



Opening Remarks by:

**Fred O. Oladeinde, President, the Foundation for Democracy in Africa
14th US-Africa Trade and Investment Forum - AfrICANDO 2011
*Miami Free Zone
September 15, 2011***

Honorable Juan Carlos Bermudez, Mayor, City of Doral; Honorable Dennis C. Moss, Miami Dade County, Board of County Commissioners, and Chair of AfrICANDO 2011; Honorable Ato Girma Wake, 2011 Medal of Glory Award Honoree; Honorable George Monyemangene, Consul General, Republic of South Africa, Honorable Rhonda Jackson, Consul General of the Bahamas; Chairman Gershwin Blyden, The Foundation for Democracy in Africa; all elected office holders present; members of the Diplomatic Corps; colleagues from Civil Society Organizations; members of the Press; ladies and gentlemen.

On Behalf of The Foundation for Democracy in Africa; members of Team AfrICANDO 2011, and our sponsors, I welcome you to our 14th Annual US-Africa Trade and Investment Symposium - AfrICANDO 2011, under the theme “Leveraging Florida’s Access to Markets in the Americas to Support US-Africa Trade.”

Ten years after the passage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), we continue to witness expansion of trade and cultural ties between the United States and Africa. Today, trade under AGOA has grown by more than three folds from the level in 2000, resulting in the creation of hundreds of thousands of good paying jobs in the US and in Africa, including, here in South Florida.

To optimize the benefits of AGOA, however, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, we need to reform policies and pass new legislation on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean that will empower Micro, Small and Medium companies and facilitate their participation in US-Africa trade, and diversify the present make-up of exports under AGOA beyond crude oil to include value-added products produced by small, and medium enterprises (SMEs) across all sectors, particularly, in rural communities; using AGOA as a platform for reducing poverty and empowering women, and young entrepreneurs to contribute to business growth and economic development.

The theme of AfrICANDO 2011 “Leveraging Florida’s Access to Markets in the Americas to Support US-Africa Trade” is timely. Today, South Florida is an important Gateway to markets in the Americas and the Caribbean serving as the hub for trade and investment for about 47 sovereign States with combined GDP of more than \$5.16 trillion dollars and population that is rapidly approaching 1 billion people, making this region one of the most lucrative markets for goods and services in the world, according to the IMF, and one that African nations need effective and efficient access to, in order to grow their economies.

Today, State of Florida, Lt. Governor Jennifer Carroll will give the keynote address during the luncheon session, and lead the strategy session on “Leveraging Florida’s Access to Markets in the America’s to Support US-Africa Trade” with Commissioner Dennis C. Moss (District 9), and Chair, AfrICANDO 2011.

This conference is a follow-up to the 2011 AGOA Forum in Lusaka, Zambia, which was held in June of this year. As the Secretariat for the AGOA Civil Society Network, FDA aims to achieve the following, and more:

1. Launch the AfrICANDO Skills and Business Development Program (ASBDP) during the afternoon strategy session. The ASBDP will provide civil society organizations with strategies, and techniques for effectively advocating for legislative and policy reforms that will empower Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, and facilitate the extension of the third fabric provision of AGOA to 2015 and AGOA to 2025.
2. Establish the AfrICA Trade Development Center (ATDC) in the Miami Free Zone, the first of its type in the United States, for the purpose of increasing demand in the United States, Canada and other markets in the Western Hemisphere for products produced by African based MSMEs.

3. Present the 2011 Medal of Glory Award to Mr. Ato Girma Wake, the retired CEO of Ethiopian Airlines tomorrow, Friday 16 September 2011 from 7 pm - 11pm at the Doral Intercontinental Hotel for his lifetime contributions, including linking markets and destinations in Africa with destinations and markets across the globe through air transportation during his career with Ethiopian Airlines.

Tomorrow, here at the Miami Free Zone, from 9:00-11:30 am during the CSO Roundtable, the future of AGOA will be discussed, including, recommendations from the Lusaka Forum and the plans for the upcoming AGOA forum here in the United States in 2012. I urge everyone to attend this important session, and to contribute as a sign of support for improved US-Africa Trade relationships.

We have site visits and one-on-one meetings planned for tomorrow, please register with the registration staff before 12 noon today.

As most of you know, The Foundation for Democracy in Africa is a membership organization. We ask those who are not already members to consider membership and take frontline position in the effort to expand peace and prosperity.

Again, I welcome everyone. Our colleagues who travelled across the Atlantic Ocean to join us here in Miami for AfrICANDO 2011 deserve special recognition and thanks.

Please join me in congratulating the Honorable Girma Wake, 2011 Medal of Glory Award honoree and his family, and welcoming them to Miami, Florida, the Gateway to US-Africa Trade and Investment.

Thank you.