



**Remarks by Fred O. Oladeinde, Chair, AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Secretariat at the Opening Session of the Civil Society, AWEF, and Private Sector Session of the 16<sup>th</sup> AGOA Forum, Radisson Blu Hotel, Lomé, Togo**  
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Welcome and good morning. Since 2001, we have gathered both in the U.S. and at other venues in Africa to craft recommendations on the way forward regarding strengthening U.S.-Sub Saharan African trade and economic cooperation under three prior administrations:

President Bill Clinton

President George W. Bush, and

President Barack Obama

And we have enjoyed incremental success, despite challenges in achieving our stated goals.

In 2015, Congress with bi partisan support extended AGOA benefits through 2025, providing you, and I the opportunity, as actors, in the effort to “use trade and economic cooperation” to achieve economic growth and economic development in Sub -Saharan Africa. Moving US trade and economics to the next level – Bilateral and free trade agreements.

Friends and colleagues, we are in the “last mile” of this effort, this critical juncture that will define how, we as “warriors for economic freedom and liberty,” finish this race and complete our legacy of accomplishments. Time is more precious, now than ever before, billions of dollars and millions of lives have been invested in our efforts to get “thus far” and the next generation demands that we use our time wisely – more effectively to achieve our goals and objectives of crafting competitive policies, implementing programs and initiatives that are more cost effective and less demanding of our time and resources in developing infrastructure and linkages that bring the levels of investment, technology, and the legal environment required to build the industries , testing labs, roads, airports, seaports, train terminals, power generation plants, and financial institutions, to create the over 20 million new jobs, annually. Jobs that are needed in Sub- Saharan Africa to stop the current “migration of our youth through the valley and the shadows of death” in search of jobs across the globe.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is why, it is more important now, than ever that we work closely and honestly together in the achievement of our mutual goal and objective of— Using AGOA to Build Prosperity by 2025; we must work with the new administration, and President Donald W. Trump with vigor and candor during this critical time and

phase of the “last mile” of our race as “warriors for economic freedom and liberty” to achieve victory and success, together.

May I, take this opportunity to express the collective appreciation of my colleagues, our partners, and sponsors to the leadership of the U.S. Government and Government of Togo for their full cooperation and openness in the preparation of what I hope will go on record, as one of the best ever attended AGOA Forums since the bill mandated our coming together. -- Madam Dede Ekoue from the Office of the Presidency of the Government of Togo, and Mr. Peter Barlerin, Head of the U.S. Delegation.

May I, also take this opportunity to express the collective best wishes and congratulations of my colleagues, partners and sponsors to Ambassador Lighthizer, our new US Trade Representative (USTR), we are eager to hear his presentation, tomorrow, and for the opportunity and privilege of a one- on -one meeting with him here in Lomé during the Forum.

Last, and saving the best for last, the more than two hundred warriors for economic freedom and liberty from across the United States, and Sub -Saharan Africa representing, NGO;s, CBOs, Chambers of Commerce; MSMEs; advocacy groups; YALI; Women; and Farmers, here inside this hall, in the overflow room at the ECOWAS building, and in homes and offices across Africa and the United States( via the internet) who’s registration, membership , contributions , volunteerism, dedication, passion, love and commitment made it possible for me to stand before you today and to address you .

May God bless the United States of America and the Union of African States?

I thank you.