



Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK



NEWSLETTER

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Building Relationships to Increase AGOA's Efficiency

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- **AGOA CSO Session** highlights important work to be done by civil society organizations
- **AGOA** loses two eligible countries and gains one, making a new total of 37 AGOA eligible African countries
- The **AGOA Civil Society Network** is being revamped this year to increase communication with Civil Society organizations in the US and Africa—building relationships to increase AGOA efficiency
- **Open call for submissions!!** Tell us your stories related to AGOA and Civil Society Service on the ground in Africa and in the US. The only way to effect change is to be proactive and share your experience. Email your thoughts, concerns and questions regarding AGOA and Civil Society work to moladeinde@democracy-africa.org

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SECOND AGOA CIVIL SOCIETY SESSION EMPHASIZES IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY WORK IN MAKING AGOA MORE EFFECTIVE

The Second AGOA Civil Society Session of the Third US—sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation took place from December 8-10, 2003 in Washington, DC USA. The Session included a number of representatives from the US and African governments as well as the public and private sector. A major theme throughout the conference was that while AGOA has made a number of strides in terms of African economic growth, there is still much work to be done. The impact on Africa has not been sufficient so far and there are a number of initiatives that Civil society organizations are in a key position to undertake to enhance AGOA's efficiency.

A number of recommendations were made by participants suggesting ways in which AGOA can be enhanced and made more effective. Key points on the work to be done by Civil Society organizations included:

- Every AGOA-eligible country should have an AGOA action plan based on a partnership among civil society, the government, and the private sector and aimed at full participation in the benefits of AGOA. This, with an eye toward enabling African countries to meet international standards and become more competitive in the international global market.
- The AGOA Civil Society Network should work with the appropriate U.S. institutions and agencies, especially



From left to right: Fred Oladeinde, The Foundation for Democracy in Africa, Gianni Zanini, The World Bank, Ram Nookadee, Mauritius Council for Social Service and Bertrand Laurent, Africa-America Institute work on developing the AGOA Civil Society Session Communiqué with session participants

USAID, US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), US Trade Representative (USTR) and US Department of Commerce to support African-led civic organizations that promote AGOA goals and objectives.

- The AGOA Civil Society network will work with the African Union to ensure that African countries take full advantage of AGOA provisions with a focus on intra-Africa trade and the eradication of HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa.
- AGOA should include in-country trade shows aimed at bringing together buyers and sellers to create an environment conducive to trade.
- Civil society should continue to promote female-owned and, otherwise, under-represented businesses, as well as good corporate

governance, transparency, accountability, anti-corruption activities and the rule of law throughout Africa, through educational and technical capacity-building programs.

- Civil society must develop appropriate mechanisms for monitoring eligibility and compliance and tracking the impact of trade on the masses of the people of Africa and the United States. Centers of Excellence and Innovation in the Sciences and Technology developed in African universities and colleges must become resources for conducting research and applying indigenous knowledge to foster growth.
- Civil society must support the AGOA's full implementation through advocacy, capacity-building and technical

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ARE CRUCIAL TO AGOA'S EFFECTIVENESS

assistance. Capacity building must include training on international standards and best practices.

- The Civil Society Network should work with regional Hubs for Global Competitiveness in Ghana, Botswana and Kenya to promote the dissemination of information and capacity building.
- Civil society organizations should encourage U.S. investment in Africa, as well as the repatriation of both human and financial African Diaspora assets back to Africa.
- The Civil Society Network should continue to promote AGOA and work to mobilize the technically skilled African Diaspora community to support AGOA-aimed initiatives.

The second day of the AGOA Civil Society Session was comprised of workshops focusing on what is needed to make AGOA more effective and to increase Africa's marketability in its use of AGOA as an instrument to stimulate economic growth in Africa. As the deliberations of the second day showed, a major civil society focus in helping to achieve these goals should be on the institution of the rule of law as well as capacity building on the ground in Africa.

In terms of the rule of law, Former US Attorney General

Ed Meese, Chairman, Center for Judicial and Legal Studies, The Heritage Foundation shared with participants some of the key elements of the rule of law that help in shaping an economy and in creating sustainable development. As he noted, "The important requirement in a fair economy and for the rule of law is equal application of the law. There's not one favorite group or one favorite individual, or that the law is not going to be applied differently to one person who comes before a court or before some other regulatory body against another, so that people can be confident that they will be treated impartially." His helpful comments embody the very mandate of civil society in AGOA implementation. By remaining a diverse network of organizations that are objective in their critique of AGOA's effectiveness, Civil society organizations play a unique role in helping to make sure that AGOA works.

Aleta Williams, Education Advisor, Bureau for Africa, USAID also provided participants with helpful comments regarding the importance of education in capacity building in increasing AGOA's effectiveness: "Education may be the



Becky Norton Dunlop, The Heritage Foundation, greets session participants and introduces luncheon speakers Former Attorney General Edwin Meese, The Heritage Foundation and Aleta Williams, Bureau for Africa, USAID

highest yielding investment a country can make because the knowledge and confidence generated by this investment enables individuals and societies to be creative in developing new opportunities for economic development as education levels rise, thus continuing a virtuous spiral that reinforces and deepens the benefits."

In terms of education/capacity-building and tracking the fairness and application of the rule of law in AGOA initiatives, Civil society has a lot of work to do and Africa has much to gain from civil society's commitment.

There is a need and a call for each country in Africa to work closely with civil society organizations as partners to achieve economic, political and social plurality for their people.

"Civil society must support the AGOA's full implementation through advocacy, capacity-building and technical assistance."

OPEN CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!!!

With the success of the Second AGOA Civil Society Session and the promise of a new year, the AGOA Civil Society Network is launching this new newsletter in an effort to establish increased communication and information sharing among members of the network.

Because the network is made up of civil society organizations with the same goal of African growth and development, we expect members to share with us their areas of expertise, opinions and grassroots experi-

ence with how AGOA affects them, how initiatives are shaping their work and how AGOA can be used as an instrument to help integrate Africa into the global economy and raise the standard of living for African people. The AGOA Civil Society Network will in turn, make sure that your voice is heard by the right people and will share all the information the Network receives on AGOA's progress and various ways that the members of the Network can work together to implement AGOA initiatives.

The AGOA Civil Society Network has a temporary website (until the launching of the official website currently scheduled for April 2004) where members can post information, ask questions and communication on the ways that they are working or would like to work on making AGOA more effective. The website is <http://groups.msn.com/AGOACSONetwork> For more information or for an official invitation to the group, email: moladeinde@democracy-africa.org



To Network Members—Keep in Touch!

US Government AGOA Updates:

TOTAL OF THIRTY-SEVEN AGOA-ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

As of January 1, 2004, President Bush has determined that Eritrea and the Central African Republic are no longer AGOA-eligible countries and has added Angola to the list of eligible countries.

As a statement by White House Deputy Press Secretary reads, "President Bush approved the designation of... 37 Sub-Saharan African countries as eligible for tariff preferences under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)... This year, the President has added Angola to the list of eligible countries. The President removed the Central African Republic and Eri-

trea from the list of eligible countries. As required by the legislation, this annual determination signifies which countries are making continued progress toward a market-based economy, the rule of law, free trade, economic policies that will reduce poverty, and protection of workers' rights. By providing these countries greater access to American markets, AGOA can spur development of an economic relationship between the United States and Africa that is based on shared values and shared responsibilities in a world of free trade, free people, and free ideas."

—<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/12/20031230-7.html>



Bush amends AGOA Bill by subtracting two countries—Eritrea and Central African Republic and adding one country—Angola

Send us your feedback!
 What does this mean for AGOA? How do you think Civil Society can or should be involved in these recent changes?

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NEW YEAR—NEW AGOA CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK



AGOA Civil Society Network Members and Civil Society Session Participants take a group picture during the second day of the session

Happy New Year! This new year brings with it not only the success of the AGOA Civil Society's Second NGO Session of the Third AGOA Forum, but also a renewed sense of purpose in terms of ensuring that AGOA as a trade enhance-

ment mechanism between the US and Africa can be implemented as a stepping stone for Africa's participation in the global economy.

This year promises to be very productive for the AGOA Civil

Society Network. With the launching of a monthly newsletter and website, there will be a myriad of ways for Civil Society organizations to communicate and to help ensure that AGOA can be used on the ground in Africa effectively.

Be sure to visit the website soon, and to join the AGOA Civil Society Network MSN Group at groups.msn.com/agoacsonnetwork or email moladeinde@democracy-africa.org for more details.

We're on the Web!

Visit our (temporary) Website* for the latest information on AGOA Civil Society Issues, and to hear from your fellow AGOA CSO Network members:
<http://groups.msn.com/AGOACSONetwork>

* - official website to be launched April 2004



Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)
CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK



In keeping with the spirit of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the mission of the AGOA Civil Society Network is to empower African people through their civil society organizations to work with governments and businesses to take maximum advantage of AGOA benefits on behalf of the citizens of their countries.

The Network will accomplish this mission through three means:

- Monitoring and compliance with AGOA eligibility requirements
- Providing technical assistance where feasible for public and private sectors on AGOA compliance and trade capacity
- Tracking the impact of AGOA specifically and trade generally on Africa societies

Ongoing and potential AGOA Civil Society network projects include: (1) Annual report on eligibility requirement compliance of AGOA nations and assessment of compliance by non-AGOA nations compiled by national network affiliates; (2) Ongoing training by network member NGOs on trade capacity for African and America businesses to support and expand AGOA trade by small and medium enterprises; (3) Ongoing training by network member NGOs on trade, economic, political and social policy issues for African governments to enhance AGOA eligibility and compliance; and (4) Annual report on the impact of trade on African societies that measures the impact beyond commercial statistics and offers recommendations on broadening the benefits of trade.

Questions? Comments? Please contact:

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