



2016 Communiqué
AGOA Civil Society Forum
Washington D.C. U.S.A.
Presented to 15th AGOA Ministerial Session

On
September 23, 2016
Reagan Events Center
Washington D.C. U.S.A.

The Civil Society Organization (CSO)/African Women's Entrepreneurship (AWEP) Joint Session of the 15th Annual U.S. – Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum (also known as the AGOA Forum) took place September 22-23, 2016 under the theme “*The Role of Civil Society in Maximizing AGOA Benefits Now while Preparing for the Future Beyond AGOA.*” The event was held at the Reagan Events Center which is located in the International Republican Institute (IRI) in Washington, DC.

The Joint Session of this year's African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum brought together more than 200 delegates from the United States, AGOA eligible countries, and others to address the following issues:

- AGOA Country Utilization Strategy
- Congressional Perspectives on The Future of AGOA
- Capacity Building and Technical Assistance to Support Trade Facilitation in Sub-Saharan Africa
- The Future of US-Africa Economic Cooperation
- Enhancing Africa's Regional Integration to Support US-Africa Trade and Investment
- YALI's Role in Strengthening US-Africa Trade and Investment Expansion
- AWEP Discussions on The Future of US-Africa Trade and Investment

Discussion Highlights:

Civil Society (CS) and AWEP members gathered in Washington, DC, USA from 22-23 September 2016 commend the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Secretariat for organizing the Civil Society Organization and AWEP Joint Session of the 15th AGOA Forum under the theme, “The Role of Civil Society in Maximizing AGOA while Preparing for the Future Beyond AGOA,” and underscore the need for National Governments in AGOA eligible countries to develop a AGOA Utilization Strategy that includes an effective and holistic buy-in by all stakeholders, through public and private sector dialogue on trade and investment issues and fast track awareness regarding AGOA in rural and urban communities across sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, CS and AWEP members:

- Urge National Governments to dovetail the National AGOA Utilization Strategies into other national strategies that support legislative and regulatory reforms that are necessary to create an enabling environment to attract the Foreign Direct Investment that is required to increase non-oil products exports under AGOA.
- Call on National Governments to include Civil Society, AWEP and other micro, small medium enterprises (SMEs) in all dialogues relating to the development of AGOA Utilization Strategies and their implementation with the view of Africans taken ownership and developing solutions generated by Africans.
- Call for the development of a database of AWEP and other women owned MSME who are export ready for Business to Businesses Matchmaking with large corporations on both sides of the Atlantic to expand women's contributions to the value and supply chain of US-Africa trade under AGOA.
- The deepening of trade and investment ties with the United States should not be viewed only as responsibility of Governments, but about partnership endeavors and initiatives to be driven by the private sector through public sector support and encouragement from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

The AGOA Civil Society Network and AWEP, hereby declare our unconditional support for the deepening of trade and investment ties between SSA and the United States for the benefit of both the African and the American people, under AGOA and beyond AGOA.

- Urge all National Governments to ratify and implement the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) with the view of removing barriers and impediments to intra Africa trade and investment, increasing transparency, reducing the transaction costs associated with exports, and improving the competitiveness of Africa's businesses in U.S. markets, and globally.
- Commend President Barak Obama, once again, for launching the Young African Leadership (YALI) Initiative in 2010 to support young African Leaders as they spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across Africa. We urge the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Secretariat to establish a framework of engagement with YALI for inclusion in AGOA related advocacy and educational outreach across sub-Saharan Africa. We collectively appeal to the U.S. Congress to provide permanent funding for the YALI Initiative.

Recommendations:

1. National Governments in AGOA eligible countries should develop AGOA utilization strategies by using public- private sector dialogue as means of incorporating effective and holistic buy-in by all stakeholders, including: Civil Society Organizations, AWEP members and micro, small, and medium enterprises regarding trade and investment issues and support awareness campaigns in rural and urban communities across Sub-Saharan Africa on the benefits AGOA.
2. National AGOA utilization strategies must recognize the role of women and include provisions for funding windows in the form of grants and soft loans to support AGOA Civil Society Organizations and African Women Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) members, micro, small and medium enterprises and other disadvantaged and minority owned businesses which are critical to the successful implementation of these strategies.
3. National Governments should establish AGOA Utilization Strategy Implementation Committees and include members of the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network, AWEP, Chambers of Commerce and YALI, as well as, and other non - governmental stakeholders and relevant government agencies.
4. Call on the United States Government and National Governments to provide funding and political support for the development of regional AGOA utilization strategies under the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Secretariat for the purpose of strengthening and enhancing intra Africa trade and investment with the view of taking advantage of improved rules of origin in the Trade Preferences Extension Act (TPEA) of 2015 to support vertical and horizontal value chains in SSA and increase AGOA exports.
5. Urge the United States Congress to provide robust tax incentives to U.S. Companies and institutions that invest in Africa in critical sectors, such as, energy, ICT, transportation, and the logistics that are necessary to spur industrialization; encourage value addition to raw materials before exporting; increase competitiveness of AGOA exports in U.S. markets and other lucrative markets in the Western Hemisphere; and create sorely needed good paying jobs on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean in strengthening U.S.-Africa trade and economic ties
6. Request funding support from U.S. Government and National governments for the organization of an annual AGOA/AWEP Trade Show and Expo in the United States to bring AGOA Exporters and Importers together to market their products and participate in Business to Business (B2B) Matchmaking starting from 2018.
7. Recommend that the U.S. Government establish an AGOA Desk in each of its Embassies and Consulates across Sub- Saharan Africa to increase demand for imports under AGOA
8. Request that National Governments establish AGOA desks in Embassies and Consulates across the U.S. to increase demand for AGOA exports.