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For immediate release

Ambassador's remarks for AGOA Event

Guinea has the products that we in the United States want and need;

Guinea has a tradition and a culture of entrepreneurship;

Together we share a Guinean-American community that has prospered across many fields, but whose income derives largely from commerce.

AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, is a decade-long initiative to weave the three facts together in the interest of our common prosperity.

Let me offer a few examples that I think all Guineans can understand:

A few weeks ago, a Guinean friend gave me a box of mangos, delicious sweet fruit from Upper Guinea that I have been enjoying ever since. The last time I was home in the United States, I saw that in my local supermarket, mangos of a far lesser

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quality were selling for GF 20,000 each. My friend from Kankan may not know this, but he gave me over 100 dollars worth of mangos.

Over the weekend, I was walking in the vicinity of Tsumbe where I saw women selling palm nuts in the market. Global demand for palm oil is at an all time high, as are global prices. Guinea has the climate, the soil, the water and the knowledge to be a major global producer, enriching people up and down the value chain.

While in the Futa Djallon region last year, I bought Christmas presents for my family back home. The beautiful indigo cloth of the Futa, produced by local manufacturers working with one of our Peace Corps volunteers, was by far the best gift I gave last year, and all my friends and relatives are now hounding me for more of Guinea's treasures.

Walk into a Starbucks anywhere in the world and you can see that this is a great time to be a coffee producing country. All those coffee beans drying on the side of the road in Forest Region should be selling for \$25 per kilo in the United States, creating wealth from N'zerekore to Washington.

Mr. Prime Minister ... through our participation in the HIPC process, we recognized the Government of Guinea for its sound stewardship of the economy at the macro-level. The performance of the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank have been commendable, but as the President of the Republic likes to say, HIPC does not put food on the table.

We need to work together for things that do put food on the table.

As I approach my first anniversary in Guinea, I am more and more certain that the poverty we see is not cultural, it is not genetic, and it is not divinely ordained. To the contrary, Guineans from all four regions and all communities share a rich

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commercial tradition backed by a strong work ethic. The poverty is man-made, and – to be honest – government made over decades of mismanagement.

The good news is that the errors of men and governments can be fixed. Your administration has started down the path, but you know far better than I how much more needs to be done.

I am personally an optimist by nature, and I believe that as the American Ambassador in Guinea, I represent and optimistic people. Guinea's problems are clear to see, but I see with equal clarity grounds for optimism.

Mr. Prime Minister ... I walked across the bridge in Forecariah and spoke to some young men whose job was to load and unload sand from river boats for sale to building companies. They told me they worked 8-10 hours a day, six days a week, all year long. Any Guinean or any "fote" who says that people here don't want to work need to go to your home town and talk to these guys.

Those young men, and the success of the Guinean community in the United States and elsewhere, show that your DNA is fine. Finally, during Ramadan, it is appropriate to recognize that God has blessed Guinea with an abundance of natural resources.

Our common goal is to build a Guinea that is as hardworking, as decent and as enterprising as her people. If we can do that, Guinea will succeed.

We are here today to inaugurate Guinea's National AGOA Committee, to help build that common prosperity.

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