

**Remarks for Ambassador James P. Zumwalt
ECOWAP + 10 and Joint Sector Review
November 17, 2015, 9:00 am
International Conference Center, Dakar**

(As prepared)

Excellency, the President of the Republic of Senegal
Excellences, Heads of State of ECOWAS Member States
President of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States
President of the West African Economic and Monetary Union Commission
Representatives of the African Union and of the New Partnership for Agricultural Development
Ministers of ECOWAS countries
Members of the Diplomatic Corps in Senegal
Representatives of International Organizations
Representatives of West African farmer's organizations
Members of civil society
Dear participants

Good morning.

Thank you for inviting me to speak before participants of this important Forum.

The United States wants to strengthen our partnership with West Africa and of the region as a whole. Together with the Economic Community of West African States and the New Partnership for Africa's Development - we want to accompany you pursue your objectives of reducing poverty and achieving a sustainable development path.

In the words of President Obama, "America believes in Africa as a region of growing opportunity and promise, for Africa, for America, and for our people and our economies."

Ten years ago, ECOWAS established the Agricultural Policy for ECOWAS, known as ECOWAP. Over those ten years, the U.S. Government, through USAID and the Peace Corps, has collaborated with participants in today's Forum to increase agricultural growth in West Africa.

Let me take a moment to mention a few specific examples.

Through USAID, we support the Africa-led Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and its target of a 6 percent agricultural growth rate by 2015.

USAID's coordinates closely with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); we supported on a regional investment plan (RAIP) and a regional agricultural agency in working towards this growth target.

USAID is also helping to strengthen the capacity of regional institutions to lessen chronic vulnerability in West Africa. These partners include the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel and the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development. Key steps include creating drought early warning systems, increasing farmer access to weather information, and disseminating agricultural statistics.

More specifically, USAID helped elaborate the Regional Food Reserve concept, the Trade Policy Document, the Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy, the Zero Hunger by 2025 initiative, the Regional Social Safety Net support program and, the Regional Offensive for Sustainable Rice Production in West Africa.

USAID direct support to the Agricultural Policy of ECOWAS from 2003 to 2015 totaled approximately: \$7,500,000. We are proud of our commitment to better the lives of people throughout the region. We will continue these efforts.

I would like to particularly thank Senegal for hosting today's meeting. I congratulate ECOWAS, under President Sall's leadership, for implementing the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy and its Regional Agricultural Investment Program.

We also commend Senegal for organizing, parallel to this conference, a meeting on a regional initiative for sustainable and sustained rice development in this region. We support the goal that West Africa will become rice self-sufficient by 2025. Thanks to President Sall's efforts, Senegal is already firmly on that path to rice self-sufficiency.

And last, I applaud ECOWAS for undertaking this "Joint Sector Review" and the seven national joint reviews in accordance with the Malabo Declaration. The results of your work will help the region to address gaps in agriculture policies and production, and improve upon the first generation of ECOWAP programs.

Thank you for allowing the U.S. government to be a partner in this vital process. I am sure that we will all learn from this dynamic and inclusive review in order to advance our common development goals for a more prosperous West Africa.

Thank you for your kind attention.