



2018 Communiqué
AGOA Civil Society Forum and AWEP
Washington D.C., U.S.A.
Presented to 17th AGOA Ministerial Session

July 10, 2018
Washington, D.C.

The AGOA Civil Society Organization (CSO) and the African Women Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) Session of the 2018 African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum took place July 9-11, 2018, at the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) and The Heritage Foundation, in Washington, D.C. The theme of the CSO/AWEP Session was “*The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Expanding U.S-Africa Trade and Investment.*” The event brought together more than 100 delegates from the United States and AGOA eligible countries from throughout Sub-Saharan Africa to address the following topics:

- New Strategies for U.S.-Africa Trade and Investment
- Promoting Prosperity through MSME Participation in AGOA
- The Way Forward for AGOA: A Moderated Discussion on Labor in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)
- Optimizing the Social and Economic Development of Women and Youth Under AGOA
- The Role of the Diaspora in US-Africa Trade and Investment, and included a
- Roundtable on African Geopolitics and the Index of Economic Freedom

During the 3 day event, the AGOA CSO Network presented House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce an award for his tireless leadership, commitment, and advancement of legislation that strengthens U.S.- Sub Saharan Africa trade, investment and economic cooperation.

Discussion Highlights:

According to U.S. International Trade Commission’s (USITC) report to the U.S. Trade Representative, dated May 2018, US-SSA trade value experienced a substantial decline from 26.8 billion in 2005 to 18.9 billion in 2015.

Sectors in which U.S. imports of goods from SSA that grew the fastest, between 2010 and 2016, were: cocoa, chocolate, and confectionery; apparel; refined copper; catalytic converters; and edible nuts. The growth in these and other U.S. goods from SSA mainly stemmed from the certainty created following the long-term renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to 2025; the increased presence of foreign direct investment (FDI) in these sectors; SSA production cost advantages over other global suppliers; and expanded manufacturing capacity in SSA.

Among the services sectors, U.S. imports of travel services from SSA increased the most during the 2010-2016 periods, reflecting in part stronger efforts by SSA countries to promote their tourism sectors.

Currently, Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing an expansion in micro, small and medium (MSME) enterprise development. Today, MSMEs with strong participation of women entrepreneurs create approximately 80% of the regions employment, five of the fastest growing economies in the world today are in SSA. By 2020, SSA's GDP is forecasted to grow 30 percent faster than the rest of the world, and by 2030 SSA countries will make up more than 25 percent of the world's workforce and middle class.

Recommendations:

1. New Strategies for U.S-Africa Trade and Investment

Civil Society Organizations commend the U.S Congress for the passage of the BUILD Act, and call on the U.S. Senate to pass a similar Bill with a special provision to support MSME's in SSA and the USA, before the end of 115 Congress; and send to the Bill to the president for his signature

Call on the USTR to fully consider the impact of bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) on regional integration.

Call for the Trump administration and the African Union Commission to establish a working group of government; private sector and civil society leaders to explore the best approaches to moving U.S.-Africa trade and economic cooperation from a unilateral AGOA framework to bi-lateral trade agreements, before 2025

2. Promoting Prosperity through MSME Participation in AGOA

Call on the U.S. government to expand the number of trade hubs in Africa, to include Central Africa, and to integrate MSMEs into larger supply chains that can take full advantage of exporting to the US.

Call on SSA governments to implement existing anti-corruption laws and improve transparency and accountability by working with Civil Society Organizations (watch dogs), press, and private sector (ethics and corporate governance) and adopt e-procurement systems to reduce opportunities for corruption.

Call on SSA governments to provide access to business development services in an effort to build the capacity of MSMEs in the areas of production management, quality control, product design/development, and compliance (labor, anti-corruption, and environment) and to encourage greater MSME participation in AGOA and exports to US.

3. The Way Forward for AGOA: A Moderated Discussion on Labor in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) SOLIDARITY CENTER

Ensure that AGOA supports economic cooperation projects that seek to advance industrialization and encourage backward and forward linkages, technology and skills transfer to help develop local value chains in line with international standards on human rights, labor laws and gender equality.

Ministries of Trade must work closely with Ministries of Labor to develop a coherent plan for the promotion of internationally recognized worker rights in law and practice with meaningful consultation with trade unions, workers' associations and gender equality advocates, and include that plan in AGOA utilization strategies.

Support and implement gender responsive approaches to trade development and promotion, including support for female leadership, investing in infrastructure and services to reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care work, and zero tolerance policy to violence and harassment, including violence and harassment at work.

4. Workshop on AGOA Country Utilization Plan for Civil Society

Commend AGOA eligible countries that have completed their utilization strategies, urges AGOA eligible countries that have not yet completed their utilization strategies to develop one, before the 18th AGOA Forum

Call on SSA governments, the United States and multilateral institutions, including the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) to support AGOA Civil Society Organization network secretariat to coordinate and monitor development of biennial national AGOA utilization strategies across SSA

Urge CSO/AWEP to partner with governments, private sector to create awareness of AGOA utilization plans and status of implementation within AGOA eligible countries
Urge US Government agencies to support US side market research for AGOA strategies including fund for buying commercial market research reports

5. Optimizing the Social and Economic Development of Women and Youth under AGOA

Call on the Diaspora to collaborate with export processing zone authorities, in SSA to establish free zones/distribution hubs for export developments.

Call on AGOA eligible countries to provide funding to support economic officers in respective embassies to promote AGOA imports

Access to information on AGOA should be more coordinated through channels that reach out to women and youth in All AGOA eligible countries through AWEP and, YALI.

SSA governments to establish Private Investment Fund, specifically to support women and youth owned businesses, and encourage, joint ventures and foreign direct investment (FDI) by U.S. companies to help women and youth owned businesses increase production and become export ready.