

**Speech**  
**Ambassador Lewis Lukens**  
**Parliamentary Assistance and Civic Engagement**  
**Project Launch Ceremony**  
**King Fahd Hotel, Dakar**  
**March 26, 2014**

*(As prepared)*

Honorable President of the National Assembly,

Honorable Minister in charge of the Promotion of Good Governance and Relationships with  
Institutions,

Honorable Members of Parliament,

The President of the Steering Committee,

Members of the Consortium of Civil Society Organizations,

Dear Participants,

It's a real pleasure for me to welcome you to the official launch of the Parliamentary Assistance and Civic Engagement project, or "PACE" in English. This project supports two of the key components of a vibrant democracy: a strong Parliament responsive to its constituents yet mindful of its duty to legislate for the common good and strong civil society organizations able to articulate the needs of its members and inform governments. Each has a role to play in the give and take of policy development and implementation. Each has a role to play in ensuring good governance.

PACE is supported by our government's premier development agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, which you all know well.

USAID has supported both elected officials and civil society in Senegal for many years through programs that promote transparency and accountability. The PACE project will build on the work of previous programs. And it will also build on the solid foundation which is the Senegalese democratic tradition. The National Assembly plays a broad and vital role representing citizens, providing a platform where the voice of the people can be heard, and shaping and enacting legislation.

And on civil society: we have seen the ability of Senegalese civil society to positively affect change. Strong civil society organizations can function as a resource to elected officials. They can influence policy and democratic processes and provide an excellent counterbalance.

Everyone from citizens to elected representatives has a role to play to ensure a nation's democratic health. To that end, the PACE project will help both civil society and the National Assembly develop a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities each plays in a strong

democracy. PACE will also seek opportunities to form strategic partnerships towards common goals.

The project will promote reforms and practices conducive to sustainable democratic governance through capacity building for members of the National Assembly, with a special focus on female and young deputies.

It will provide staff with skills necessary for the Assembly to function smoothly.

The project will also increase the effectiveness of citizen participation in decision making processes, discussions, law making and implementation.

We hope that USAID's implementing partners, including NGOs 3D, *Reseau Siggil Jiggen, Y'en a Marre*, the Gorée Institute, *l'Association nationale pour l'alphabétisation et la formation des adultes*, and Counterpart International will develop a strong alliance with the National Assembly. Such synergistic relationships will help build a stronger democratic tradition in Senegal for generations to come.

Before closing, I would like to especially thank National Assembly President Moustapha Niassé for his enthusiastic support of this initiative.

We look forward to a long and fruitful partnership for a vibrant Senegalese democracy.

Thank you for your gracious attention.