bringing peace to the people of Somalia. Sacrifice has accompanied your contributions. The United States salutes the resolve of Djibouti's leadership and people to continue this important work, despite the loss of Djiboutian soldiers and violence perpetrated by terrorists. I wish to reiterate today the commitment of the United States to remain Djibouti's partner in our shared goal of ridding this region of the evils of terrorism.

To secure the promise of the future, Djibouti's economy must continue to develop. We are proud that the United States contributes more than 18 billion Djiboutian francs a year to Djibouti's economy. I am also pleased that the United States is Djibouti's third largest employer. We employ more than 2,000 Djiboutians at Camp Lemonnier and the U.S. Embassy. But we understand that more Djiboutians must reap the benefits of economic growth. To that end, the United States will help Djibouti attract U.S. investment. I will personally reach out to U.S. businesses to discuss investment opportunities in Djibouti. We will also help Djibouti to train a workforce adapted to the demands of the global economy, and to assist Djibouti to achieve its goal of energy independence.

These actions are but a few in a number of concrete steps that the leaders of the United States and Djibouti have outlined for broader cooperation. President Obama and you, Mr. President, in May also made a commitment to creating a new forum to discuss areas of mutual interest and benefit. To implement this Binational Forum, the United States hopes to send a team of technical experts to Djibouti before the end of the year. In cooperation with Djiboutian experts, we will prepare for high-level bilateral meetings to take place in Washington next year.

I look forward to advancing the many initiatives that I have mentioned here, and in developing additional ones in partnership with our Djiboutian friends.

Let me close by thanking you all, the many Djiboutians that I have already met, and your Excellency, for extending me such a warm and gracious welcome to your country of “encounters and exchange.” I am very happy to be here.