

**Communiqué**

**AGOA Civil Society Forum  
13<sup>th</sup> June 2012  
Washington, D.C.**

**Presented to: 11<sup>th</sup> AGOA Ministerial  
on  
15<sup>th</sup> June 2012  
U.S. Department of State  
Loy Henderson Room  
Washington, D.C., U.S.A.**

The Civil Society Session of the 2012 African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum examined the following issues: AGOA - Challenges and Opportunities; Civil Society's Role in Effecting Legislative Reforms that Enhance U.S. Africa Trade beyond the Expiration of AGOA in 2015; Africa's Regional Integration and Bilateral Trade Facilitation Efforts; Strengthening African SME's Capacity to Diversify Imports under AGOA; Technical Assistance and Capacity Building to Support Expansion in the Africa's Agriculture Sector; Engaging the Diaspora as Culture Brokers for US-Africa Trade and Investment Expansion; Public Private Partnerships: A Platform for Supporting Youth Entrepreneurship; and Trade and Gender: Empowering Women Entrepreneurs.

This year's CSO Session took place at a number of venues. The Opening Ceremony and day one activities took place at the Washington Plaza Hotel on June 12, 2012; events took place at the Woodrow Wilson Center and the Brookings Institution on Wednesday, June 13, 2012.

The CSO Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> AGOA Forum brought together civil society organizations, network members, small and medium enterprises, young professionals, entrepreneurs and members of the African Women Entrepreneurs Program (AWEP) together to network, discuss, and share experiences and best practices regarding AGOA and other trade related issues. The following is civil society's platform:

We call on the Obama administration to work with the leadership in both Houses of Congress for a prompt Congressional extension of the Third Country Fabric Provision (TCF) and prevent further pain and suffering to the most vulnerable – the poor.

We welcome the recent appointment of a Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Civil Society and Emerging Democracies, in the U.S. Department of State—Tomicah Tillemann, and call on the U.S. government and African governments to expand political space for civil society organizations and engage them constructively.

We acknowledge the significant contributions of the African Diaspora to the development of their home countries through money remittances and recognize the Diaspora as culture brokers for AGOA and a untapped asset for government and private sector on both sides of the Atlantic, in the effort to expand U.S. Africa trade and economic ties.

We urge the African Diaspora to use their numbers to influence votes in local elections to support stronger US-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation and to get heavily involved in organizing, educating and advocating for AGOA.

We welcome the G-8 Alliance for food security and nutrition and call on CSOs to harness its benefits and work to contain any negative effects that it may cause the general population.

We call on U.S. government to develop a policy framework to increase U.S. direct investment in Africa and encourage U.S. companies to develop an Africa trade and investment strategy.

We encourage women entrepreneurs to explore viable and beneficial opportunities offered by U.S. companies looking to involve women into their value chain.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- We call for an immediate Congressional extension of the Third Country Fabric Provision (TCF); before September 30, 2012
- The U.S. government should provide Congress with annual reports regarding the growth in non-oil imports under AGOA including specific activities stimulated by AGOA and new opportunities for U.S., African entrepreneurs, and their alliances
- USAID strengthen its support in the area of capacity building for U.S. and African civil society organizations working to expand US-Africa trade under AGOA
- The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) should initiate new equity funds for small medium enterprises, and infrastructure funds focusing on electrification, renewable energy, transport corridors, airport and sea ports
- Current proposals to strengthen the activities of the Export-Import Bank (EXIM) in Africa should include a special focus on small business
- U.S. agencies whose mission it is to ensure minority and SME's participation in government contracting, such as, the Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and USTR's Office of the Small Business Assistance should have a role in the implementation of AGOA; these agencies should be provided with the resources to support SME's and MBE's participation in US-Africa trade expansion
- The U.S. government should provide development assistance and diplomatic support to facilitate the completion of a Continental Free Trade Area that encompasses all of sub-Sahara Africa by 2019; and the Tripartite FTA in Eastern and Southern Africa by 2014
- Civil Society urges the U.S. and other G-20 members to place on its agenda, measures that support African States' efforts to progress towards the African Economic Community (AEC). These measures could include support for the

modification of WTO rules treating non least developed countries' (LDC) members of sub-Saharan regional groupings, differently, than developed countries (DC) members, and we request that the European Union delay implementation of its end of 2013 ultimatum, which denies preferential benefits to sub-Saharan countries that have not begun to implement Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) until the G-20 develops a standardized approach. We also urge leaders to ensure that non LDC's are treated as favourably as LDC's within the WTO, so as not to impede economic integration efforts

- AGOA be reformed into a more inclusive, more accessible and more permanent framework; a framework under which expertise may be provided through a network of facilitative and topical agreements, such as, Trade, Investment and Development Cooperative Agreements (TIDCA's), Bilateral Investment Treaties, and investment and development friendly double taxation agreements. These agreements should address customs and trade facilitation, SPS and technical barriers, protection of investment, avoidance of excessive taxation, SME participation, and supply chain while other arrangements with sub-Saharan African countries, i.e., Free Trade Agreements, await integration
- A formal recognition that civil society and the Diaspora are best placed as culture brokers for AGOA trade related aspects - considering that they ( the Diaspora and Civil Society) are uniquely equipped with knowledge of the two or more cultures and engaging them in the process can only lead to mutually beneficial negotiated outcomes
- African governments should speed up regulatory and policy reforms that foster private sector development, and encourage domestic and foreign investment
- African governments must undertake sufficient trade and gender assessments, especially, regarding women and young people, and provide them support through skills enhancement and access to finance for business