



Remarks for Ambassador Lewis Lukens

Sports Envoy Reception, CMR

August 26, 2012

(As prepared)

Mr. Ndiaye, Presidential Advisor for Sports

Mr. Minister of Sports

Mr. Minister of Culture

Mme. Minister of Women and Family

Representatives of the Senegalese Olympic Committee and National Basketball Federation,

Lucy and I would like to welcome you all to our home, and introduce you to our visitors from the WNBA and NBA. We are fortunate to have two outstanding players, Chamique Holdsclaw and CJ Watson here as official Sports Envoys for the U.S. government.

The Sports Envoy program began in 2005 as a way of creating dialogue, particularly with young people, about the shared values we find in the world of sporting such as discipline, hard work, fair play and integrity.

By sharing basketball, an icon of American culture, and by representing these values both on and off the court, the Sports Envoys help foster mutual understanding and friendship between Americans and Senegalese publics.

These envoys also represent the very best of their sport. Chamique is a gold medalist from the Sydney, 2000 Olympics and she's played on many top WNBA teams. C.J. has played in over 300 NBA games with 58 starts. In 2011, C.J. helped take the Chicago Bulls to the NBA Finals (where they unfortunately lost to the Miami Heat). We're really looking forward to watching him this coming season as he begins a new phase of his career with the Brooklyn Nets.

Thank you Chamique and CJ for giving of your time this week. I understand you are headed to South Africa this Tuesday, for the NBA's Basketball Without Borders program.

I also want to thank Amadou Gallo Fall for joining us tonight. He's the NBA Vice President for Africa, and a native of Senegal. As many of you know, the NBA and US government have had a partnership for many years not only to share the best of America through sports but, to fight malaria through the "Nothing but Nets" program. Peace Corps and USAID have donated literally millions of mosquito nets throughout the world, and we are pleased that the NBA and "Nothing but Nets" campaign is contributing to that public health effort.

Another big thank you goes to SEEDS, which stands for Sports for Education and Economic Development in Senegal and which Amadou Fall founded after his own experience in the United States. I understand that more than 100 young basketball players – both boys and girls – are benefiting from Sports Envoy clinics in Thies and Dakar. The Embassy couldn't have organized those without a strong local partner, the SEEDS organization. I was fortunate enough to attend the Hoops Forum last May for the 10th Anniversary of SEEDS. I'm sure the coaches and players here will share valuable knowledge and advice on the game of basketball. Even more important though, is what you will share off the court.

I wish you all great success – I'm sure you will learn from each other in many ways. Chamique and C.J., enjoy your stay in this land of Teranga – a Senegalese word that means hospitality – and best of luck.