

Communiqué

**2011 AGOA Civil Society Forum
Lusaka, Zambia
8th June 2011**

**Presented to: 10th AGOA Ministerial
on
9th June 2011 at Mulungushi International Conference Centre
Lusaka, Zambia**

Since the passage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2000, civil society organizations have strived to work closely with government and the private sector as partners to achieve the modest growth in trade volume, and closer trade ties between the United States and the eligible sub Saharan African nations. We have seen trade volume increase from \$23.4 billion in 2001 to \$64.3 billion in 2010, and hereby pledge our re-commitment to fostering increased US-Africa trade under AGOA, through trade policy reforms that will provide African producers the necessary competitive edge to be successful in accessing US markets.

We recognize that the trade volumes are mainly composed of petroleum products. There is need for diversification in the make-up of exports under AGOA beyond crude oil exports, to include value-added products produced by Small and Medium African producers across all sectors, particularly, in rural communities; using AGOA as platform for reducing poverty and mitigating the rural to urban migration of unskilled workers in Africa.

We acknowledge the fact that the sustainability of the positive gains in increased trade volume and closer economic ties between the United States and the eligible sub Saharan African (SSA) countries under AGOA in the last decade requires robust and receptivity to such participation from government. We believe this can be achieved, through dialogue, strengthened collaborations between the public and private sectors on policy, facilitate the extension of the third country fabric provision of AGOA, and the expiration of AGOA beyond its present deadlines.

We, the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) gathered here, in Lusaka, for the 2011 AGOA Civil Society CSO Forum are gravely concerned about the termination of the multi fibre provision in 2012, and the expiration of AGOA in 2015. We see these two upcoming deadlines as major challenges to the sustainability of the trade gains made since the passage of AGOA in 2000, and a threat to the improved trade linkages that currently exists between the US and sub-Saharan Africa .

We applaud the US Administration's recent commitment to working with the US Congress on extending the third country fabric provision to 2015. We call upon the US government to extend both the AGOA deadline, and the third country fabric provision to 2025.

We welcome the recent, midterm review of AGOA, conducted by the African Union and the UNECA, and look forward to their findings and recommendations. And we would like to see Civil Society Organisations to be part of future midterm reviews.

We call upon the US Government to foster greater co-operation with, and provide enhanced technical assistance to eligible Sub Sahara African countries. This supplemental support would enable eligible AGOA countries to conform to market requirements and other technical standards, such as, Pest Risk Assessment (PRA), Minimum Residue (MR) Requirements, Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary (SPS) regulations.

The 10th AGOA forum has brought together Civil Society private sector and young professionals and entrepreneurs. The young entrepreneurs are important in the sustainability of Sub-Sahara Africa's development process. We therefore commend the Zambian and US governments for facilitating such a process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We hereby recommend the following actions:

- We call upon Sub-Sahara African governments to adopt measures aimed at addressing the supply side constraints. And we call upon the US Government to consider extending the third country fabric provision from 2012 to 2015 and the AGOA provisions beyond the current deadline of 2015.
- We recommend that official delegations to future AGOA ministerial forums include and support at least three (3) civil society organization representatives, so that they can participate in the CSO forums.
- We call for the diversification of imports under AGOA from eligible African Countries, to include products by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from various sectors, including arts, handicrafts, cultural souvenirs, and pottery.
- We call upon the United States to provide technical assistance to AGOA eligible countries on sanitary and phyto-sanitary requirements, Minimum residue requirements, pest risk assessment and to facilitate imports of primary and value added agricultural products from Africa, under AGOA. We commend the US government for efforts to initiate a bill to address Technical Assistance under AGOA.
- We call upon SSA governments to reform their investment policies to encourage both domestic and foreign direct investment through public private partnerships for processing and manufacturing plants in Africa. We urge US, private sector to invest in SSA countries, and to also help create demand in the U.S for African products.
- We call upon African countries to speed up regulatory and policy reforms that foster private sector development, encourage domestic and foreign direct investment, stimulate the supply of export products that will create jobs in the rural areas and support agriculture and food and nutrition security. We urge the US to support infrastructure development, especially the production, transmission and distribution of power to spur economic growth in Africa and

support industrialization; and the building of feeder roads to transport products from farm to market, ports and airports to reduce transportation cost between Sub Sahara Africa and markets in the United States this can be done through the Millennium Challenge Corporation grants, private sector investment and other US Government bilateral assistance.

- We call upon Governments of the SSA countries to harmonize and standardise customs requirements to allow for easier movement of goods and services.
- We call upon the Governments of Sub-Sahara African countries, under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), to increase investments in the sector, accordingly and address the needs of small holder agricultural producers. SSA countries should encourage investment through Public Private Partnerships, (PPP) in the processing of agriculture products; realising that the majority of the agricultural producers are small scale farmers.
- We call upon SSA governments to undertake assessments regarding trade and gender, specifically women and to provide support to women through skill enhancement and access to finance. This would ensure that opportunities for women in trade are maximized.
- We call upon the US government to facilitate a framework under AGOA for the empowerment of young African business professionals and entrepreneurs, through entrepreneurship skills development, knowledge exchange, mentorship and internship programmes.
- We call upon the US government through AGOA to promote responsible business practices among US investors in Sub Sahara Africa.