



Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)
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Recent Passage of AGOA Acceleration Act (S. 2529) Is Assuring and Timely as Civil Society Leaders Prepare for Third African Union Summit

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After a bit of confusion and uncertainty over whether the AGOA Acceleration Act (S. 2529) would become controversial with Senators considering adding unrelated amendments coupled with election year politics, the US Senate successfully passed the bill by unanimous consent. AGOA's successful passage in the Senate brings assurance to AGOA supporters in the US and Africa thus renewing the opportunity to further expand bilateral trade relations between continental Africa and the US.

For Civil Society leaders focusing on African social and economic development, this is good news. AGOA's passage in the US Congress is especially timely as civil society prepares for the upcoming African Union Summit to take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Participants of the Summit will concentrate on topics such as the relationship between the AU and civil society organizations in African development, the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) as well as the successful implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) objectives.

"The passage of the AGOA Acceleration Act will ensure continuity and hope for African trade and development programs continent-wide, but may not necessarily guarantee sustainability - especially if the program is only government-to-government oriented. Only the bottom up, people-to-people involvement can seal the success of the AGOA program. We must continue to recognize the huge role for civil society organizations in reinforcing the AGOA program's implementation in Africa," commented Anthony Okonmah, Executive Director, The Foundation for Democracy in Africa.

Key provisions in the original AGOA Act (signed into law in 2000) and in the third installment just passed by the Senate, illustrate the United States' commitment to helping Africa in good governance, the democratization process and in building necessary infrastructure as Africa countries work towards increased participation in the global economy.