



**Remarks for James P. Zumwalt
U.S. Ambassador to Senegal
Graduation Ceremony of the first cohort of
YALI Regional Leadership Center West Africa-Dakar,
June 30, 2016**

(As prepared)

Minister of Youth
Representatives of the diplomatic corps
Madame the director of USAID
Managing Director of CESAG
Director of the YALI RLC West Africa Dakar
Private sector partners
Representative of young African leaders
Private sector partners
Other young African leaders
Dear guests

Congratulations to all of the 98 men and women from 11 different countries here today to receive certificates marking the successful completion of a five-week intensive course under President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative.

Please let's all give them a round of applause.

This event is to celebrate you, to celebrate your achievement, and celebrate Africa's youth leadership.

Today marks the start of your new journey as leaders in your respective communities, businesses, and work places.

The leadership tools, practical experiences, and knowledge you have received these past five weeks, I hope has enhanced your ability to inspire others. .

In your quest for excellence and determination to achieve great things for you and your communities, please know that you can count on the support of the American people through YALI.

YALI Regional Leadership Centers in Dakar, Accra, Nairobi, and Pretoria are all supported by the U.S. Government in partnership with the private sector.

The U.S. Government, through USAID, has committed nearly 50 million dollars to support the operation of the four RLCs providing youth development as well as program management expertise to help them succeed.

I know a sense of community has emerged from these intensive weeks of learning, sharing, and living together, creating the foundations for new networks where you can help each other thrive.

As graduates of the Dakar RLC, you are now part of the YALI alumni family along with the Mandela Washington fellows, who have received similar leadership training back in the States.

You now have access to the YALI international network. Established by President Obama in 2013, the network already includes over 200,000 members across the continent. It provides online courses and materials, and connects members with global leaders in their fields.

YALI is a force for transformational change, and you are in the driver's seat. You can help lead Africa toward growth, prosperity, and security, to the benefit of all.

The YALI program is rooted in partnerships between the public and private sectors and prestigious African organizations responsible for its implementation.

I want to thank YALI Dakar's private sector partners: MasterCard, Sonatel, Tigo, Citi, Microsoft, and the Mara Foundation.

Let me also congratulate *Centre Africain des Etudes Supérieur* – CESAG [Sehzag], Synapse Center and West African Research Center (WARC) for their daily engagement to successfully implement a program of such importance and complexity. Together they have brought the Dakar YALI Regional Center to life.

Honorable Minister of Youth and Employment, thank you for agreeing to co-chair today's event.

Your presence here, today, with the wide array of guests from government, diplomatic representations from fifteen countries, the private sector, and non- governmental organizations reaffirms the importance we all attach to the promotion of Africa's youth.

Young leaders, before wishing you safe travels back home, I would like to leave you with a quote from President Obama: *“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”*

To all of you, I offer my congratulations, and best wishes for your success and that of your countries, and the African continent.

Thank you for your attention.