

Speech
Chargé d'affaires, *ad interim* Sandra Clark

Opening of the AFRICOM Pandemic Response Exercise
Dakar
June 2, 2014

(As prepared)

Distinguished Republic of Senegal officials,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honored to be here this morning. Today's event recognizes an important phase of the Republic of Senegal's National and Senegalese Armed Forces Pandemic Disaster Preparedness / Response Plan and the Senegal Armed Forces Military Assistance to Civil Authority Disaster Contingency Plan. These documents will guide an effective response during a global pandemic emergency or other disaster you may face. Managing a severe pandemic, from planning to post operation phases, is a shared priority of the United States of America and the Republic of Senegal. The American people have supported this significant undertaking through the last four years with total contributions in excess of \$1,300,000.

Your participation in today's program underscores your strong commitment to be prepared to meet natural disaster and pandemic threats before they arise. The costs of not doing so have been tragically clear in recent years. Even when preparedness methods are routinely drilled and in place, human and economic damage cannot be completely prevented. We appreciate Senegal's cooperation in developing these plans. We could not have done it without you. We have seen important relationships established and strengthened throughout the process. We congratulate the Ministries that participated -- you should be proud of your achievements. THANK YOU for your dedication and partnership. This project will be instrumental in maintaining the safety of the Senegalese people -- meaning, you, and all of your families.

I would like also to call attention to the importance of close cooperation between national military and civil authority leaders, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other civil society groups in mitigating potential disasters. All of these actors play an important role in these efforts.

Innovative collaboration between the United States Agency for International Development and United States Africa Command formed the basis of U.S. engagement with Senegal. Today, we celebrate the efforts which culminated in these plans. They include wide and inclusive representation from the Republic of Senegal in several Pandemic Tabletop Exercises that were held in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo. This week's Validation Exercise is the culmination of those Exercises, as well as of a 15-country Regional National Pandemic Response Validation Conference in 2012.

The resulting innovative pandemic programming implemented by USAFRICOM is aimed at long-term sustainable results -- much like USAID programs. This program is an excellent example of President Obama's vision of expanded cooperation and coordinated efforts among American diplomats, military staff, and development professionals to promote effective results and service through programs sponsored by the American people for the Senegalese people.

To the participants in attendance, I hope your experience in today's session and over the next several days will be informative and productive. I hope what you learn continues to build on the knowledge required to enhance your service to the great nation of the Republic of Senegal and your fellow Senegalese. Your ministries and branches of service have selected you to attend this event because of your stellar performance and leadership potential.

I am now proud to witness the unveiling of the Republic of Senegal National Pandemic Disaster Contingency Response Plan and Armed Forces of Senegal Military Assistance to Civil Authority Disaster Contingency Plan. Thank you for your attendance, and best wishes for a successful week.