

Excellency Minister(s) of Commerce

Ambassadors and representatives of Diplomatic Missions, International Organizations, and Civil Society

Distinguished guests and colleagues – especially the Open Society Representative who is our cherished former colleague,

Welcome to the U.S. Embassy! We are pleased to host you for this AGOA conference.

Almost one year ago, I accompanied President Alpha Conde to meet President Obama at the White House in Washington. At that meeting, President Conde asked President Obama to restore Guinea's AGOA eligibility, and President Obama agreed. So here we are today to discuss how AGOA can work for you.

AGOA is a win-win partnership between the U.S. and Guinea, because trade between nations builds ties far beyond day-to-day business; trade will foster entrepreneurship, innovation and job growth not only in Guinea but in the United States too.

President Obama has emphasized four goals in our relations with Sub-Saharan Africa. They are: to strengthen democratic institutions, to spur economic growth, trade and investment, to advance peace and security and to promote opportunity and development. AGOA will play an important role.

Improving Guinea's and the sub-region's trade competitiveness by encouraging diversification of exports beyond natural resources ensure that jobs and income and other benefits of trade of manufacturing and economic development are experienced as broadly as possible throughout Guinean society and do not benefit only the few.

The discussions we begin today centering on the questions of how to use AGOA to benefit Guinean entrepreneurs begins what we foresee as years of growing partnership on AGOA and other economic issues. We look forward to a close and fruitful trade relationship between the U.S. Embassy and the Government of Guinea, civil society, and most especially with Guinea's entrepreneurial private sector, particularly women and youth.

Thank you for participating with us today. I wish you a productive conference.

Talking Points for AGOA Conference Opening Ceremony, June 27, 2012.

1. [Customary greetings: Minister of Commerce, GOG representatives, civil society, distinguished guests]
2. Guinea's re-admittance to AGOA eligibility is a direct result of the personal request made by President Conde to President Obama during his visit to Washington in July 2011, and has been made possible by Guinea's progress toward democracy and a free market economy following the successful and peaceful presidential elections in 2010. Guinea's readmission is a sign of the progress the country is making towards a new democratic, prosperous future.
3. AGOA is a win-win partnership; increased trade encourages entrepreneurship, innovation, and job growth in Guinea and in the United States. It also builds ties between peoples and nations that can facilitate and expand cooperation in other areas beyond day-to-day business.
4. AGOA is a key element in the new U.S. Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) for sub-Saharan Africa, which sets forth four strategic objectives: (1) strengthen democratic institutions; (2) spur economic growth, trade and investment; (3) advance peace and security; and (4) promote opportunity and development.
5. The Policy directive highlights the fact that the United States wants to see Africa succeed, not only because it is good for Africa, but because it is good for America as well. This new approach recognizes that it is in the interest of the United States and our African partners to improve the region's trade competitiveness while at the same time encouraging the diversification of exports beyond natural resources, and ensuring that the benefits from increased growth are broad-based, and shared more equitably by the people of Guinea and rather than benefiting the few.
6. Today's conference is only the beginning of what we expect will be years of continuing partnership on AGOA and other economic issues. We look forward to working with the Government of Guinea, civil society groups, and the private sector to empower Guinea's entrepreneurs, particularly women and youth, to achieve their potential for success, and to further strengthen and increase trade links between Guinea and the United States.

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