



**Opening of IBM Regional Office in Dakar  
Ribbon Cutting Ceremony  
Remarks  
Ambassador Marcia Bernicat  
Monday, May 16, 2011**

Minister of Communications, Telecommunications and Spokesperson of the Government,  
Mr. Moustapha Guirassi,

Distinguished guests,

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen for joining me for the opening ceremony of the IBM regional office.

Let's welcome our very special guests from IBM, including Mr. James Stallings, IBM General Manager for Global Markets Systems and Technology.

After ten years of absence, I am very pleased to welcome you back to Senegal. I can think of no better base from which to re-launch operations in sub-Saharan Africa. IBM, of course, is no stranger to Senegal, or to Dakar. On Boulevard Léopold Sédar Senghor, there is a landmark building still known as the "IBM building," even after years of absence. Probably a sign that you were always meant to return!

On occasions like this, I am particularly proud to be the U. S. Ambassador to Senegal. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to celebrate another success. IBM's return to Dakar is just one more example of positive progress in terms of increased trade and investment between the United States and Senegal.

In fact, some recent developments suggest that Senegal is becoming increasingly open to doing business with the U. S. The U.S.-Senegal trade balance was \$218 million in 2010, up from \$213 million in 2009. In one year, U. S. exports to Senegal increased by \$5 million.

Half-way through 2011, total U. S. direct foreign investment in Senegal is already estimated at approximately \$150 million. Our trade relationship remains modest, but its steady growth is proof that the United States is an important investment partner for Senegal.

The return of IBM to Senegal, along with other prominent U.S. companies like Hewlett Packard, DuPont, and 3M, is another sign of increasing investor confidence. Senegal has some vitally important advantages that appeal to investors – a history of peace, stability, and democracy; steady economic growth; and financial and telecommunications systems which are better than most of Africa.

In addition, the Senegalese government has made the development of information technology (IT) one of the pillars of its Accelerated Growth Strategy, aimed at reaching 15 percent GDP growth by 2015. The expansion of IT has played a critical role in the development of the country, and Senegal is in a good position to be an IT hub in the region, as it has often been a regional hub for other types of service companies.

President Wade has also made the decrease of the digital divide a priority. As a leading IT company, IBM will participate in bridging the digital divide, becoming an integral component in Senegal's development by helping the Senegalese administration modernize its IT systems. IBM has already made a significant contribution to this goal by providing mainframe computers to the Customs office.

This is an impressive start; however, much remains to be done. Acting as a counterbalance to Senegal's advantages, potential investors and current businesses are still concerned about Senegal's energy situation, lack of transparency, and the perception of corruption.

We welcome the steps Senegal is taking to fight corruption, and urge that more concrete steps be taken in more areas. When present, corruption – and the perception of corruption – raises the cost and risk of doing business. Corruption has a corrosive impact on both market opportunities overseas for U.S. companies and the broader business climate. This deters international investment, stifles economic growth and development, distorts prices, and undermines the rule of law.

IBM, like all U.S. companies which do business in Senegal, must have an effective compliance program with measures to prevent and detect corruption, including bribery. By adhering to and sharing this practice, your company will do its part in helping us help Senegal to fight against corruption.

We also want to urge you to join forces with other U.S. and U.S.-linked businesses in Senegal to advocate the Government of Senegal take other steps to improve the business climate. One way to do this most effectively is through the American Chamber of Commerce.

The U. S. Government is committed to development of the private sector as the ultimate means to increasing development and therefore prosperity in the beautiful and entrepreneurial country. Senegal's willingness to continue to increase transparency, fight against corruption and improve the business climate will ensure profitable days are ahead for both its citizens and for U.S. firms like IBM.

I wish you much success here in Senegal.

Jëre Jëf!