
Address to the First Annual International Conference on Africa: Africa Initiative Project

By

Phillip Carter III

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs

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This conference is very important. It not only allows for a deeper understanding of African history, but contemporary United States and Africa Affairs. Combining a rich historical perspective with an interdisciplinary vision and awareness for the future, provides a great means to address challenges on the African continent.

We at the Department of State's (DoS) Bureau of African Affairs are also celebrating an important milestone this year — our 50th Anniversary. Building upon a half century of accomplishment, the Bureau looks to the next fifty years with great hope and excitement.

United States Policy in Africa

Over the past eight years, the United States (U.S.) has made an unprecedented commitment to Africa. [The former Bush's] Administration has gone further than any previously in engaging and assisting the continent. We are working with our sub-Saharan partners to pioneer a new era of development in Africa. This afternoon, I would like to highlight our policy priorities on the continent.

Democratic Institution Building

The first defining priority is “Democratic Institution Building.” We are engaged in supporting the rise of freedom and democracy throughout sub-Saharan Africa. During the past two decades, progressive democratic reform has adapted to local values, customs, and practices. Outgrowths of democratic, well-governed states that adhere to the rule of law, support the will of their people, and contribute responsibly to the international system are developing.

We have partnered with these nations to build democratic institutions, conduct free and fair elections, and govern justly. These outcomes mark an important historical shift. In the past four years alone, there have been more than fifty democratic elections throughout Africa. Almost three-quarters of sub-Saharan nations are now classified by Freedom House as “Free” or “Partly Free” — up from less than half in 1990.

Despite significant progress, recent elections in Kenya and Zimbabwe have hindered these advances. These elections, marked by voting irregularities, contestable results, and post election violence, demonstrate that the path to democracy is often challenging.

Notwithstanding these impediments, the U.S. will continue to work with our international partners to support democratic institutions, promote free and fair elections, and expand freedom and prosperity for the benefit of all. For example, we will continue to strongly support the democratic transition in Liberia — and to strengthen democratic institutions in post-conflict countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Burundi.

Although conflict resolution is an essential part of our foreign policy objectives, we believe that to sustain long term peace and stability on the continent, it is not enough to just end wars but we must move beyond post-conflict transformation to consolidate democracies.

Economic Growth and Development

Our second foreign policy priority is the expansion of “Economic Growth and Development.”

At the 2005 Gleneagles G8 [Group of Eight Top Economic World Powers] Summit, the United States committed to doubling its assistance (bilateral and multilateral) to sub-Saharan Africa from a base of \$4.4 billion in 2004 to \$8.7 billion by 2010. We are on track to meet that pledge.

To accelerate growth in Africa, the U.S. implemented the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), a revolutionary foreign assistance program that seeks to reduce poverty through sustainable economic growth by awarding sizeable grants not loans to countries that practice good governance, seek to take responsibility for their own development, and are committed to achieving results. Of the eighteen compacts signed to date since the program’s inception in 2004, eleven totaling over \$4.8 billion have been signed with sub-Saharan African countries. Senegal and Malawi are in the process of developing compacts, and another eight African nations have Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) threshold programs to help them qualify for full compact.

The U.S. government has enacted the *African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)*, a program that rewards reforming African countries with U.S. trade preferences. This initiative has helped to reduce barriers to trade, increase exports, create jobs, and expand business opportunities for African and U.S. entrepreneurs. With 41 countries presently qualified, AGOA has become a cornerstone of our trade and investment policy in Africa. It has helped increase two-way trade between the U.S. and eligible African economies to over \$50 billion more than six times the level in 2001, the first full year of AGOA.

Programs such as MCC and AGOA are strengthening African economic health and underscore our cardinal interest in the continent’s economic affairs. Not surprisingly, in 2007, sub-Saharan Africa experienced a growth rate of 6.5 percent one of its highest in decades.

Disease

The third U.S. foreign policy priority in Africa is the fight against “Disease.” As the leading cause of death on the continent, disease is one of the greatest challenges to Africa’s future. Rising to meet this challenge, the U.S. is partnering with sub-Saharan nations to target the prevention, care, and treatment of disease . . . especially human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), malaria, and neglected tropical diseases.

To address the severe and urgent human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) crisis, former President Bush led the world into action with the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PEPFAR is the largest commitment ever by a single nation toward an international health initiative. Through PEPFAR, the U.S. government has already provided \$18.8 billion in HIV/AIDS funding, with a reauthorization of up to \$48 billion for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria over the next five years.

When former President Bush launched PEPFAR, approximately 50,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa were receiving antiretroviral treatment. Today, PEPFAR supports lifesaving treatment for over 1.7 million people worldwide, care for 6.6 million people living with HIV/AIDS, and prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission during nearly 12.7 million pregnancies, allowing nearly 200,000 children to be born HIV free.

Responding to the malaria crisis, the President launched the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) in 2005. The U.S. has committed \$1.2 billion in new malaria funding to reduce malaria-related deaths by 50 percent in fifteen African countries. In 2007, the Malaria Initiative reached more than 25 million people with effective prevention and treatment interventions.

In the fight against what we call "neglected tropical diseases," the President, in February 2008, announced a five year, \$350 million initiative to eliminate the burden of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) as a major threat to health and economic growth in the developing world. Focusing on seven major diseases, from snail fever to hookworm, this initiative aims to provide integrated treatment for more than 300 million people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Through the prevention and treatment of disease, programs such as PEPFAR and PMI are touching the lives of millions. In collaboration with our regional partners, we will continue to develop sustainable healthcare infrastructure; so African nations can address these challenges through their own national institutions.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict Resolution represents our final foreign policy priority on the continent. In the past seven years, we have seen the end of major conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, North-South Sudan, Ethiopia-Eritrea, and Angola. Although the current peace is fragile in several of these countries — and challenges persist in Darfur, Eastern Congo, and Somalia — Africa has demonstrated a trend toward conflict resolution and stability. I would like to highlight three distinctive areas demonstrating this trend:

- Peacekeeping
- Counterterrorism
- Maritime safety

Through our participation in the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), the U.S., along with our G8 partners [Canada, United Kingdom, France, Russia, Japan, Germany, Italy, and the United States] are committed to building global peace and security by training and equipping 75,000 peacekeepers worldwide by 2010. The U.S. has been the most important contributor to African force generation efforts through our Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program and large scale provision of peacekeeping equipment. Since 2005, the U.S. has directly trained nearly 60,000 African peacekeepers in twenty-two countries. Of these troops, over 82 percent have deployed to African Union and United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Second, to combat terrorism, the U.S. is pursuing a multidisciplinary regional approach in the trans-Saharan region, as well as the Horn of Africa. The Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership is a multi-year effort, funded at about \$150 million per year, to leverage and coordinate military, law enforcement, development, and public diplomacy elements to enhance the capacity of the trans-Saharan region to deter and defeat terrorism and counter extremist ideology. We are seeking to build on the success of this program with a parallel East Africa Regional Strategic Initiative to counter the terrorist elements that destroyed our Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam ten years ago and continue to threaten regional stability.

Last, the U.S. is also partnering with African nations to support progress in strengthening maritime security, particularly anti-piracy measures in sub-Saharan Africa. The ability of African nations to control their coastal waters is critical to regional trade and economic growth; control of sovereign natural resources, including fisheries; the delivery of critical humanitarian assistance to Somalia; and efforts to stem the trafficking of drugs, weapons, and humans on the continent.

Conclusion

In closing, the U.S. government is committed to work with our African partners to promote democratic institution building; conflict resolution; economic growth and development; and the prevention, care, and treatment of disease throughout the African continent.

When African nations cultivate freedom, prosperity, and justice, their populations are more likely to reject extremist ideology, build strong economies that benefit all people, and replace disease and despair with healing and hope. These are unwavering priorities of the U.S. government today, tomorrow, and in the months and years ahead.