

**AGOA: Empowering Civil Society Organizations to Build Economic Prosperity: The 2005 U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum in Dakar, Senegal, July 18-20, 2005**

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**MR. DENIG:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Washington Foreign Press Center. Welcome also to journalists assembled at our New York Foreign Press Center. I'm very pleased this morning that we can host a briefing on the subject of AGOA, Empowering Civil Society Organizations to Build Economic Prosperity. This looks forward to the 2005 U.S.-Sub-Saharan African Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum in Dakar, Senegal, which will start on July 18th and go through July 20th.



We'll do the briefing this morning in two parts. In the first part, we have Constance Berry Newman, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and an official from Senegal. I have to pass on the regrets of Ambassador Ba, who was called unexpectedly to go to New York to be with his president, but we're very pleased to be able to welcome Mr. Ahmadou Fall, the Chief Economic Counselor for the Senegalese Embassy. Secretary Newman and Counselor Fall will both have brief opening statements and then they'll be very happy to take your questions.

And then in the second half, we have three of the leaders of the Civil Society activities under AGOA who will make opening statements and take your questions. So let's start with Secretary Newman, please.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWMAN:** Thank you. I want to thank you so much for coming today to this kick-off event for the AGOA Civil Society Forum and to thank civil society for the real contribution to making AGOA the success that we know it is today and for what will be done in the future. The United States Government has long been aware that the international consortium of civil society groups in the U.S. and from Africa could work to empower African people through their organizations. It's been clear that civil society is committed to African economic growth and development, to poverty reduction on the continent, and the health and well being of Africans.

It was this particular awareness that led the United States to include the participation of civil society in the legislation for AGOA. We value the contributions and the special prospectus of our non-governmental organizations and civic groups in assisting in the guidance of the AGOA policies. Civil society has an indispensable role to play in helping Africans take advantage of AGOA and as I said earlier, particularly the goal of reducing poverty on the continent.

NGOs play a role in supporting business and trade and have been and will continue to be proactive in promoting democracy, good governance, and capacity-building efforts. Civil society models are working throughout Africa to promote these ideals and we're pleased to facilitate the contact between the groups in the U.S. and Africa. The network and organizations affiliated focus on how to unleash

Africa's economic potential through education, training programs for government officials and private sector. Building relationships, as the civil society network notes, is key to success.

I'm not going to take time to talk about AGOA. I think the speakers after me will do so. But I will say that I have participated in the forum up to this point and have found the discussions candid and helpful to the process and that there is a clear linkage between the role of civil society and the private sector and the government in order to make AGOA work.

We're honored that Senegal has offered to host this year's forum. The Civil Society Network has been actively working with Senegal's umbrella civil society organizations, the Council of Support for NGOs. I had the opportunity to go to Senegal and to meet with the planners and just want to say that we are quite confident that this forum in Senegal will be — I won't say the best because I might insult others, but it will certainly be among the best. So thank you very much and I will be here for questions.

**MR. DENIG:** Thank you very much, Secretary Newman. (Applause.)

Let's ask Counselor Fall to speak, please.

**COUNSELOR FALL:** Thank you very much, Paul. Thank you, Madame Secretary. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It's a pleasure to be here with you today and I am honored to speak to you on behalf of His Excellency Amadou Ba, the Ambassador of Senegal, Africa, who is not able to attend this meeting because our President is here in New York.

First, I want to say that Senegal, the Government and the people of Senegal, are thankful that the United States has chosen Dakar to host the fourth AGOA forum. As you know, AGOA has transformed the U.S-Sub-Saharan African relations by building intra-state investment and inter-state economic cooperation between the United States and the eligible Sub-Saharan countries.

As our countries develop trade opportunities in the AGOA, they are also seeking import expertise and joint venture partnership. And the role and contribution of civil society organizations is crucial in the formation and the implementation of AGOA. It's why the coming AGOA forum will be a good opportunity to bring their agenda on the table and to have a dialogue with African — Africa's most senior administrators, the business people and the civil society of the continent.

So we look forward to seeing many of you in Senegal. And additionally, while you are in Senegal for the forum, please allow some extra time for the opportunity to be one of the 500,000 tourists to visit and explore our country. I thank you for your time today.

**MR. DENIG:** Thank you very much, counselor. (Applause.) Let me ask Counselor Fall and Secretary Newman, if you wouldn't mind coming to the lectern and we'll open it up now for questions by the foreign media. If anybody has some questions you'd like to address to either one of our speakers?

**QUESTION:** We have one. All the way in the back.

**MR. DENIG:** If you could introduce yourself, please.

**QUESTION:** Oh. Camille Grosdidier, the French Service of the Voice of America. We broadcast to Francophone Africa. And I was wondering if you could give us some idea of some of the successes that AGOA has achieved in the last couple years — concrete examples?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWMAN:** Yes. There have been major successes up to this point in countries such as Lesotho in textile and apparel. And I could give you other examples and we'll have many more. But the major increases up to this point have been in apparel and there have been thousands of people employed as a result of the use of AGOA. And I want to play off of that point to make another one.

The emphasis of this particular forum is diversification. And everybody's being realistic that the major

successes except in extractive industries, have been in apparel and textile. And that going forward, it is extremely important that there be diversification.

And so for this forum, there will be a series of workshops and panels of other product areas. There's a recognition that on the continent of Africa, the wealth is in the land and the resources, and the people who live in rural areas can benefit greatly from AGOA if agriculture is expanded. And so we can share with you the data, but I wanted to use this opportunity to make the point that the real theme of this forum is diversification.

**MR. DENIG:** Thank you. We'll have Counselor Fall say something.

**COUNSELOR FALL:** Yes. And Madame Secretary, we have some numbers and — everyone can see... Let me go to some numbers. In Ghana, we have additional \$3 million in investment and additional job creation of 1,000, just for one year. Kenya 12 million in investment. Malawi, you have 70,000 job creation. And we can go to this list. But as Madame Secretary said, the importance of the forum of Dakar is we say it's just not about textiles. We needed to have more products coming from Africa in the U.S. market. Thank you.

**MR. DENIG:** Did you have a quick follow-up?

**QUESTION:** I just wanted to follow-up quickly, Mr. Fall. If I was a business leader in Senegal and I heard about this upcoming summit on the radio, what would you tell me to make me come?

**COUNSELOR FALL:** Yes. The businessman should come to the forum because, as I told you, it is a platform for diversification. We need also to say it's a forum for a Senegalese businessman to be able to in order to discuss quantity, maybe sometimes quality. It is why I'm saying we are seeking for partnership, expertise and investment, because there are private businessmen, but maybe they haven't the funds to be able to support and to compete in these markets. So he is coming because he will meet some partners and learn about the U.S. market.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWMAN:** May I just add that in the planning sessions that we had in Senegal for the forum, the point was made by the representatives of the Government of Senegal and civil society that they wanted this forum to have practical application for everybody who came, so that they're not going to be talking heads but rather workshops, and there's going to be a great deal of give and take between people who have been successful in the past, but also, there are going to be workshops on how to raise money.

There are going to be workshops on how to get agricultural products entered into the U.S. and there are going to be people that are prepared to tell you the problems that they've had and how they solve them. So the argument that will be made for people to come is, it's going to be practical and that, I think, is going to make it an extremely useful forum.

**MR. DENIG:** I would just add that on the AGOA website, there are also specific success stories, so if you'd like to look at that, throw that into your Google search engine and then you can find a bunch of success stories. Let's go to New York now for the next question, please. Sir, if you could introduce yourself?

**QUESTION:** I'm Charles Nwachukwu. I represent Africa Independent Television. My question is, poverty is reaching Africans, in spite of the efforts the U.S. and the international community are making towards combating the menace. What is AGOA doing to make sure Africa is not swallowed up by poverty in the 21st century?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWMAN:** Thank you for the question. AGOA is one tool in a kit of addressing poverty on the continent. What has to happen is that there has to be good governance so that there is an interest in investment. There have to be governments investing in people so that there is an educated population. The donors have to work together with the government in the context of what it is the government thinks needs to happen. All of this has to be put together at the same time that the government and the people are taking advantage of AGOA.

I appreciate the question, because what's very important to understand is that ultimately, AGOA's purpose is to reduce poverty on the continent, to raise and improve the lives of the people on the continent and that takes place the more there's economic growth, the more there's investment in the people, the more there are jobs, the more there are educated people, the greater likelihood that there is a reduction in poverty.

And if you took the example of Lesotho and the numbers of people who have been employed, you would see that there is a definite relationship between the benefits of AGOA and poverty reduction, because it's through the jobs that those families have raised their standard of living. But we can give you more detailed information and examples of the relationship between AGOA and where it's been effective and ultimately, the reduction of poverty, because as I said, that's what it's all about.

**MR. DENIG:** All right. Do we have any further questions? Yes, we'll go with the gentleman on the right here, please?

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Mrs. Newman. My name is Yao, *Le Diplome*, from Togo. First of all, I want to thank you for your briefing, like the United Forum in New York City. AGOA's main goal is to reduce poverty in the continent. Right now, I feel now that there is a lack of democracy in Africa, such as in places like Sudan, Ivory Coast and in Togo. I wonder if the Assistant Secretary of State Mrs. Newman has some special concern for the ongoing democratic process, in Togo, regarding the AGOA goal.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWMAN:** I think Togo and what has happened recently in Togo provides the best example of African leadership taking responsibility for bringing about democracy on the continent. And I say that because as a result of ECOWAS and the African Union, the original decision of the military to turn the power over to the son was turned around and instead there was a demand that there be an election in 60 days. There was the election and the election now has led to the son being elected. There are now efforts under President Obasanjo to put together a transition — a government representing all of the various forces there.

And it says to me that the outside world doesn't need to meddle in Africa's affairs in terms of ensuring democracy. It says to me that the leadership on the continent has, as its value, the importance of citizens participating in their government in a democratic way and is insisting that countries take that seriously.

Now, moving to the relationship of that to AGOA, you do have to have a government in place. You do have to have people accepting the government and you have to have enough stability that investors are willing to invest in order to take advantage of AGOA. We have a ways to go — the world and Togo have a ways to go there and the sad story of Cote D'Ivoire is you now have to reverse what was an unfortunate trend away from a stable economy. But now I think as a result of President Mbeki's efforts, I think Cote D'Ivoire will eventually get back on the right path.

**MR. DENIG:** Next question. All right. Way in the back there.

**QUESTION:** Chuck Corey, Washington File to Africa. Could you tell us a little bit more — could you give us a little bit more of a flavor for the upcoming summit, some of the workshops, what's going to take place? You mentioned diversification as one of the important themes. Could you tell us just a little bit more about it?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWMAN:** There will be sessions, particularly on agriculture. You know, the United States has somewhat of a complicated set of standards in order to get products into United States. One of the workshops will be very much involved in educating people about how to get through that process. There will be a workshop on investment and how to raise money, in order to participate under AGOA.

There will be examples there of those who have gone through the process in workshops and how to go through the process in the future. And there will be, as I said, emphasis on diversification, but it does not mean that there won't be sessions furthering the advances that have been made in apparel and textiles because there will be sessions. So it's practical, both in terms of the how-to, but a

success story and stories of those where there have been difficulties and how they have been worked through.

We're going to have the tentative agenda on the website and we will share that with you. But I've given you some of the basic topics that will be covered.

**MR. DENIG:** Any further questions? In that case, I want to thank Secretary Newman very much and Counselor Fall, as well. (Applause.) And we'll proceed now to the second half of the briefing where we'll look at in greater detail the civil society component of the AGOA. We have three representatives of the AGOA Civil Society Network with us this morning. I'll give the opportunity for each one of them to make a brief opening statement. We'll start with Mr. Oumar Barou Makalou, the chair of the AGOA Civil Society Network.

**MR. MAKALOU:** Thank you very much. Mr. Secretary, ladies and gentlemen, Excellency. My name is Oumar Makalou, as he said. I have been honored to be elected chair of the Civil Society Network for AGOA, which is a joint Civil Society Network, U.S., 37 African countries. Our aim will be explained by both Mrs. Guthrie, who is the co-chair. As a rule, we have a chair from Africa and a co-chair from the United States. And we have a strong Secretariat, which is led by Fred Oladeinde whose office is on K Street and in an organization called The Foundation for Democracy in Africa. So I'd like them to explain what our network is all about.

Thank you very much.

**MR. DENIG:** Thank you. I'd like to now ask Mrs. Vernice Guthrie, the vice chair of the AGOA Civil Society Network, to make some comments.

**MS. GUTHRIE:** Thank you. Thank you and good morning. My name is Vernice Guthrie Sullivan. And you know, I think that when one thinks about the purpose and the coming together of civic society organizations in support of the implementation and furthering of AGOA, one need only to reflect on the questions that were presented and the challenges in addressing issues of poverty, issues of HIV/AIDS, the inclusion of youth and women, in ensuring that business development and development of all types, in fact, reaches the very people in the communities and countries in which AGOA is intended to serve.

And to that end, the AGOA civic society network represents a conglomeration of organizations who come at the issue in different ways, but whose ultimate goal is to ensure that the masses of Africans living in the 37 countries that are eligible for AGOA benefit from the business development and the investment that was referred to.

And it is our goal to ensure that civic society continues to play its appropriate role in the implementation of AGOA. And the reason that I say, "continues to play," is because the civic society, globally, has demonstrated its need and function in ensuring that everything from international human rights treaties to peace agreements are enforced and recognized.

So some of the issues in terms of how does one get access to credit, for example, because you can't begin to even think about, you know, entering into the textile market if you don't have access to credit. And if we peel that back a layer and if you're living in a country where, as a woman, you don't have the right to hold a title to land and you can't use that land to leverage it to get credit, you can begin to see the kind of challenges that would be faced at the grassroots level in terms of addressing or benefiting from AGOA.

And then on the other spectrum in terms of the larger business efforts — reliable, dependable means of processing goods in and out of country's export schemes and the rest are all — are required to come together in order for AGOA to be successful. And to the extent that those issues are cross-sectional and to the extent that they must be addressed over a short and long-term period, NGOs, CSOs, and PBOs have come together to bring their synergies and their forces together. And we are — there's a place for a variety of different approaches.

So I hope that kind of gives an idea of AGOA without — of the AGOA Civil Society Network without regurgitating their mission statement. And in terms of the forum, we are very much looking forward to — not in the traditional conference/workshop environment, but what would technically be called trainings, discussions, opportunities to engage one another on best practices and really looking at this as a launching of — into different areas where the civil society groups have not been active in the context of AGOA previously.

So this is an opportunity to broaden and deepen the impact of CSOs and PBOs and NGOs in Africa with the support of U.S.-based CSOs and NGOs who are committed to the myriad of issues that are relevant to AGOA.

Thank you.

**MR. DENIG:** Thank you very much, Mrs. Guthrie. Like to now invite Fred Oladiende, the coordinator of the AGOA Civil Society Network.

**MR. OLADIENDE:** Thank you very much and good morning, members of the press. Let me first express the gratitude of the Secretariat to the Assistant Secretary Newman for joining us today in addressing and providing information on what civil society plans to do in Dakar.

Last year, we had the second forum here in Washington and in 2003, we had the first forum which was in Mauritius. In fact, the AGOA Civil Society Network was established after the first forum in Mauritius. And the objective and mission of the network is very simple: To ensure that through civil society organizations in Africa and the United States that the African people and the American people are empowered to ensure that this excellent act, which has also helped to advance economic relationship between the United States and Africa continue to help address poverty and also work to ensure that good governance, human rights, transparency and corruption are issues that all addressed.

We have seen, and I think it's been well stated that since the bill was signed into law in 2000, there has been tremendous economic improvement. There's about \$44 billion as we speak, in increasing trade between the United States and Africa. And if we want to break this down, we're saying that there's about \$17.6 billion in precious tools and metals, about \$1.5 billion in apparel. We've also seen almost one billion — about \$79 — \$76.8 billion dollars in vehicles and parts coming from Africa into the United States, most of the time duty free and quota free.

And AGOA is facing some challenges and that is why we believe that the forum in Dakar is going to be very important. As most of us know, the quota part of AGOA and it's often referred to as the agreement on textile and clothing, is on the 1st of January. There has been a surge of about 1,035 percent from some countries. I don't think we want mention names and that we believe this would erode the gains that have been made by some of the small African countries that have missed significant investment to support industry, particularly in the area of textile and apparel.

We are hoping that at this conference in Dakar we will take a look at that. And at the same time, look at issues that would allow some of these governments to diversify. Agriculture, as Assistant Secretary Newman has mentioned, provide a very excellent opportunity in terms of not only addressing poverty but also actually looking at trying to minimize the influx of migration from the rural area to the open area because the infrastructure in most of these countries in Africa really are very limited, particularly in the open area.

And AGOA has a role to play and we believe that through the cooperation between civil society organizations here in the United States that worked very hard to ensure that over the period of the last eight to nine years — I think it took about four-five years before the bill was signed into law — that they can work, providing technical assistance, providing training to their counterparts in Africa that understands the political landscape, understands the culture, understand the problems that have made AGOA not as effective as it can be.

So we are looking at using the synergies as Madame Guthrie Sullivan had mentioned to empower the

civil society so that we can build economic prosperity and that is a theme this year of the AGOA civil society forum — session of the forum.

I think in some of the questions that were asked earlier on were questions about what is the success of AGOA? I think if we look at the political situation in Africa today, we would see how a lot of countries, because of the inducement of being able to participate in AGOA, are doing the right thing not only in terms of policy and legislation, but also addressing human rights, democracy issues that have not been addressed in the past.

What we hope to do now is to assemble the civil society organizations. We're monitoring eligibility criteria and putting in place mechanisms that will allow us to come up with an index and I think this is a valuable tool — a tool that can be used not only by donors but also can be used by citizens to assess the development in terms of political development, economic development and social development of their government.

So we are looking at civil society again, coming to use the eligibility criteria and these are very simple criteria that the bill comes up with. It talks about good governance, it talks about human rights, it talks about removing impediments to trade, it talks about ensuring that there is a right environment for investment, to be able to come into countries so that we can create jobs and address unemployment, particularly among the youth.

The conference in Dakar would have the hope during our session addressing empowerment of youth. How do we engage our youth, how do we bring them into the process, and how do we ensure that some of the chronic unemployment that is facing some of these nascent democracies — who we've talked about Togo — and the kind of problems that Togo, Nigeria, Zimbabwe is facing in terms of unemployment.

AGOA is a direct — has a direct correlation in trying to help address all of these issues. And while this forum in Dakar would have the government to government, it's also going to be the private sector. Africa's will be civil society and I don't think we want to misunderstand the role of civil society because in terms of our program, we're looking at civil society and working with government to ensure that they can provide the required environment that would allow for investment to come in, that would allow donors to see how they can better assist some of these governments in terms of their development agenda.

We're also looking at civil society providing the leadership and also working with private sector to address areas that we've not been able to address and which they may not be able to address because it will look at the motives of private sector is different to that of civil society. So we're looking at helping civil society to work with the private sector to ensure that all of these objectives can be met.

And one other important point that I think we should not lose focus of is that the forum is an important meeting point and we hope that we will use the forum this year to provide training and to discuss possible technical assistance. But beyond the forum, the AGOA Civil Society Network looks at the ongoing training opportunity on the ground in Africa, working through (inaudible), working through (inaudible) and other African civil society where we can go on the ground and use the power of American civil societies to work with African civil society in a way that government and private sector cannot.

And we have seen how in the process of democratization and addressing human rights issues, how civil society became and still is the platform that has been able to assist us in achieving all of what we've seen today. Ten to fifteen years ago, we could count the number of democracies in Africa on our fingers. Today, we do know that even though there are different level of democratization in Africa, we have seen significant increase, not only in terms of leadership accepting democratic principles, but also building institutions and working very, very adamantly to ensure that they can assume their rightful position within the international community.

We look forward to the support of all of the civil society groups who are not members of the network at the moment. I think that is work-in-progress and I also want to let you know that I am here representing over 90 civil society groups, here in the United States and also in Africa. There are well

more than that and we will continue to ensure that we'll reach out and include other civil society groups so that we could have a very holistic forum in Dakar.

We want to thank you for joining us this morning and we look forward to continuing working with you to present to the world, particularly to the thirty-seven eligible countries in Africa, and I believe there are also about, out of — there are still about nine or ten or eleven African countries that could part of AGOA that are not. I think we need to reach out to them through their civil society and those that are also in AGOA, but have been disqualified because of not meeting the eligibility criteria, we want to see how we can reach out, try to help with the required reforms and policy and legislation that could bring them back into the fold.

Thank you very much.

**MR. DENIG:** Thank you very much, Mr. Oladeinde. I'd like to give the media, once again, the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists.

Do we have any questions?

**QUESTION:** There's a great deal of anxiety in Africa about about the textile situation, the overwhelming exports coming out of China since the beginning of the year. How do you plan to address that very specific issue in Dakar? And do you go to Dakar with specific ideas on how to help African countries increase their textile exports to the U.S.?

**MR. OLADEINDE:** Definitely, the objective would be to work with the African countries to mitigate any decline in market share that has been achieved over the five-year period. And I think this can be achieved in different ways. One would be through training and technical assistance, working this government and working with the private sector to ensure that we can use techniques and technology that would increase efficiency, not necessarily retooling, but looking at how best practices are being used in other areas to achieve these objectives.

I think the other answer would be to — and I think some of this has been done already — we've seen the USTR with China, we hope some of that will help. We've seen the European Union, which is outside of AGOA, also put in place the early warning mechanisms and we believe those will help. But I will also think that I know that at least two of you worked on, is the African Government using bilateral relations to talk with some of these countries that have an — I think we need to mention China, India and Pakistan — and to talk with them in a way where we could have an agreement that would be mutually beneficial and would allow for countries like Lesotho that is making gains, countries like Swaziland, countries like Malawi that has invested a lot of money to maintain, if you met the quality and quantity of production we have in place now.

There's absolutely no doubt in my mind that some of these trading partners will be more than willing and sensitive to the cause of these countries. And I think also the entire governmental organization — the African Union also would have a role to play, similar to what we've seen USTR does here and see the European Union; where some of these countries could be asked to ensure that some of the grade of the textile and clothing that these particular countries in Africa — these companies in Africa are producing that somehow they are not under — they're not dumped in those markets. Thereby, allowing this young textile companies to continue to survive.

It will take work in terms of civil society, working with government to put the required policies and legislation in place. It will also take work with civil society, working with private sector, to institute some of these practices. And that is why there's a bridge between civil society here in the United States, where we do know that there's high level of efficiency in production and also other parts of the world, would be aware of assisting those countries to maintain their market share.

One of the points that I think you didn't bring up, but also need to be addressed right now, is that also we all know that by 2007, the third country fabric provision of AGOA will come to an end. And that itself, even though it's in the future, is in the very near future. We hope that that issue also needs to be addressed, because what that would mean by 2007 is that not only would we have lost a quota

advantage that AGOA provides, but also we'll be in process of losing the tariff advantages that AGOA provides.

And so we have to take a look at both of those and I think we have to be very ready to address the consequences of that. And I think policy and legislation needs to be put in place and at the same time, we need to look at how we are producing and what we are producing.

And I think with a mix of all of that, that the textile industry in Africa will be able to create a niche for itself. There is a report that came out, I think, two days ago, saying that Mauritius is probably in the position to create more work for itself. And so we need more work like that. And just to let you know that it was paid for by USAID, which we think is one of the important tools that can help these governments and their private sector to do the right thing.

**QUESTION:** Can AGOA do anything for cotton producers? Cotton producers in Africa have bitterly complained about the obstacles, the subsidies that developed countries, including the U.S., give their own producers. Can AGOA do anything there?

**MR. OLADEINDE:** Do you want to take the question?

**MR. MAKALOU:** Yes. I am Director and President of the Center of Citizen Research. And to prepare the Cancun meeting in 2002, we went over that question and we presented our views to the African delegation — and all developing countries delegation. We tried to classify countries in purchasers, net exporters, net importers and we tried to see the international price for cotton over about 20 years and to relate it or correlate it to subsidies and we found out that subsidies were coming from, not only the United States in absolute term, but from European Union and from many of the so-called developing countries, including China and in African countries like Egypt.

So we've tried to (inaudible) the debate, not to make it a political instrument to fight government in particular countries or continents. And what we suggested is that we have negotiation with the net exporters. The first net exporter is the United States. But believe it or not, the second most important net exporter is Africa — six African countries.

Mali, my home country, is the first producer of cotton, even before Egypt, was at that time because — I don't know if this year — and Burkina and Chad and Tanzania and Uganda. So we tried to see if we can negotiate a way to get the subsidies cancelled in all of these countries. We entered in negotiation. And those negotiations really were very successful in Cancun.

People were expressing — your colleagues, journalists — wanted an exclusion, a political clout, we didn't want that. We wanted to do something, which is meaningful, which can change the situation. And that is what is happening. And that relates to what Secretary of State Newman said here before: diversification.

Now, with the Chinese and the Pakistanis and the Indians expanding in their export all over the markets worldwide, we want the transformation of our products in Africa. Instead of having cotton and raw materials, want to transfer all of these things. And we have competitive advantage on costs, you know, and the quality of the cotton. That is what we see. And the U.S., through AGOA, is willing to help us and to do what Mr. Oladeinde said, to have some cooperation with the producer in Asia and have a triangular cooperation, whereby Africa, Asia and America would work together to have a wider and more equitable markets.

**MR. DENIG:** I'd like to go to New York for the next question. Sir, if you'd introduce yourself?

**QUESTION:** Yes, my name is Oginni Babatunde. I'm from African Independent Television in Nigeria. I really like to know what kind of structure the civil society will want to advise AGOA to put in place in terms of training and technological transfer, in light of many structures like in Nigeria you have industrial training fund which — structures which might not be too effective right now. What advice do the civil society want to give because they have working knowledge of the countries they come from?

**MR. OLADIENDE:** Thank you very much. And I think that is where we also see civil society having a comparative advantage and being able to complement the work of government and the work of the private sector. And we believe very strongly that this — your questions and issues that you've got these questions raised can be achieved through one-on-one discussion and assessment in particular countries.

This is one of the strategies that the Network has in place to create a network. And in fact, since you have mentioned Nigeria, we do have about seven or eight civil society groups from Nigeria who are part of the network. And we hope that in Dakar, we would, through these workshops and training sessions that we will be having, be able to listen to specific needs from some of our colleagues and come up with a recommendation on how we could address some of those needs.

There is tremendous opportunity within the continent that can allow AGOA to be more efficient. But somehow we need to put together the — what it takes to do those assessments and be able to put people back to work. And that's where the poverty reduction and issues will be addressed. I also think that Ms. Sullivan has some points to make on that.

**MS. GUTHRIE:** I just wanted to add that the benefit of having civil society organizations that are working in various countries working in AGOA is that they don't start from ground-zero. Organizations have been working in various areas, be they human rights or worker rights or the development of access to credit and they know where the soft spots are. They know where the problems are and they have thoughts and have come to the table with solutions. And it's really building on the work that's already being done and synergizing the work that's already being done and continuing to create a push both from the civic society organizations, as well as government and the private sector to ensure that the benefits of AGOA are realized.

So we come to the table with so much and we're really looking to build on the investments that the donor community has made in our various organizations and that government has made in building their own investment schemes or making their countries more investment-friendly, as well as the work that the private sector has done in terms of supporting their business communities and their various countries.

**MR. DENIG:** We have time for one last question. If you could introduce yourself. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. My name is Yao, *Le Diplome*, from Togo. I want to ask Mr. Oladiende one question. You talk about eligibility criteria for debt program for their organization. Now, I want to ask him that regarding this criteria and regarding the criteria for Millennium Challenge Account program, you say to me there is not a lot of difference. I want to ask you if he has some — something to convey to me about the Millennium Challenge Account eligibility criteria and what they're doing?

**MR. OLADIENDE:** Thank you very much. And that really makes my point and the need for civil society to engage on both sides of the Atlantic. The eligibility criteria for AGOA, as you've said, is similar to the eligibility criteria that the Millennium Challenge Account has. Because I think the objective of both programs — the AGOA and also the Millennium Challenge Account, which is a new presidential initiative — is to support government that have in place and are working hard to ensure that they improve the relationship between government and citizens; that we have in place a rule of law; that we have in place a representation of a democracy; that we have in place opportunity for citizens to be able to express themselves without intimidation.

And these are all things that establish democracies; people take for granted. And some of what countries that have been able to use this discipline to achieve, is what countries — in developing countries like Africa, need to put in place for them to achieve the same goals.

So your point is very correct. The Millennium Challenge Account and AGOA eligible criteria are not too far apart. And civil society needs to work with the government, particularly in Africa, to understand the similarity in eligibility criteria, so that if you can work to achieve the AGOA eligibility criteria, you've also achieved those of the Millennium Challenge Account and that would also assist you to meet the Millennium development goal's objectives.

So we cannot expect development in a vacuum — development that would be built on a platform. And what civil society can do is explain that to the private sector for them to be a responsible business community and work with government to ensure that it could also put in place some of these very simple, but very important to us, that would allow their missions to achieve all of these improvements in terms of human development that would allow them to grow the economy.

So the criteria that I was talking about earlier on is actually the eligibility criteria for the African Golden Opportunity Act. And I'm glad that you were able to see the similarity between that and the Millennium Challenge goals. And most donors, those are the same basic requirements that they are looking for because the objective is it will have to realize any kind of gain in terms of investment and development, government has to have those conditions in place. I think one person made that point very clear.

During the AGOA Civil Society Forum last year here in Washington, the former attorney general Ed Meese, spent a lot of time explaining the importance of rule of law. And he said, even though people talk on grace of rule of law and assume we know what rule of law is, now without a basic clear understanding of the rule of law and ensuring that nations have established strong platform for a rule of law. Some of the development goals that we are looking for will not be achieved.

Thank you.

**MR. DENIG:** Thank you. I want to thank our speakers very much today for the time they spent with us. And ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your participation.

(Applause.)