

The U.S.-Kenya Partnership in the 21st Century
Ambassador Robert F. Godec's Speech at the University of Nairobi
Thursday, September 25, 2014

Hamjambo, mabibi na mabwana! Habari zenu?

Thank you Vice Chancellor Magoha for that introduction, and thank you to everyone for attending. Asanteni sana.

It is wonderful to be here at the University of Nairobi with some of the best and brightest young minds from universities and colleges across Kenya. I remember well my own days at university and at graduate school. They were some of the most intellectually challenging and wonderful days of my life. As the great Nelson Mandela so memorably said, "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." I know all of you will take what you learn and work to change the world to make it a better place for everyone.

This morning, I'd like to speak with you about the U.S.-Kenya partnership in the 21st Century – a partnership based on equality, a partnership dedicated to addressing our shared challenges. Before doing so, however, I'll offer a few words about Africa and the recent U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit in Washington, where President Obama hosted 51 African leaders.

"Africa Rising"

Today, Africa is on the move. Having been in and out of Africa for the past 25 years, I have had the chance to see firsthand impressive changes in countries across the continent, including here in Kenya.

Let me list just a few facts. Six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world are now in Africa. Manufacturing and retail are expanding, and Africa has one of the fastest-growing telecommunications markets in the world. Infrastructure is being

built, including roads, airports, and new power plants. More governments have adopted wide ranging reforms and are attracting record levels of foreign investment. More Africans have access to education and health care, and the continent's middle class is growing quickly.

As a result, the stories about Africa in the international media are no longer just about crises, wars, disease, and problems. They are about economic success, positive social change, and political reform. They are stories about innovation, and about the greater freedom Africans have to pursue their dreams. I have seen these stories firsthand. In Kilimani, at the iHub, where young Kenyan computer engineers are writing world-class software. In Kibera, at the extraordinary Shining Hope for Communities, led by Kennedy Odede, where residents are working together to educate young girls, to provide health care and clean water for thousands of people, and to create new economic opportunities. And, with Kenyan self-help groups in Mombasa, Turkana, Nyeri, Siaya, and across this great country that are working hard, innovating, and finding new markets, both here and abroad.

As Africa rises, the most important story of all is that Africans themselves are leading the way. Africans are driving growth and building a better future. Of course, serious challenges do remain. Africa must continue to enhance the conditions for economic growth, improve security, and strengthen democracy and governance. Africa's leaders must continue to deepen the reforms that have started. But, make no mistake, Africa is on the move and the lives of Africans are getting better as a result.

The U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit

The United States welcomes the changes sweeping across Africa. For decades, we have been a friend and partner. We worked for the independence of African countries, including Kenya, and we have stood by Africa through our development programs and other assistance. Much of what we have done has been transformative, for example the President's Program for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, which has taken head-on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Yet, there is certainly an

opportunity for the United States to do more to support this new, exciting time in Africa's history. That is why President Obama hosted the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit in Washington in August. It was attended by 51 African heads of state or government, other U.S. and African political leaders, and U.S. and African business and civil society leaders. Kenya's own delegation was one of the strongest and busiest at the Summit. It was led by President Kenyatta, and included several Cabinet Secretaries and many top Kenyan business leaders.

The Summit was the largest engagement ever by a U.S. President with Africa. Its theme was "investing in the next generation." It recognized that Africa is growing rapidly, and it focused on African capacity to solve problems. It reflected the fundamental shift in what is happening today in Africa.

President Obama's message at the Summit was clear: the United States wants a new model of partnership with Africa to deepen our longstanding investments in the continent. A partnership of equals. A partnership based on shared values and interests, and on mutual respect. A partnership that will be a driving force in the development of the world in the 21st century.

And the Summit was not just talk. There were real outcomes, real deals, and real steps forward. The leaders and other participants focused on three key areas.

First, the Summit made important progress on trade and investment. All told, President Obama, American companies and other partners announced more than \$33 billion in new trade and investment commitments, including \$7 billion in new financing under our "Doing Business in Africa Campaign." President Obama called again for the renewal and enhancement of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, or AGOA, which has been so successful in assisting African exporters, including many Kenyans, to get their products into the United States. And, he redoubled our commitment to Power Africa and tripled our goals. We now aim to add 30,000 MW of new electricity generation and to bring connections to 60 million homes and businesses in sub-Saharan Africa.

Second, the Summit focused on security. Now, there is no doubt that insecurity, including here in Kenya, continues to threaten African communities and to slow economic growth. During the Summit, African and U.S. leaders all emphasized the need to address the root causes of insecurity and to find regional solutions to increasingly transnational threats. Building the capacity of governments to deal with these problems is important, but holistic approaches are essential, including building tolerance across diverse communities. As part of the U.S. commitment to assist on security in Africa, at the Summit President Obama announced a new Security Governance Initiative, or “SGI.” I am very pleased that Kenya was one of the six countries on the continent to join SGI. SGI offers a comprehensive approach to strengthen Kenya’s security sector and its capacity to address threats. As Kenya faces security challenges, the United States has been and will remain a committed partner.

Third, Summit participants discussed the important challenge of governing for the future, and the responsibility all leaders have for the freedom, dignity, and prosperity of their citizens. Efficient, effective, and transparent governance is essential to the well-being of citizens in Africa and indeed everywhere. That includes investing in women and providing skills and opportunities for youth.

The Summit discussions, announcements, and initiatives I’ve mentioned all point to one essential truth: the United States is committed to making substantial and long-term investments in Africa’s future and the future of the people on this continent. We want to take our partnership to a new level.

The U.S.-Kenya Partnership in the 21st Century

So, what does this mean for Kenya and for U.S.-Kenyan relations in the 21st Century? It is important, I think, to start here: the United States has been Kenya’s steadfast partner for 50 years. Our relationship is a dense, intricate web of social, cultural,

economic, and political ties. These connections affect everything the United States and Kenya do together.

Now, there have been some questions about our relations recently, based on the spread of unfounded rumors and myths. So, here are the facts. The United States has excellent relations with the government and people of Kenya. We support the ideals and the principles set out in Kenya's Constitution and our own.

We do not support any particular political party or candidate. Our actions and programs work in support of our shared values to further strengthen our relations. The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi is open for business and we have no intention of closing it. The facts point to an abiding U.S.-Kenya friendship.

And, that friendship began even before Kenyan independence. Our record of partnership is a strong one: you may have heard of the Kennedy airlift, which brought hundreds of Kenyans to the United States to study – including President Obama's father. In 1963, the United States brought the Fulbright program here, and in the past five decades thousands of Kenyan students have participated in American exchange programs. Notable alumni include two former Kenyan presidents and a deputy president.

U.S. Agency for International Development programs also date to the 1960's, and USAID continues to work with Kenyans across the country to strengthen agriculture, protect wildlife, improve healthcare and education, and assist in civic education and devolution. Our Centers for Disease Control and Prevention started in Kenya in 1979. Today, CDC and Kenyan researchers work together to control the world's most dangerous diseases, including malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis – and now, Ebola. The United States has also stood side-by-side with Kenya in the fight against terrorists for many years, and we are working jointly to strengthen security across the region.

We stand on a strong record of cooperation and achievement that forms a solid foundation for the future. What we do now, what we ALL do now, Americans and

Kenyans, will help shape our next 50 years together. And with Kenya's role as a leader in the region, what we do with our partnership will have far-reaching effects.

Today, we work together on a wide range of challenges, from climate change to deepening regional integration to ending the conflicts in Somalia and South Sudan. On behalf of the United States, I'd like to express our appreciation for all Kenya does to address those issues. Looking ahead let me now discuss the opportunities and challenges in the same three critical areas that I did when reviewing the outcomes of the Summit: trade and investment, security, and governing for the future.

First, our trade and investment relationship with Kenya is important and it is growing. American business already supports tens of thousands of jobs in Kenya. In Washington, we announced our plans to upgrade the existing Nairobi Trade Hub to a "U.S.-East African Trade and Investment Hub" that will create new opportunities for African businesses to export goods to the United States, expand U.S. investment in and exports to East Africa, and contribute to developing critical port infrastructure in Mombasa. In addition, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation approved up to \$250 million in financing to support the development, construction, and operation of a 310 MW wind power project near Lake Turkana. The project, when complete, will be the largest wind power project in Africa.

Our initiatives will also help attract more American companies to come to Kenya. Many U.S. companies are already here: IBM, Google, Coca-Cola, and GE, to name a few. And there are more on the way, from Americans working on producing a \$10,000 car for the Kenyan market, to Domino's Pizza, to high-tech entrepreneurs. In the weeks since the Summit, I welcomed one American trade delegation to Nairobi and I expect another one in November. There will be serious, important opportunities in the coming months to deepen our trade and investment relations.

To encourage further trade and investment, it will also be important for Kenya and other countries in the region to continue to work to make foreign investment easier and to reduce import restrictions. The simpler it is for companies to make

investments and move their products, the more they are interested in doing business, and the more jobs, services, and growth are created. Continuing work to reduce corruption, a longstanding problem in Kenya, will also be important. The bottom line is that the more Kenya does to curb and eliminate corruption, the more foreign investors will want to do business here. More broadly, corruption threatens Kenya's economic growth, security, and the provision of government services. It jeopardizes Kenya's Vision 2030 goals. The United States works with Kenya on anti-corruption initiatives, and will continue to do so.

Security is also vital for the future, for both the United States and Kenya.

Terrorism is a global challenge and we stand with Kenya in the fight against it. We will continue to provide information, equipment, and training to Kenya in this effort. The United States welcomes the effort Kenya is making to help bring peace and stability to Somalia and to address the threat of al-Shabaab through its participation in AMISOM. In addition to the new Security Governance Initiative launched at the Summit, we also signed a new Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement that will allow for the exchange of information and evidence to assist in the prevention, detection, and investigation of customs offenses – including those related to terrorism.

Building a real foundation for security in Kenya and elsewhere – a critical goal for both our countries – also requires steadfast respect for human rights by governments and security forces. Respect for human rights builds the trust of local communities, and is essential in the effort to combat insecurity. Failure to respect human rights alienates communities, exposing them to radicalization and exploitation by violent extremist groups. It is in Kenya's own interest to ensure that respect for human rights is an integral part of its approach to security. It is also the right thing to do. We know that Kenya is up to the challenge of doing this – of being self-critical, investigating allegations of abuses, and taking action to promote a culture of accountability. These are values enshrined in Kenya's own constitution.

Turning to governing for the future, what Kenya is doing right now is extraordinary.

In the wake of the terrible post-election violence of 2007/2008, Kenya adopted a new and progressive constitution. And then, in 2013 Kenya held credible and largely peaceful national elections. When the presidential election result was contested, the Supreme Court heard the case and all parties accepted its decision. And since then, Kenya has been working to reinvent government from top to bottom. It is a difficult, challenging process – one Americans know from our own experience with devolved power! – but I believe historians will one day see this time, right now, as one of momentous change.

Kenya has old institutions that now have new roles, such as the presidency and National Assembly. And it has new institutions, including the Senate, governors, and county assemblies, that are seeking to establish their roles. Settling crucial questions about power and authority will take years. It will require patience and sustained effort by all Kenyans. But the debate is worth the effort. The work being done to devolve power and reimagine government is critical for Kenya's future, and the future of the region. As Kenya holds this great conversation about democracy, I want to assure you of this: the United States stands with you, ready to assist as your partner.

Governing for the future also requires efforts to build bridges to all communities, to reach out to reduce ethnic and religious tensions, and to address long-standing grievances. It requires strong protection for the civil rights set out in Kenya's constitution, including freedom of expression and the media and encouraging a vibrant, thriving civil society. Promoting an open society will empower Kenyans to pursue their dreams. As President Obama told a young Kenyan woman during his Town Hall in South Africa a little more than a year ago, we believe that people – particularly young people like you – are Africa's greatest resource. And, as you work to empower people, we are ready to help.

We do so through programs like Fulbright and Yes, Youth Can! Another example is the Mandela Washington Fellowship, in a sense an update to the Kennedy airlift.

In June, we brought 500 young African leaders to the United States to learn and share their experiences with Americans. Forty-six of those young leaders came from Kenya alone – and many of them had studied right here at the University of Nairobi! I have already met with many of them and their stories are extraordinary.

To take just one example, Hope Mwanake is the co-founder of Trace Kenya Group, a vibrant community-based organization that works with young people to address solid waste management issues in Gilgil. She has returned from her fellowship and plans to start a recycling venture making compost, glass tiles from glass waste, and plastic poles from discarded bags. Fellows like Hope have been an inspiration to others and to me – they are the next generation of Kenyan leaders. That’s why over the next two years, we plan to double the size of the Mandela Fellowship so 1,000 young leaders can come to the United States every year to develop their skills, build networks, and return home to contribute their talents to moving Africa forward.

Kenyans have come a long way. You have achieved so very much. To face the challenges that remain, I would urge all of you, as future leaders, to dream big. As Lupita Nyong'o said after winning the Oscar recently, “your dreams are valid.” The challenges you face are not easy, but I know that with Kenyans leading the way in forging their own future, you will succeed.

As you do so, the United States will be there as a partner, just as President Obama promised. And our partnership will be based on equality and dialogue. For we, the United States and Kenya, the American people and the Kenyan people, have a shared future. And as I stand here today, I am proud to say that the future of our partnership, and of our two countries, has never looked brighter.

Asanteni sana.