



**Remarks by David A. Sampson
Acting Deputy Secretary of Commerce
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[Text As Prepared for Delivery.]**

On behalf of President Bush and the U.S. Commerce Department, I'm delighted to be here today along with my colleague Minister Dulloo from Mauritius.

I am very pleased to share today's program with Minister Dulloo. Your presence reminds us of the fantastic job Mauritius did in hosting the 2003 AGOA Forum, and the successes of the AGOA legislation.

The "Mauritian Model" shows us that AGOA does what it promises: by generating investment from abroad, creating new domestic investment, and increasing trade between African nations.

I think all of us would agree that trade is the backbone of any successful economy. Just look what trade has done in recent years for China, Singapore, and a growing number of nations across Africa ... from Kenya and Nigeria to Botswana, Mauritius and South Africa.

Obviously, pro-business policies are an absolute must to be a successful trader, open markets, rule of law, transparency and prudent fiscal and monetary policy. The government's best role is to foster the conditions that allow trade and investment to flourish. Once the right economic policies are in place, you're halfway there.

What gets you the rest of the way? A strategic trade promotion plan. That's what you have to do because you have to get the word out. You have to promote your businesses, you have to promote your country, you have to promote the comparative advantages that you have. And that's what I mean by strategic.

We've learned this in the United States. We're the world's largest exporting country, but it wasn't always the case. It's easy to forget that when the U.S. was founded, we were mostly an agrarian economy, similar to the economies in most developing nations today. It took us a long time to learn how to tap into our potential. President Bush and I hope you can learn from our experience.

Many of our biggest companies are now major exporters and do very well without much help. However, these large companies, such as Microsoft, Ford, Dell, and Hewlett-Packard ... names known around the world ... share a common denominator. They were all started by entrepreneurs, like many of you attending this forum. The big businesses of tomorrow are now small businesses in America, in Senegal, in Kenya, and elsewhere.

This is what we all have in common. In fact, most businesses in America are small businesses and they are America's biggest generator of new jobs. But only one percent of our small businesses are exporters, despite the fact that companies who export, are less likely to go out of business and more likely to pay higher wages and better benefits to their workers. So we made a strategic decision to focus our resources on helping small businesses promote their exports.

Small companies have the greatest difficulty overcoming barriers to exporting. We have found the biggest hurdle is getting the right information about how to export, a service government can easily provide. A recent survey found that one-third of U.S. small businesses that never exported would export if they had information on markets, customers and finance.

So, we set up a network of "Export Assistance Centers" in over 100 cities where a small company can get counseling and all the information they need in one place. And we have Commercial Officers in 80 countries around the world, including in a new office we're opening today here in Dakar.

In closing, I urge all of you thinking about trade promotion to think about it strategically. Take time to assess which markets hold the greatest potential for your companies, and which are your most competitive sectors in those markets.

For AGOA governments, it might make sense, for example, to focus your efforts on so-called "Category 9" folk art textiles, where many of you are competitive, even with big exporters like China. Eleven are now qualified for this special duty-free treatment, and we're consulting with Nigeria, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone to receive similar benefits.

I strongly believe that a strategic export promotion program helps our businesses expand and create new jobs. And in so doing continue to deepen the trade relationship between the U.S. and each of your nations.

Thank you very much.