



**Speech by Mr Lewis Lukens,
Ambassador of the United States of America
NEC Dedication Ceremony
March 15, 2013**

(As prepared)

Salutations/VIPs

Welcome to our new home! Thank you all for joining us today to inaugurate our new embassy compound. We do so 53 years after establishing relations with Senegal, and 36 years after we dedicated our embassy downtown. That building was our home from 1977 until two weeks ago, and for a long time now has been too small for us. So it is a real pleasure to move this month into a modern, functional, attractive building.

We are honored today by the participation of so many high level officials, starting with President Macky Sall. We are most grateful for your presence here today.

I would like to point out that this is only our second Gold LEED certified embassy in Africa, and surely the most environmentally and technologically advanced building in West Africa. Through the use of technology and sustainable material, this building uses 35% less energy and water than buildings of similar size. We will generate up to 25% of our electricity directly from solar energy. We treat our own wastewater and recycle that water for our landscaping. I hope this building will set a new standard for sustainable construction in West Africa.

I want to thank the many people who made this building a reality.

Three of my predecessors were actively involved in this project – Ambassadors Richard Roth, Janice Jacobs, and Marcia Bernicat. I am so pleased that two of them, Richard Roth and Marcia Bernicat, are here today.

Thanks to the State Department Office of Overseas Buildings and Operations, represented here today by Managing Director Eric Rumpf, who spent several years here leading this project. Thanks to our Project Directors Jim Lehman and Chris Dudding and their whole team. Thanks to Matt Sweeney, our Site Security Officer. Thanks to the over 900 Senegalese workers who clocked more than 4.5 million work hours, without a serious injury, and who learned world class

construction techniques that will strengthen Senegal's own construction industry for years to come. And finally, thanks to our entire mission team, especially our loyal and dedicated local staff who, led by DCM Robert Yamate, made it possible for us to move into this building smoothly and in record time.

Thanks to our contractor, BL Harbert International, represented here by former project director and now Vice President at the company, Jay Warren, for producing another world class embassy building.

Ladies and gentlemen, when I look around here, I don't just see a beautiful building and gardens. I see a real symbol of America's strong commitment to partnership with Senegal and the Senegalese people. As former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said here in Dakar last August, our relations in Africa must be based on mutual responsibility and respect, and true partnerships. The United States and Senegal have been partners since the first days of Senegalese independence. Vice president Lyndon B Johnson traveled to Senegal in 1961 to celebrate the one year anniversary of independence, and enjoyed Senegalese Taranga so much that he canceled a scheduled stop in Spain to spend more time in Dakar! For over half a century we have worked together to advance a relationship based on responsibility and respect. In many ways this has come naturally, given our shared traditions of democracy, freedom of expression, and religious tolerance. While our partnership covers many US government agencies and programs, I will highlight three today.

One example of this partnership is our close cooperation with the Senegalese people through our USAID programs, which focus on health, education, agriculture, governance, and natural resource management, all in close coordination with Senegal's governmental priorities. Through our joint efforts, Senegal has a less than one percent HIV prevalence rate; millions of citizens have access to anti-malaria bed nets; and under-five mortality rate has declined more than 40 percent. In the last ten years primary school enrolment increased 25 percent to near-universal enrolment. And of course we worked closely with local organizations to observe and report on last year's elections.

Another example of this partnership is our robust MCC program. This \$540 million program is creating agricultural opportunities and building roads and bridges in the far north and in the Casamance, opening up market access for some of Senegal's most remote regions. A few months ago we kicked off the major works up north, and next month President Macky Sall and I will launch the works in Kolda.

And perhaps the most enduring symbol of our partnership is the Peace Corps. This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps in Senegal. Since 1963 over 3,000 Americans, young and old, have spent two years of their lives in Senegalese towns and villages, working

with local communities on health and sanitation, education, and agriculture, and developing small businesses. One of the highlights of my job is traveling throughout Senegal, visiting Peace Corps volunteers, and witnessing their flexibility and creativity in addressing local problems. Today this is the largest program in Africa, with over 250 volunteers. They truly are the best representatives we have in this country.

As we dedicate this building, let us re-dedicate ourselves to shared values and common purposes. Let this building be not just a symbol of our friendship and partnership, but a venue where Senegalese and Americans come together to build a better future for both our countries. Thank you all, so much, for being here today for this special event. Thank you for your attention.