



U.S.-Africa Relations: Building Alliances through Trade, Education, Culture, Diplomacy, Peace

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Organizers of the 2008 U.S.-Africa Sister Cities Conference (especially Barbara Mason and her corps of efficient volunteers), officials of the City of Lansing (especially Mayor Virg Bernero) and the Lansing Regional Sister Cities Commission, Ladies and Gentleman.

I am proud to be representing the Department of State and the Bureau of African Affairs on this auspicious occasion and I bring you greetings from Secretary Condoleeza Rice and Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer.

It is inspiring to be here, so close to both the State Capitol and to Michigan State University, that is home to one of America's outstanding African Studies programs and international agricultural programs.

I also wish to congratulate the city of Lansing for celebrating its ten-year anniversary as a sister city to Akuapim South District, Ghana. This is an impressive milestone, one that reflects the Greater Lansing area's long-standing commitment to engaging with Africa.

In the next few minutes, I will tell you about three 50th anniversaries that are important in the shaping of US Africa relations today, and then I will discuss briefly our current Africa Policy.

Three 50th Anniversaries

A. Michigan State / University of Nigeria

It was fifty years ago this year that Michigan State President John A. Hannah traveled to Africa to join Nigeria's future president, Nnamdi Azikiwe, to establish the University of Nigeria, an institution I know well and have visited often during from my tours of service in Nigeria. No legacy is deeper than an enduring institution of higher learning. Michigan State can take justifiable pride in its role in creating and nurturing one of the flagship campuses of Africa's most populous largest countries.

B. Sister Cities – 9/11/1956

The second half century milestone occurred on September 11, 2006. On that date in 1956, President Dwight David Eisenhower founded the Sister Cities movement in response to the atrocities that he had witnessed during World War II and those he feared might happen in future wars.

His emphasis even during the early days of this movement was to encourage direct interaction between private individuals, and not government employees, as the best means of founding true personal friendships.

C. Africa Bureau's 50th

The third anniversary took place half a century ago this year when President Eisenhower authorized the creation of my bureau, the Bureau of Africa Affairs, headed by an assistant secretary of state. President Eisenhower saw that a free society must encourage its citizenry to be part of foreign policy, to reach out people to people to those overseas. His role in establishing Sister Cities and my own Bureau of African Affairs were two sides of the same coin.

By the late 1950s, President Eisenhower and his vice president, Richard M. Nixon, came to understand that decolonization was a reality and that one by one, dozens of new African states would soon appear.

At the same time, there was another force that was re-making America. That was the civil rights movement. Far-sighted foreign policymakers of the era saw clearly the negative impact racism at home had on American prestige – and influence – abroad, especially in the newly independent Africa.

I'd like to tell you a true story about the Department of State, Civil Rights, and Africa during this period. In June 1961, the new ambassador of the Republic of Chad, a man named Adam Malik Sow, was refused service at a Maryland restaurant while en route from New York to Washington to present his credentials to President John F. Kennedy.

The incident was only the first of a series of cases of racial discrimination against African diplomats, including refusal to sell or lease property in affluent neighborhoods of the District of Columbia for official residences.

The Africa Bureau's then Assistant Secretary and former Michigan Governor G. Mennen Williams proved instrumental in setting up a new office, the Special Protocol Service Section, to deal with such incidents. The head of this office, Pedro San Juan, accompanied the Chadian ambassador to his meeting with President Kennedy where the issue of discrimination against African diplomats was aired at the highest possible level.

I tell you this story because it illustrates so well the need to involve state and local governments and citizens in the foreign policy process. This was part of the vision of President Eisenhower when he called for people-to-people programs, knowing that the strength of our nation lay in its openness to the world, and in our democratic values and attitudes.

US Africa Policy

Let me now move from history to policy. In Africa, our policies are straight forward (1) to support political freedom and democracy (2) to expand economic opportunities and growth (3) to fight infectious diseases, (4) to end wars and combat terror and violence, and (5) to increase mutual understanding through cultural and educational exchanges.

Ø *First Pillar: Supporting Political Freedom and Democracy*

In the last decade, Africa has experienced a sea-change in political orientation. At least two-thirds of sub-Saharan Africa's 48 countries have held free elections. Two standouts are the Democratic Republic of the Congo that in 2006 held its first free election in more than 45 years and Liberia that elected the continent's first woman president.

Impressive as this trend is, Africa still faces serious problems of governance and transparency, and of human rights and freedom of the press. Notable examples of these problems are Kenya and Zimbabwe where the world watched anxiously their recent presidential elections. Happily, with regional and international intervention, Kenya has been able to resolve its political crisis. The crisis in Zimbabwe is, however, still on-going. The US has strongly condemned the shameful actions of the Mugabe regime that continues to reject the will of the Zimbabwean people, abuse their human rights, and deny them humanitarian assistance. News reports in the last few days indicate that the two factions seem to have reached a consensus on talks that we hope will lead to negotiations to end this crisis and the suffering of the Zimbabwean people.

Ø Second Pillar: Fighting Infectious Diseases

President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDs Relief (PEPFAR) is committed to spending \$15 billion to combat HIV/AIDs in 15 high-prevalence countries, 12 of which are in Africa. Before PEPFAR, curbing the HIV/AIDs pandemic in Africa seemed hopeless. PEPFAR, however, is giving African AIDs victims new hope. In its first year of operation, PEPFAR activities reached 42 million women who received medication to prevent mother-to-child transmission of the disease and prevented 47,100 infant HIV infections. We are also working with our African partners to fight malaria, tuberculosis, and avian influenza. PEPFAR is a program that is getting results and Congress is currently reviewing the re-authorization of the program.

Ø Third Pillar: Peace Building

In the last 5 years we have seen belligerence give way to peaceful negotiations in 9 countries: Angola, Burundi, Comoros, Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Northern Uganda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and N-S Sudan. The US will continue to assist our African partners and the African Union to increase their capacity to respond to a variety of security situations. The US will train 40,000 African peacekeepers through the Global Peace Operations Initiative and the African Contingency Operations and Training Assistance (ACOTA).

Ø Fourth Pillar: Expanding Economic Opportunities and Growth

I'd like to elaborate upon a subject central to many Sister Cities programs: international trade. Communities across America are realizing that economic development is synonymous with international trade. Cities and counties in America as well as overseas are looking more and more to Sister Cities as an arm of economic development. And Sister Cities International has responded by pairing cities that often have similar economic bases, such as ports, heavy industry, tourism and agriculture.

Available to assist Sister Cities are two relatively new USG programs: the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

The MCC provides funding to African governments for much-needed infrastructure projects (roads, water systems, electrical and communication projects). To date, the USG has signed nearly \$ 4.3 billion worth of MCC compacts with 10 African nations. One of the first compacts was with Ghana for \$547,009,000.

The second program, AGOA, creates jobs in African countries by providing duty-free access to the US markets for African products. Last week, July 14-16, the State Department hosted the Seventh AGOA Forum whose theme was "Mobilizing Private Investment for Trade and Growth." The Forum brought together approximately 600 senior US officials and African government ministers, as well as US and African members of the private sector and civil society.

While speakers at the Forum discussed many challenges, they also reported many successes. For example, AGOA imports (including GSP) totaled \$51.1 billion in 2007, more than 6 times the amount in 2001, the first full year of AGOA. As you might suspect, petroleum products accounted for the largest portion of AGOA imports. Non-oil AGOA trade totaled \$3.4 billion in 2007, more than double the amount in 2001. There was a lot of discussion of the need to diversify the imported goods from Africa.

What does AGOA mean to you and your communities? AGOA offers an opportunity of importing at reduced cost hundreds of products from Africa – apparel, specialty foods, handicrafts, and cut flowers, to name a few. AGOA is not a cure all, but it is one tool among many to encourage two-way trade with Africa. I encourage you to learn more about it.

Ø Fifth Pillar: Increasing International Understanding Through Cultural and Educational Exchanges

It is common in foreign policy speeches to speak about the rise of non-state and trans-border actors in today's world. Usually, we in government are referring to the threats posed by terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda, by narcotics traffickers, or even piracy, a growing problem along Africa's coastlines.

But as I've indicated, other non-state actors can be forces for good, especially in Africa: these are NGOs, universities, religious organizations, and community groups such as yourselves.

It is engagement with these forces of good that we in government support strongly through public diplomacy (PD) programs. Many of these PD programs such as the Fulbright Program and the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program are well known to you. In addition we also sponsor a wide array of programs to support the teaching of English around the world. We also have a program that recruits and sends speakers abroad to discuss a wide spectrum of subjects ranging from US elections and anti-corruption to bio-technology and journalism.

Last year, for example, the mayor of York, Pennsylvania, spent two weeks in Indonesia meeting with fellow mayors and municipal officials. Most of what they talked about was what majors everywhere do: potholes, planning, budgets, parks, and schools.

CONCLUSION

I have tried today to convey the idea that in today's world, foreign policy is not merely the management of government-to-government relations. In a world of increasingly meaningless borders and constantly changing communication technologies, it is you, the citizens and your citizen groups, who are more and more influential.

As a diplomat who has dedicated her career to the conduct of public diplomacy and to Africa, I know that you are a key link between American and Africa. It is with you that Africans in your sister cities begin to understand that America is more than the White House, the Department of State, and Hollywood movies. And Americans begin to understand that Africa is a huge continent with thousands of languages and vibrant cultures. They begin to appreciate that Americans, too, have real families, real communities, and share universal aspirations. And we Americans learn about African families, African communities who share these same aspirations. Together you see first hand that ordinary citizens can participate and make a difference in international relations.

I thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts this morning and look forward to hearing your concerns and questions.

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