

2021 Communique
Civil Society Organization Network Session
Miami, Florida, USA
Presented to:
19th Ministerial Session of the AGOA Forum

On
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Miami, Florida, USA

The Civil Society Organization (CSO) Session of the 2021 African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum took place October 6-8, 2021, under the theme: *The Impact of COVID-19 on US-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation: The Way Forward*. The CSO Session was held jointly with the 22nd Annual US-Africa Trade and Investment Conference/Trade Show at the Miami Airport Convention Center (MACC), in Miami, Florida.

The CSO Session of the 19th AGOA Forum was a hybrid event that brought together members of the AGOA CSO Network from venues in Miami, Florida; Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); Lagos, Nigeria, and other AGOA eligible countries with virtual participation from the United States and Africa. The purpose of the gathering was to discuss solutions and provide input to areas critical to public and private sector stakeholders' success on *The Way Forward* regarding the following issues:

- AGOA: Miami the Gateway to Africa
- Cyber Security, E-Commerce and E-Learning
- Climate Change: The Impact on Politics and the Economy
- US-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation: The Way Forward
- Local Manufacturing of COVID-19 Vaccine in Africa: Challenges/Opportunities and Diaspora Contributions
- Civic Education, Elections and Governance in Africa
- Financing and Capacity Building for SME's

Discussion Highlights:

The COVID-19 pandemic almost brought global economic activity to a standstill, drastically disrupting the global supply chain and resulting in the loss of more than 4.7 million lives to date and causing significant structural damage to the nation's economy. In January 2021, the AGOA CSO Network Secretariat and its members published a policy white paper on *The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on US-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation - AGOA* with recommendations and areas of concern for the Biden/Harris Administration and U.S. Congressional Leaders for action and implementation. To view the policy white paper visit www.agoacsonetwork.org/Publications.

Since its passage by Congress on May 18, 2000, and signing into law on October 2, 2000, by President Bill Clinton, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has been the cornerstone of U.S. economic engagement with the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

AGOA imports to the U.S. from eligible sub-Saharan Africa countries were \$7.5 billion in 2001, \$55.87 billion in 2008, \$10.75 billion in 2018, and \$7.3 billion in 2019.

AGOA is a long-term commitment with broad bipartisan support. On June 25, 2015, Congress overwhelmingly approved the Trade Preferences Extension Act (TPEA) of 2015, and on June 29, 2015, President Barrack Obama signed TPEA into law. TPEA re-authorizes AGOA along with the associated “third Country fabric “ provision for ten years through 2025. Congress passed, and the executive branch implemented, three prior legislative enhancements of AGOA, with significant bipartisan support in 2002, 2004, and 2006.

Civil Society applauds the people of Florida and Miami-Dade County in particular for supporting and hosting the 19th AGOA Civil Society Forum and their continued support for the Annual US-Africa Trade and Investment Conference/Trade Show-AfrICANDO. Specifically, we commend the Miami -Dade County Board of Commissioners and the Executive Mayor for sustained efforts of using the Sister Seaport and Sister Airport initiatives to increase the competitiveness of AGOA imports in U.S. markets and other lucrative markets in the Americas and as the Gateway for trade, investment, and tourism with Africa.

Civil Society supports and encourages ongoing negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the U.S. and Kenya that complements regional integration efforts within the East African Community (EAC), as well as the African Continental Free Trade Area

AGOA CSO Network members call on all AGOA eligible countries to develop partnerships with Civil Society to develop biennial AGOA country strategies for more effective utilization of AGOA trade benefits.

Civil Society welcomes collaboration with U.S. private sector companies and institutions on national cyber security strategies for the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa with a framework for implementing cybersecurity-related projects and initiatives. And we call on the African Union and AGOA eligible Countries to embrace this effort.

Civil Society applauds Claflin University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), for developing a Post-Graduate Degree Program in biotechnology. The post-graduate program addresses the impact of climate on politics and the economy and builds capacity in Africa. And the African Diaspora Organization's partnership with AGOA CSO Network members across Africa on using solar energy and blockchain technology to reduce CO2 emissions and advance industrialization in AGOA eligible countries.

While approximately \$11.7 trillion or about 12 percent of global GDP has been spent worldwide primarily by governments of rich nations to support health care delivery systems and provide lifelines to vulnerable households and businesses, most of the citizens and businesses of cashed-strapped countries, most in sub-Saharan Africa are struggling to survive. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected sub-Saharan African economies, and as a result, the IMF expects sub-Saharan Africa's GDP to contract by 3.2% this year.

COVID-19's economic impact presents a threat to US-Africa trade and investment, US-Africa strategic alliances, and gains made over the last two decades using the benefits of AGOA to: incentivize market-based economies that protect private property rights, the rule of law, political pluralism, and the right to due process; improve the availability of health care delivery systems and educational opportunities; and protect internationally recognized workers' rights, is at risk.

In our opinion, the U.S. should continue to support sub-Saharan Africa countries' efforts to assist refugees and victims of conflict. The U.S. should continue to provide emergency food aid, funding

for promoting vaccination use in Sub-Saharan Africa, COVID-19 in particular, and research and development of renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies.

Civil Society support efforts for the Local Manufacturing of COVID-19 Vaccines in Africa. We call on the Biden Administration, the U.S. Congress, the African Union Commission, and AGOA eligible countries to work collectively to ensure the necessary technology transfer, grants, and investment to make the efforts viable and sustainable and address current and future “Vaccine Poverty” issues.

We commend the U.S. Congress’ passage of a law to provide \$2 billion dollars for AIDS relief; \$1 billion dollars to assist refugees and victims of conflict worldwide; 1.5 billion for emergency food aid, overseas; and \$4 billion in U.S. funds to support international vaccination efforts, including \$2 billion dollars for scientific research, and \$241 million dollars in economic support for countries across the globe. We encourage other developed economies to provide financial assistance to support sub-Saharan COVID-19 recovery efforts.

Recommendations:

Civil Society calls on the Biden Administration and U.S. Congress to: provide budget support, extend credit facilities, grant waivers for public debt, and interest payments on sovereign bonds to multilateral financial institutions, i.e., the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), other partner institutions and regional development banks to ensure financial viability, delivery of public goods, and peace and security.

Civil Society urges sub-Saharan African countries to designate food and nutrition services as essential. African nations must strengthen social protection systems for nutrition, safeguarding access to safe, nutritious foods for at-risk groups.

Civil Society implores AGOA eligible countries through their respective national export and investment agencies to increase single digit financing and technical capacity building for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) especially, in the Textile and Apparel sector. And to use the textile and apparel provisions of AGOA to create much-needed good-paying jobs for youth to reduce poverty.

AGOA CSO Network members call on civil society organizations to expand outreach and engagement efforts at the state and local government level across the United States to galvanize grassroots advocacy for AGOA imports and the restructuring of U.S. - Africa trade and economic cooperation in preparation for the sunset of AGOA benefits in 2025.

We urge the African Union and AGOA eligible countries to embrace the U.S. private sector and other stakeholders’ support on cyber security and work closely with the Civil Society on implementing national cyber security strategies at country and regional levels.

Civil Society calls on the U.S. Congress, the African Union, multilateral institutions, and foundations to increase funding to support the delivery of civic education and voter education programs/projects by AGOA Civil Society Organization members across Africa to improve free and fair elections and the quality of governance.

We call on the private sector, government, universities, and technical institutions in Africa to work closely with HBCUs, African Diaspora institutions, and other stakeholders in developing the technology and capacity necessary to address the impact of climate on politics and the economy, mitigating unnecessary migration and separatist agitation due to adverse climate effects on agriculture and in-humane living conditions.

Civil Society on both sides should work with American Farmers and African farmers to build sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships to bring American know-how to optimize the productivity of African fertile and arable land and to increase food security and AGOA exports.

Civil Society urges the Biden Administration, the U.S. Congress, the African Union Commission, and AGOA eligible countries to work collectively with the Africa Center for Disease Control and other stakeholders on the local manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccines. And to ensure that the required technology transfer, grants, and investments are available to make efforts viable and sustainable in addressing current “Vaccine Poverty” concerns. We also urge providing financial support to Civil Society for advocacy and public outreach to expand vaccination availability and use across Africa.