

DECLARATION ON THE AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

WE, the Ministers of Trade of the Member States of the African Union, meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on October 24-25, 2013 in our 8th Ordinary Session;

Taking into account Africa's international trade relations and economic partnerships particularly in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa-U.S. Trade and Investment Relations and its cornerstone policy, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA);

Welcoming the US Administration's renewed engagement and the strong Congressional bi-partisan support to bolster partnership with Africa, spur economic growth, support regional integration, and encourage US companies to trade with and invest in Africa;

Expressing appreciation of President Obama's announcement to host the next Summit of Heads of State from sub-Saharan Africa in the US, as a platform of engagement in a greater political dialogue on issues of common interest and concern, including AGOA at the bilateral, regional and international levels;

Commending also President Obama's recent new initiatives: Trade Africa and Power Africa intended to boost trade with sub-Saharan Africa and which have an important potential to usher in a new model of collaboration that could be replicated across the continent in the coming years;

Taking into consideration the positive contribution of AGOA since its enactment in 2000 on economic growth, job creation, improvement of the business environment and stability in Sub-Saharan Africa, its transformation of the way Africa and the U.S. engage on trade and economic issues as well as the need for scaling up efforts in order to harness its full potential;

Welcoming the positive outcomes of the 12th AGOA Forum, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on August 12-13, 2013, under the theme "Sustainable Transformation through Trade and Technology" marked by a dynamic discussion on how AGOA can be better utilized to sustain Africa's future growth, development and global economic integration and how to move Africa up the global value chain;

Referring to the recommendation of the Ministerial Consultative Meeting of the 12th AGOA Forum which underscored that AGOA should be reauthorized for at least 15 years for all eligible countries and that additional African countries should be offered eligibility;

Reaffirming the need for greater predictability and certainty in unilateral trade preferences schemes, as a necessary condition for sustained investment and growth;

Reiterating the high importance attached to the timely and seamless reauthorization of AGOA by 2014, and the major contribution it could make in supporting Africa's economic transformation and deepening regional integration processes in order to enhance regional economies of scale, integration into global production chains and intra-African trade;

Hereby adopt the following as a consensus position, henceforth called “**Declaration on the African Growth and Opportunity Act**”, and:

1. **Recommend** the development in eligible countries of a national AGOA Export Strategy and the setting-up of a mechanism that can monitor and evaluate the implementation of AGOA as well as the outcomes of its annual Forum at the national level on a voluntary basis, and establish an annual evaluation report at the continental level that could serve as a valuable tracking tool for decision makers;
2. **Direct** the African Ambassadors Group in Washington, D.C., to continue engaging actively the U.S. Administration and members of Congress on the way forward for a timely, seamless and meaningful reauthorization of AGOA by October 2014 for a period of at least 15 years to ensure that trade with the U.S takes place on a predictable, reliable and legally secure basis in order to inspire investors' confidence;
3. **Recommend** that the Third Country Fabric provisions should be made coterminous with AGOA since undue delay of the extension of that provision has devastating effects on loss of orders, jobs, business and investment in both the U.S. and Africa;
4. **Also direct** the African Ambassadors Group in Washington, D.C to mobilize the support of key stakeholders in the U.S. Administration, the Congress, private sector, civil society and think-tanks on the importance of developing an AGOA compact for the Eligible countries which have effectively developed and implemented a National AGOA export strategy, while underscoring the importance of the inclusive aspect of any project in order to allow the expansion of AGOA 's benefits to more countries;
5. **Call upon** the U.S. Congress to reauthorize the extension of AGOA by October 2014 for at least another 15 years, in an integrated and all-inclusive approach, so as to guarantee the predictability and certainty required for long-term investment and economic growth both in the U.S. and across the African continent, based on mutually reinforcing U.S.-Africa relations;
6. Deeply concerned by any development (including any possible studies) that undermines the seamless renewal of AGOA by 2014, and negatively affect the benefits to eligible countries, **Call Upon** the US to fast-track the seamless renewal of AGOA by October 2014;
7. **Welcome** the US Power Africa Programme and call on the US to use this as a model to support broader infrastructure development in Africa;

8. **Also Call upon** the U.S Administration and Congress to maintain and expand U.S trade preferences to ensure that African products remain competitive and improve rules of origin for some products with high export potential, and that AGOA preferences are not eroded in the context of bilateral or multilateral trade negotiations;
9. **Further Call upon** the U.S. Administration to integrate AGOA into an inclusive, predictable and sustainable framework that would promote industrial, commercial and agricultural development in the beneficiary countries, expand targeted trade capacity building and technical assistance in quality assurance and standards, simplify compliance requirements, improve trade-related infrastructure and trade facilitation; enhance trade support and trade finance; and strengthen the regional integration processes in Africa;
10. **Recommend** the provision of higher visibility for AGOA in the U.S. Congress through the organization of Congressional Delegations to African Regions;
11. **Suggest** the establishment of a special fund, with the support of African Institutions, to finance advocacy efforts of the African Ambassadors Group in Washington D.C. in respect of AGOA-related trade and investment opportunities and regional integration;
12. **Reaffirm** our commitment to remain actively seized with this matter which has important implications for the establishment of a sustainable and mutually beneficial economic partnership between the U.S. and Africa based on shared values and common interests; and
13. **Commend** the strenuous efforts of the African Ambassadors Group in Washington, D.C., in particular the co-Chairs of the Ambassadors' Working Group, Ethiopia and Mauritius, for their valuable contribution in developing a set of recommendations which have become an important roadmap for engagement with the U.S. side.

Done in Addis Ababa, 25th October 2013