



U.S. Embassy Dar es Salaam TANZANIA

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Chargé d’Affaires, a.i. Virginia M. Blaser’s Remarks at Canine Handover Ceremony Port of Dar es Salaam

Habari za asubuhi?

It is my distinct pleasure to be with you all here today to celebrate an achievement that is truly the first of its kind. Ambassador Childress is in the United States on official travel, but I spoke with him this morning and I can assure you he’s with us in spirit.

This ceremony marks the summit of a mountain we have all climbed together. I’m going to let other folks talk about the details, but I remember standing right here at the Port almost a year ago with many of you who are here right now (except the dogs; we had a stand-in dog that day) when Commissioner Kerlikowske from U.S. Customs and Border Patrol announced its intention to assist the Tanzanian Government in the development of this canine detection program that would detect illegal shipments of ivory and drugs. That day marked the beginning of an effort that involved just about every single office and agency at U.S. Embassy Dar es Salaam. From development officers to military officers to security officers. Public affairs officers; political officers; the list goes on and on. And we needed all of them, working together, to get this done.

More importantly, every one of my people from the U.S. Embassy had a partner colleague in the Tanzanian Government. Everything from travel arrangements to veterinary services to dog food required hundreds of emails, and phone calls, and meetings. And we did it. We did it together. These handlers and dogs are now ready to work, as we’re going to see in just a few minutes. But I would like to speak now about two things: Why we did this, and what we need to do going forward.

We supported Tanzania’s effort to develop this canine detection program for two reasons. First, illegal shipments of ivory and drugs represent a significant obstacle to Tanzania’s goals. The criminals who obtain, buy, sell, and move these illegal goods within and then out of Tanzania do not care about the development of this country or the welfare of its people. They

don't care about protecting Tanzania's natural treasures or its longstanding global reputation for peace and stability. They don't care about trying to corrupt government officials with bribery or intimidation. They don't care about Tanzania. They care about money. And we believe these criminals should be identified, arrested, tried in a court of law, and put in jail. And we supported the creation of this canine detection program because we believe it's a really good way to make sure that first step of identification takes place. Containers, or boxes, or suitcases, or pretty much anything that could contain illegal ivory or drugs are linked to people. So once you find the container with the bad stuff, you trace it back to the criminal, and you do everything you can within the law to make sure that criminal goes to jail.

Second – and this is specifically about ivory here – we supported the creation of this program because, apart from their majesty as one of the world's greatest natural treasures, Tanzania's elephants are absolutely vital to its long term economic growth, especially in the rural areas that face some of the most significant development challenges. Wildlife tourism represents more than twelve percent of the Tanzanian economy, and Americans, more than any other nationality, are the tourists who are making that contribution. And Tanzania stands to make impressive gains as tourism infrastructure continues to steadily improve. But here's the thing: No elephants, no tourists. And because the poaching crisis has fairly decimated a significant chunk of the country's elephant population in just the past few years, a Tanzania without elephants is absolutely possible. It can happen. So we believe having canine detection teams that can find this ivory and trace it back to the criminals who are smuggling it will help us realize a future in which ivory stays right where it belongs: on the elephants.

So that's why we did this, together with our Tanzanian partners. I'd like to close now with what we believe needs to be done to make sure this innovative and exciting new program succeeds in detecting drugs and ivory, and that it becomes part of a strong comprehensive program to combat smuggling of all kinds. First, I mentioned before the importance of cooperation between the different parts of the U.S. Government, and the coordination between American and Tanzanian officials to get this job done. But what we're hoping to achieve here in the not-too-distant future is a Tanzanian canine detection program that needs no support whatsoever from the U.S. Government. Our trainers from U.S. Customs and Border Protection have been teaching these Tanzanian officers not only about canine detection techniques, but also about how to teach future generations of officers and their dogs. In order for that independent program to succeed in the future, however, the different parts of the Tanzanian Government involved, all the ministries represented here today, must continue to demonstrate the high level of cooperation and coordination that helped us together achieve this goal. As is the case with wildlife conservation and anti-poaching efforts overall, this canine detection program will require a whole-of-government approach to succeed.

Finally, this whole-of-government approach must extend beyond the identification of smuggled goods, and ensure that identification results in the arrest, trial, and incarceration of the

criminals who seek to profit from the destruction of Tanzania's natural heritage and stability. Through their hard work over the past twelve months, these officers and their canine partners have already demonstrated the spirit and commitment we all need to emulate to end the trafficking of illegal goods. They can't do it alone. Stopping the poaching crisis and the drugs trade requires everyone to contribute. These teams have already shown us the road ahead. Now let's take the journey together.

Asanteni sana.

To request more information about this event, please email Japhet Sanga (SangaJJ@state.gov), Senior Information Specialist at U.S. Embassy Dar es Salaam.

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