



US Foreign Policy Priorities in Africa for 2007

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
National Council of International Visitors
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Good morning, and thank you, for your kind introduction. It is a pleasure to be here. Of all the times to work in the Bureau of African Affairs, this is an historic one. President Bush and Secretary Rice have made Africa a centerpiece of their foreign policy agenda. The President took an interest in Africa from the outset. It is integral to his commitment to make the world "safer, freer, and better."

For example, he met with more African heads of state during his first two years of office than any previous U.S. president. U.S. foreign assistance, as a percentage of federal spending, increased about 70 percent between 2000 and 2004. Instead of short-term solutions, President Bush has focused on ways to reshape the landscape and reframe the debate.

Among the noteworthy changes, is the President's practical application of the Golden Rule. He places emphasis on partnership and cooperation with African political and civil society leaders. Compassion and respect shape the President's views and policies, and these policies have been accompanied by a three-fold increase in U.S. government assistance to Africa over the past five years.

When Secretary Rice was asked during a recent interview about President Bush's legacy, she highlighted his accomplishments in Africa, and there are quite a few. This morning, I would like to focus on four: First, President Bush's dedication to conflict resolution. Second, the hopeful shift toward democracy across Africa. Third, the United States' increasing investment in the people of Africa. And last, President Bush's comprehensive and revolutionary approach to addressing the great health challenges, HIV/AIDS and Malaria.

MAKING THE WORLD SAFER

As you may know, the term Secretary Rice uses to describe her foreign policy approach is Transformational Diplomacy. The guiding principle is partnership, as opposed to the paternalism of the past. This philosophy calls for "doing things with people, not for them." As Secretary Rice has explained, "we seek to use America's diplomatic power to help foreign citizens better their own lives and to build their own nations and to transform their own futures."

One striking example is the resolution of various conflicts in Africa. The most recent case to make headlines has been Somalia, which had spent about 15 years as a collapsed state, but after a brief war involving the Ethiopian military looks like it may return to the path of recovery and stability.

As a general rule, we have relied on one particular method: We have backed African conflict mediation and strengthened Africa's capacity to carry out peace support operations and fight terror. Our approach is to work with lead African mediators and multilaterally with the United Nations, African Union, and sub-regional organizations like ECOWAS. Our method is working.

When President Bush took office in 2001, there were six wars raging in Africa. By working together, Africans, the United Nations, and other international partners have successfully ended those wars in Sierra Leone, in Liberia, in Congo, in Burundi, in Angola, and the North-South conflict in Sudan, which had raged for 22 years and taken two million lives.

Work remains to be done, but there are good reasons to be hopeful. Africans have increasingly taken the lead in such instances. The African Union (AU) and its New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) Program of Action have contributed to better governance across the continent. The international community, including the United States, has deferred to and supported African mediation efforts. This is an important and effective first step.

DEMOCRACY TAKES ROOT

In our quest for regional security and stability, it is important to support democratic institutions and reject oppression. Governments that reflect the popular will of the people are more likely to respect borders and human rights. The good news is that Africa has no democracy deficit. Democracy is firmly rooted in South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana and is taking root in Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho, and Mozambique.

Burundi, which had been divided by conflict, now has a functioning government. Tanzania's 2005 elections were deemed largely free and fair, and Jakaya Kikwete's election marked the nation's third peaceful transition of power. President Kerekou of Benin peacefully transferred power to his elected successor, Boni Yayi, last year. Liberia made history by inaugurating Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first elected woman leader in January 2006.

In Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, a debate over term limits has paved the way for the first transfer of power between civilian administrations in the country's history, following presidential elections in April. This makes Nigeria one of eight countries that have announced they will hold presidential elections this year, and seven countries expect to hold legislative elections.

It is worth taking special note of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which held free elections in 2006, for the first time in over 40 years. The historic election is the culmination of efforts of many nations, led by South Africa, to restore peace and build democracy in a Central African nation that had been ravaged by a generation of conflict and mismanagement.

Even Freedom House, which has been among the harshest critics of freedom and democracy in Africa, has acknowledged the continent's significant progress. In 1990, Freedom House classified only four countries out of the 48 in sub-Saharan Africa as free and 20 were classified as partly free.

The majority of countries were not free in 1990. This year, the numbers have reversed. Eleven nations were classified as free, as opposed to four in 1990. Twenty-three were partly free, and only 14 were classified as not free. So, the trend offers a rare hope for the continent with 34 of the 48 countries now on the path to freedom.

That path is not always straightforward, and the journey can be frustrating at times, but more often than not, it is the right way forward, as in Ethiopia. The campaign period leading up to the May 2005 elections in Ethiopia was the most open and promising in that country's 3,000-year history.

The civil unrest, fiery rhetoric, and precipitous decline in political space that followed those elections were extremely alarming, but taken as a whole, it is an instructive demonstration of the magnitude of the ebbs and flows of democratic advances in Africa.

This zigzag toward transparent elections and good governance is part of realizing the transformational vision Secretary Rice has so eloquently described. The other major benefit of African nations with strong, representative governments is the likelihood of greater African impact on decisions made by international organizations.

Consider again the ongoing challenges in Sudan and Somalia. Instability in central and east Africa most directly impacts people living in the region, and so, one other change that we strive toward is African leadership in for a like the United Nations Security Council. Ideally, when African interests are at stake, the international community should defer to African leadership.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Sovereign nations have a right to expect that their authority will be respected. This is true when we consider borders and natural resources. The nations of Africa have resources that the rest of the world needs or wants - including oil, iron ore, and diamonds - and this raises questions about resource control and management.

Africa is a rich continent in an impoverished state. The wealth of that continent is unbelievable across the board-from north to south and east to west. The Millennium Challenge Account is a program geared toward addressing that tension. It aims to reward the success of good actors and catalyze reform efforts. We want to expand economic opportunity and growth, focusing on private entrepreneurship, as well as leveling the playing field in our global economic institutions.

This new mechanism for distributing direct foreign assistance seeks out nations that have committed to: good governance, economic reforms, and investment in their own people. Guiding principles for assistance are to reduce poverty through economic growth, reward good policy, operate as partners with beneficiary countries, and focus on results that will have a lasting impact.

Partner countries, not the Millennium Challenge Corporation, have ownership of their compacts. In return, the U.S. expects accountability. The U.S. designs an evaluation plan in coordination with the host nation.

The U.S. has already completed compacts with Madagascar, Cape Verde, and Benin, and Mali. Mali's \$461 million agreement recognizes the strides that this majority Muslim democracy has made over the last 15 years. With this infusion of aid, Malians will be able to invest in agriculture, light industry, and infrastructure improvements that will enable Mali to better feed its population and be more competitive internationally.

This investment is incredible when we consider the context. Earlier this year, the U.S. promised \$307 million of assistance to Benin through the Millennium Challenge Account. Twenty-five years ago, that was the approximate total of U.S. spending for all of Africa. Indeed, U.S. Official development assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa \$1.4 billion in 2001 to \$4.1 billion in 2005.

The other major investor in Africa right now is China. We do not see Chinese engagement on the continent as a threat; we believe that we can work with China to support shared goals including poverty reduction and sustainable development. That said, there is concern about China's rapidly increasing lending to poor nations in Africa.

Many of these loans are made on non-concessional terms and simply replace debts that had been forgiven under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and the Multilateral Debt Initiative (MDRI), programs that were intended to free up resource for critical investments in health, education, and poverty reduction.

PEPFAR

Never one to shrink from a challenge, President Bush has also taken on Africa's most daunting health issues. He recently noted in his State of the Union Address, "Our work in the world is also based on a timeless truth: To whom much is given, much is required. ... We must continue to fight HIV/AIDS."

Worldwide, more than 39 million people are living with HIV, and more than 25 million people have died from AIDS. According to UNAIDS, almost two-thirds of all HIV-positive individuals were living in sub-Saharan Africa last year.

To meet the severe and urgent crisis, President Bush announced the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in 2003. PEPFAR is the largest commitment ever by a single nation toward an international health initiative -- a five-year, 15 billion dollar, multifaceted approach to combating the disease around the world. The program targets its resources to 15 focus countries, 12 of which are in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the United States is the largest contributor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The U.S. is privileged to partner with local citizens in PEPFAR's host countries to build comprehensive, community-owned responses that can be sustained for the long term. When President Bush announced PEPFAR, only 50,000 people were estimated to be receiving antiretroviral treatment in sub-Saharan Africa. Since then, the Emergency Plan has worked in partnership with host nations to support antiretroviral treatment for approximately 822,000 men, women, and children through bilateral programs in the focus countries through September 2006. As of last September, PEPFAR also supported care for nearly 4.5 million, including care for more than 2 million orphans and vulnerable children.

The Emergency Plan supports the most comprehensive, evidence-based prevention program in the world, supporting activities that focus on sexual transmission, mother-to-child transmission, the transmission of HIV through unsafe blood and medical injections, and greater HIV awareness through counseling and testing. Through September 30, 2006, PEPFAR supported prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission services for women during more than 6 million pregnancies and prevented an estimated 101,500 infant infections.

These are dramatic, life saving results - made possible through the power of partnerships between host nations and the United States.

HEALTHY FAMILIES

For those women and children subject to rape or domestic violence, there is a related program known as the Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative, or WJEI. Inspired by a South African program, American policy makers hope that WJEI will provide some comfort to female victims of rape and abuse, by offering both medical care and legal assistance.

This 55 million dollar program currently supplements existing efforts in: Benin, Kenya, South Africa, and Zambia. WJEI funds will help raise awareness about gender-based violence, protect and assist victims of rape and domestic violence, and bring justice to perpetrators of violence.

These nations will strengthen existing protections by training police, prosecutors, and judges, providing shelter, medical care, and psychosocial services for abused women and children, establishing hotline numbers to report rape and other violent crimes, and developing laws that criminalize violence against women.

In Nigeria, USAID coordinates another family health initiative, the Access to Clinical and Community Maternal, Neonatal and Women's Health Services program, often known as ACCESS. ACCESS aims to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality in two northern states, Kano and Zamfara, by providing integrated community and facility-based essential maternal and newborn care, by focusing on antenatal care, emergency obstetric care, and newborn care (EmONC), postpartum care, and family planning for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies.

In Fiscal Year 2008, ACCESS will rehabilitate 12 obstetric wards and train 16 medical doctors, 14 nurses and midwives, and 30 community health extension workers in EmONC and life saving skills. ACCESS will increase the number of woman receiving active management of third stage of labor in these facilities from 4,000 to 9,000 and will double the number of antenatal care visits to 20,000.

Taken together, the Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative and ACCESS should raise awareness and empower healthy women and children in Africa.

MALARIA INITIATIVE

As with HIV/AIDS, the President is committed to combating Malaria. Last month^[1], he and the First Lady hosted the first ever White House Summit on Malaria. The President's Malaria Initiative, which went into effect in June 2005, aims to reduce Malaria-related deaths by 50% in each of the target countries.

This five-year, 1.2 billion dollar initiative is meant to enhance Malaria control interventions in the 15 hardest hit countries in Africa, since 80 to 90 percent of all Malaria deaths occur in Africa, most of them children.

More than 5 million people received life-saving prevention and treatment remedies during the first nine months of this Initiative, and 30 million people are expected to benefit from the Initiative's programs and medicines this year.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I would like to thank you for inviting me to join you. This is an exciting time to be working on Africa policy. President Bush has introduced innovative solutions to improve the lives of Africans, he has demonstrated respect for the nations of Africa, and he has followed Africa's lead.

The policies we implement now are likely to have positive repercussions for generations to come, and that is truly something special. Thank you again, and now, I would be happy to take any questions that you may have.

(1) The Summit on Malaria was held in December 2006.

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