

Remarks DCM Sandra Clark

Building Blocks for GIST Boot Camp

DATE/TIME: April 21, 2016 @ 4 pm

LOCATION: Hotel de Ville, Dakar

(As prepared)

It is an honor to be here today for the Global Innovation through Science and Technology or GIST Demo Day. The GIST initiative, a public private partnership led by the U.S. Department of State, seeks to empower young science and technology innovators to become part of the global community of GIST entrepreneurs.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our participants from across Francophone Africa. In addition to Senegal, we have teams from Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Rwanda, and Togo. Thank you for making the journey to Dakar to participate. We are happy to have you here. I am sure that my counterparts at the U.S. Embassies in your countries will be eager to hear your feedback about this experience!

I'd like to recognize and thank VentureWell and their local partner, CTIC, for organizing this startup boot camp.

GIST is based on a simple idea. When young innovators have the skills and mentoring they need, they are more likely to turn their ideas into start-ups and ultimately successful businesses. The GIST initiative is committed to identifying and supporting young science and technology entrepreneurs to achieve the dream of creating a successful startup company through skills development, networking, and financial advice.

As President Obama said, “We believe entrepreneurs can create jobs that fortify relationships between countries, build global markets, and help fulfill the dreams of all who desire the freedom to make of their lives what they will.”

Science and technology innovation is integral to economic development and job creation. Societies that value education and free markets, that offer opportunity for all, including women, and that encourage risk-taking tend give rise to successful entrepreneurs and to positively impact innovation.

Scientific and technical knowledge, talent, and projects are not defined by national borders. 21st century knowledge-based economies will compete in an increasingly global scientific and technological environment. Technological change now proceeds at such an incredibly rapid pace that it is hard to imagine, much less predict, what and where new transformative possibilities will emerge even two decades from now.

I know that you all have been working hard during this week’s boot camp and that, in a few moments, some of you will be presenting your pitches. I imagine that you are very focused, and perhaps a bit nervous, as you prepare.

So, I will not keep you long but I want to emphasize that each of you exemplifies the talent, motivation, and ingenuity that can drive prosperity and security, both in your own communities and globally. I hope that you will share the spark that got you started with other young entrepreneurs.

I have met many remarkable young Senegalese striking out to establish their own enterprises. They definitely understand the concept of business, but they also care deeply about their country and want to make life better for those who follow.

I am certain you, too, will find ways to build socially responsible businesses – making money but also improving the lives of those around you and caring for those whom you employ.

I wish you all great success with your ventures.

