

Ambassador Lewis Lukens
Arrival Ceremony - Lompoul to Yoff Run
Yoff Beach
Thursday, March 6, 2014

(As delivered)

Representatives of local authorities,
President of the Ndiambours,
President of the Freys,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have just concluded one of the greatest adventures of my life -- a run that began in Lompoul-sur-Mer and which just concluded here on the beach in Yoff. But greater than the 115 kilometers that I just ran is the importance of Senegal's ecology and the future of this beautiful country's environment.

I wanted to run from Lompoul to Yoff in order to see more of Senegal, a country that I have loved living in, both as a child and now as Ambassador of the United States. I was able to enjoy some beautiful scenery as I ran down the coast. But I also saw trash - lots of trash. And I was dismayed, just south of Mboro, to see (and smell) where a large chemical factory is pumping chemical-tainted waste water directly into the ocean. All this trash hinders Senegal's economic potential and poses health risks. I am thrilled that I was able to partner with several organizations to help clean up beaches. I met the dynamic members of the Association Agir pour le Bien-Etre et la Sauvegarde de L'Environnement (ABESE), an amazingly well-organized community-based organization that consists of young adults who -- at least once per month -- clean up neighborhoods and schools around their hometown of Mboro. On Sunday, over 100 children from Thierry Sabine in Lompoul-sur-Mer joined me in cleaning up that village's beach. They performed a delightful skit in which they acted out the conversations they will have with their parents, -- that emphasize that the ocean is not a garbage can. And of course, the Association pour la promotion économique, culturelle et sociale de Yoff (APECSY), which has brought over 100 people to the beach over the past few days to clean up this beach. I am so glad that I had the opportunity to meet all of you, and I wish you *bonne continuation* in your future endeavors to keep Senegal clean, healthy, and beautiful.

If all of these efforts continue, and if more of Senegal's citizens join you, it will be possible for tourism to surpass its current levels and to play an even greater role in Senegal's economy than it does now. And more importantly, your country's beautiful environment will be preserved for future generations.

Jere jef to all for you for your hard work cleaning up the beach this week. *Jere jef* to all those who welcomed us so warmly in the communities that we visited along the way this week. These 100 steps that we have taken together to create a better environment for Senegalese children are just the beginning, but we have shown that all of us can make a difference. «NAGNU SETAL, NGIR MAASU ÈLÈK YI»!