

That was certainly the idea behind the African Growth and Opportunity Act, a bipartisan act, an act of the United States Congress that recognized this fact. You see, AGOA is promoting democratic reform in Africa by providing incentives for these nations to extend freedom and opportunity to all of their citizens. Under this law, African nations can obtain greater access to our markets by showing their commitment to economic and political reform, by respecting human rights, tearing down trade barriers, and strengthening property rights and the rule of law, which is precisely what the leaders of these five nations are doing.

Because AGOA is producing results, I've twice signed into law provisions that build on its success and extend its benefits long into the future. My predecessor worked with the Congress to get the law passed. I have been honored to work with the Congress to extend the good law. And the reason why I feel confident in going to the Congress is because it has worked. It's a good piece of legislation that has made a difference in people's lives.

In 2004, we saw dramatic evidence of the results that this new engagement between the United States and Africa is helping produce. Last year, exports to the United States from AGOA nations were up 88 percent over the year before, and non-oil exports were up by 22 percent. In other words, we pledged to open our markets; we have opened our markets; and people are now making goods that the United States consumers want to buy. And that's helpful. That's how you spread wealth. That's how you encourage hope and opportunity.

Over the same period, interestingly enough, U.S. exports to sub-Saharan Africa were up 25 percent. In other words, this is a two-way street. Not only have folks in Africa benefited by selling products in the United States; American businesses, small and large, have benefited through the opening of the African market as well. Across sub-Saharan Africa, economic growth

increased to an 8-year high. Real per capita income increased by 2.7 percent, and this growth is expected to continue in 2005. By creating jobs and lowering prices and expanding opportunity, AGOA is today developing benefits for Americans and Africans alike, and that's important for our fellow citizens to understand. Trade is beneficial for the working people here in America, just like it's beneficial for people on the continent of Africa.

We'll continue to work for policies that build on these impressive results. In December, I announced that 37 African countries are now eligible for AGOA benefits, and next month in Senegal, senior ministers from my administration will meet with government ministers from these 37 AGOA nations to build on this progress. These representatives will be joined by hundreds of American and African businesses and private organizations who will discuss ways to promote development and strengthen civil society.

As we expand our trade, the United States is committing to expanding our efforts to relieve hunger, reduce debt, fight disease on the African continent. One thing we discussed was the Millennium Challenge Account, and I assured the leaders we will work harder and faster to certify countries for the MCA, so that MCA countries and the people in the MCA countries can see the benefit of this really important piece of legislation and funding.

I also announced last week that the United States will provide about \$674 million of additional resources to help alleviate humanitarian emergencies in African nations, especially the growing famine in parts of Africa. On Saturday, we also announced an agreement worked out through the Group of Eight industrialized nations that will cancel \$40 billion in debt owed by 18 of the world's poorest nations, including 14 in Africa. The countries eligible for this relief are those that have put themselves on the path to reform. We believe that by removing a crippling debt burden, we'll

help millions of Africans improve their lives and grow their economies.

Finally, one of the greatest causes of suffering in Africa is the spread of HIV/AIDS. I appreciate Randy Tobias being here. I made fighting this terrible disease a top priority of my administration by launching an emergency plan for AIDS relief. Working with our African partners, we have now delivered life-saving treatment to more than 200,000 people in sub-Sahara Africa, and we're on our way to meeting an important goal—an important 5-year goal—of providing treatment for nearly 2 million African adults and children.

The United States of America is firmly committed to working with governments to help fight the pandemic of AIDS. It is—this crisis is one that can be arrested. And I want you all to know that when America makes a commitment, we mean what we say, and this Government means what it says, and this Congress means what it says, and we'll work together to fight HIV/AIDS.

These are just some of the initiatives that we're pursuing to help Africa's leaders bring democracy and prosperity and hope to their people. The reason I ask these

Presidents to join us today is because I applaud their courage; I appreciate their wisdom. I appreciate them being such good friends that they're able to feel comfortable in coming to the White House to say, "Mr. President, this is going well, and this isn't. How about working together to make this work better." That's how we solve problems. We solve problems by having a frank and open dialog.

We believe Africa is a continent full of promise and talent and opportunity, and the United States will do our part to help the people of Africa realize the brighter future they deserve.

Again, I'm honored you all are here. Thank you all for coming. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:11 a.m. in Room 450 in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to President Festus Gontebanye Mogae of Botswana; President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana; President Armando Guebuza of Mozambique; President Hifikepunye Pohamba of Namibia; and President Mamadou Tandja of Niger.

Remarks to Students From the Partnerships for Learning, Youth Exchange and Study

June 13, 2005

Nice and warm today, isn't it? I'm glad you're here. Almost a year living and studying in America—I hope you've come to realize this isn't my house; this is the people's house. And Laura and I are just temporary residents here. That's how democracy works.

I really think you're part of an important program that is bringing students from Muslim countries to the United States. I think it's important, and I hope you think it's important too. I'm amazed by the number of countries represented amongst you

all: Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, West Bank, Gaza, Arab communities in Israel. You represent a lot of countries and a lot of people. Here's what I think. I think your generation is going to help shape one of the most exciting periods of history in the broader Middle East and the world. It's a period of time when the hope of liberty is spreading to millions.

And I've heard your stories, and people who know your program have talked to me about your experiences and your attitudes.

So let me make a prediction, that I should be able to say to the world, I have confidence in the spread of freedom because there's a young group of people who love freedom and want to do something about seeing freedom spread. That's what I think.

I'm really pleased that Dina Powell is here. Dina is the—Egyptian American, by the way—she ran the Presidential personnel department. In other words, she's the person that brought names to me that would serve in our Government. It's a pretty powerful position, when you think about it. I nominated her to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs. That's a big job here in America. I'm going to miss her in the White House, but our country will be well-served by her serving in the State Department.

I appreciate the staff of the Department of State Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs. I want to thank the representatives from AYUSA for being here. And I appreciate the representatives from the Close Up Foundation for coming. I want to thank your chaperones for being here as well, caring adults, people who want you to enjoy your experience here in America.

The American people probably don't know this program well, so I'm going to say some things that's obvious to you. First, you've been here for 10 months, and secondly, you've attended American high schools, and you've stayed with American families, and you made American friends, which means that you have made contributions. You've contributed to better understanding.

You've also done some interesting things. I've been told you volunteered in local charities. You found out one of the great strengths of this country is the fact that people volunteer to make somebody else's life better. We all got hearts and care deeply about a neighbor in need, and there's a universal call in the Good Books throughout the world that says, "Love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself." And I understand some of you did that, and

I want to thank you for contributing to our country.

I want to thank you for teaching—being teachers, just by telling people your life story. It really wasn't all that hard to be a good teacher, was it—say, "Here's how I was raised," and "Here's what I believe," and "Here's what my culture is like," and "Here's what my faith teaches me." So, thanks for being a teacher as well as a helper.

I know there's a student here who went to Grayling High School in Michigan, Abdul Rahman. He's from Syria. He took on a special project. He decided—and I'm sure maybe some of you all did the same thing during the holy month of Ramadan—explained to students what that means. A lot of kids your age here in this country really aren't sure what Ramadan means, and it's important for them to understand what Ramadan means. And so Abdul—here's what he said. He said, "When I got to one of my classes on the first day of Ramadan, I was totally amazed. There were signs everywhere in the class saying 'Happy Ramadan, Abdul.' Some students even tried to fast with me on the first day."

Getting a high school kid in America to fast is kind of hard to do. [*Laughter*] But the point there of the story is, somebody—some kids in that high school class have a better understanding of a different culture.

Many of you have shown young Americans how Islam inspires you to live, to lead lives based on honesty and justice and compassion. Because you came to this country, thousands of Americans better understand your faith and your heritage, and that's really important. So I want to thank you. I want to thank you for reaching out. I want to thank you for taking a little bit of a risk. It's not easy to come to a foreign country, is it, to leave home. It must be kind of hard—you say, "Well, I can't imagine what it's going to be like to go to school in America and be teamed up with a family I've never met before." And so you were