

Remarks Announcing the United States–Sub-Saharan Africa
Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum
May 16, 2001

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome to the Rose Garden. It's my honor to share the podium with Representatives Crane and Rangel and our friend from Senegal Ambassador Seck. Thank you very much for being here, sir. I'm so appreciative that our Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has joined us today—Secretary, thank you for being here—and our Secretary of Treasury, Paul O'Neill. They're here for a reason. They're here because they strongly support the initiative about which we are about to speak.

I'm thankful that many Members of the United States Congress are here, Members who worked on this initiative long before I came. I appreciate you all being here. I look forward to working with you to do the right thing for our friends on the continent of Africa. I also want to thank many members of the diplomatic corps who are here. We're so grateful that you took time out of your day to come and share in this moment.

I finally want to thank Hakeem “The Dream” Olajuwon for being here today. He is—I know this isn't the moment to herald Texas sports—[*laughter*—]but thank you for many great moments.

There is good news coming out of the sub-Saharan Africa. Democracy is emerging in countries like Ghana and Nigeria and showing enduring strength in Senegal, Botswana, and South Africa. Free market reforms are delivering real benefits to people in places like Mozambique and Madagascar and Mali. We Americans want to be more than spectators of Africa's progress. We want to encourage a brighter future through policies that nurture and support freedom and democratic reform.

And that's why Congress passed the African Growth and Opportunity Act. There is now a broad consensus that open trade

and international investment are the surest and fastest way for Africa to make progress. The act opens American markets to countries that have embarked on the difficult but beneficial path of political and economic reform. These are countries that are moving toward market-based economies and the rule of law, that are lowering trade barriers and strengthening their commercial law, that are combating corruption and eliminating child labor, and that are showing enhanced respect for labor standards and human rights.

Thirty-five sub-Saharan African nations are eligible under AGOA for their commitment to these principles. The principles in the African Growth and Opportunity Act are important for Africa, but they're also important for the United States. Countries that respect markets and the rights of the individual are more likely to grow economically. They are more likely to achieve political stability. They can raise education standards, deliver better health care, and protect their environment. Strong African democracies with strong economies and healthy populations will contribute to a world that is more peaceful and more prosperous for all.

Now, we should take the next step to realize the promise of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. This October the United States will invite the eligible countries to Washington to inaugurate the U.S.–Sub-Saharan African Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum. The Forum will discuss further measures we can take to stimulate trade, to develop prosperity, and to enhance democracy.

I'm today asking and directing the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Treasury, the Commerce Secretary, and the U.S. Trade Representative to issue invitations to

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the Forum, to their ministerial counterparts. Secretary Powell may just deliver some of those invitations in person when he travels to the continent later on this year. The United States will also invite representatives of African regional organizations to this Forum. I hope I get to attend, as well.

Sub-Saharan Africa has suffered much from political oppression and inward-looking economic policies. Africans, themselves, now agree that democracy and open trade are the right way forward. The United States wants to engage sub-Saharan African countries as valued economic partners. And we look forward to welcoming sub-Saharan African leaders as our guests next fall.

Thank you all for coming. And it's now my honor to bring to the podium Phil Crane, Congressman from Illinois.

[At this point, Representatives Philip M. Crane and Charles B. Rangel and Sen-

egalese Ambassador to the United States Mamadou Seck each made brief remarks.]

The President. Again, I want to thank you all for coming. It is our honor to host many from the diplomatic corps. Welcome to the White House. We look forward to working with you. It's in our best interest that your great continent thrive, and we look forward to working with you to make sure it does so.

God bless. Thank you guys for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to professional basketball player Hakeem Olajuwon. The U.S.–Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum was established by Section 105 of Title I of the Trade and Development Act of 2000 (Public Law 106–200).

Remarks on Receiving the Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group and an Exchange With Reporters May 16, 2001

The President. Thank you all for coming. Today the Vice President and the National Energy Policy Development Group made their presentation to me and the Cabinet. This is an extensive report. It provides over 100 proposals to diversify and increase the supply of energy, innovative proposals to encourage conservation, and ways to make sure that we get energy from producer to consumer.

I am really pleased with the work the Vice President and his folks did. This is a very optimistic look at America. It's tough, in that it lays out the problems; it's a direct assessment of neglect. But this great Nation of ours, because of our technology, our attitude, our adherence to free enterprise, our willingness to conserve, we're going to solve this problem. And I'm

looking forward to making my case to the American people tomorrow and throughout the years.

While there are some—you know, we can't overcome the fact that we haven't built a refinery in years and we should have. We can make sure—we can make sure that any entity will not illegally overcharge. And so I'm calling on the FTC to make sure that nobody in America gets illegally overcharged. And we're going to make sure FERC will monitor electricity suppliers to make sure that they charge rates that are fair and reasonable. The Attorney General and I will work with the FTC.

But I'm upbeat about America, I truly am. I think this is a country that is going