

Dear Colleagues,

I am honored and delighted to welcome you to the Civil Society Organization/African Women Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) Session of the 17th AGOA Forum.

The report on U.S. Africa trade and Investment with sub-Saharan Africa: Recent Developments, released in April 2018, by the U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) at the request of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) shows significant decline in total value of U.S imports from SSA under AGOA between 2010 and 2016.

“The report highlighted sectors in which U.S. imports of goods from SSA between 2010 and 2016 grew fastest: cocoa, chocolate, and confectionery; apparel; refined copper; catalytic converters; and edible nuts. The growth in these and other U.S. goods imports from SSA mainly stemmed from certainty created following the long-term renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to 2025; the increased presence of FDI in these sectors; SSA production cost advantages over other global suppliers; and expanding manufacturing capacity in SSA. During the 2010–16.”

Recent passage in both Houses of the United States Congress to enhance the benefits of AGOA and expand Millennium Challenge Corporation support for infrastructure development across national boundaries in SSA will help increase competitiveness and productive capacity and help increase U.S. import from SSA. Passage of the AGOA and MCC Enhancement Act of 2016 must be recognized, applauded and benefits fully utilized to reverse the decline in exports value. Similarly we must work to provide advocacy capital and human capital, to support African Union efforts in achieving its goal of establishing the Continental Free Trade Area. The secretariat applaud the recent launching of the Framework Agreement for the Continental Free Trade Area, in Kigali Rwanda and urge our members and affiliates to encourage member State of the African Union to work closely together to use free and fair trade to achieve regional integration, free markets and private enterprise expansion.

To date, only 15 out of 38 AGOA eligible countries have published Biennial Country Utilization Plan as recommended by the Trade Preferences Extension Act of (TPEA) 2015. We must work collectively to provide the leadership and coordination necessary to ensure that all AGOA eligible countries create a frame work to engage and cooperate with AGOA Civil Society Organization Network member at national level to put in place biennial AGOA Plans, maintain eligibility, and optimize the benefits of AGOA in creating wealth and prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. We must work with the Trump administration to forge new strategies for U.S. Africa Trade and Investment, to increase US-Africa Trade and Investment.

In appreciation of the over 30 years, service in the United States House of Representative, We honor Chairman Ed Royce of the Foreign Affairs Committee for his steadfast support and commitment to strong U.S.- Africa Relations. We watched him ,champion the passage of AGOA

in 2000, and with admiration and respect his efforts working both sides of the aisles to ensure bi partisan support for AGOA II; III; IV when he was Chairman of the sub Committee on Africa. Chairman Ed Royce was the “go to Leader” in the United States Congress on issues relating to US-Africa Relations. He provided leadership for the passage of the Millennium Challenge Act; Electrify Africa Act; TPEA of 2015 and passage of the AGOA and MCC Enhancement. Act in 2016. We all owe Chairman Royce a lot of gratitude for his tireless efforts to expand Rule of Law, Free Enterprise; Good Governance; Democracy across the globe and particularly in Africa. We wish Chairman Royce and his wife and family the best in coming years, in retirement.

Please join me this morning in presenting AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Award of Appreciation to Chairman Ed Royce for his commitment and support to Liberty, Freedom and Pursuit of Happiness.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Board of Director of the Center For Private Enterprise; Executive Director Andrew Wilson , and staff for hosting the CSO/AWEP Session of the 17th AGOA Forum; our sponsors; Chevron; Ethiopian Airlines; USADF; Africa Trade Development Center; Advisory Board members; secretariat staff, interns and volunteers, and most important you our members, members of AWEP for your continuing support and Cooperation.

I look forward to your participation and contributions to the success of this session and look forward to the recommendations .

Sincerely,

Fred O. Osadeinde

Chairman, AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Secretariat