

to the comprehensive balanced approach that will enable our country and all of our people to prosper.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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UNITED STATES-AFRICA TRADE RELATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend my fellow colleagues in the House for their leadership, for their vision, and for their votes today to strengthen the U.S.-Africa economic and trade relations. Passage of H.R. 5986 will also solidify the U.S. long-term investment in Africa.

I want to commend my colleagues for voting to extend AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act. And I would also like to applaud all of those advocates who worked tirelessly to pass H.R. 5986, the long overdue extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, AGOA, including the third-country fabric provision as a part of AGOA.

This third-country fabric provision will enable eligible countries in sub-Saharan Africa to ship thousands of goods to the United States without paying import duties. This provision, which has been set to expire this September, on September 30, waives the duties on clothing from most AGOA countries, even if the yarn or fabric is made in a "third country," such as China, South Korea, or Vietnam. With passage of this important legislation, sewing jobs for hundreds of thousands of African workers will be protected and also created.

The first beneficiaries for this bill will be the women of Africa, because about 70 to 80 percent of the workers in these burgeoning apparel and textile industries are women. Mr. Speaker, when women are working, families are fed and stability is a result.

I am so pleased, Mr. Speaker, that once again AGOA will become the law and that the President will sign this law in the near future.

THE DEATH OF GHANAIAAN PRESIDENT JOHN ATTA MILLS

Next, Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House well today to send my deepest sympathies, the sympathies of the people of the First Congressional District of Illinois, and to send our prayers to the Ghanaian people and to the family of the recently departed President John Atta Mills, the late president of Ghana. His death is a terrible loss not only for Ghana and its people, but for the entire world.

Mr. Speaker, President Atta Mills was a tremendous leader. He solidified the foundation for peace and prosperity in the nation of Ghana, creating confidence in the Ghanaian political, so-

cioeconomic system that led to massive foreign direct investments in Ghana, which resulted in the creation of millions of jobs for the Ghanaian people. He will be greatly missed.

I also want to congratulate His Excellency, Mr. John Dramani Mahama, the new leader of Ghana.

Mr. Speaker, the peaceful transition of power in Ghana clearly demonstrates that Ghana has embarked into an unwavering path and process for democracy and the democratic principles we all hold near and dear. Within hours of the passing away of the President, late President John Atta Mills, the Vice President was sworn in as the new President.

The political violence that we witnessed after the passing of President Umaru Yar'Adua of Nigeria and President Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi simply did not occur. This, Mr. Speaker, is evidence, sheer evidence that Ghana's democratic institutions are viable and are getting much stronger day by day.

This just did not happen. It took strong leadership from previous Presidents of Ghana in order to lay the right foundation for this smooth transition of power in Ghana over the last week. People like former President Jerry Rawlings, who was elected in 1996. And lest we not forget Mr. Rawlings' party lost with a narrow margin, but he didn't try to fight and hold back the willful decision of the Ghanaian people. He conceded the election without any controversy.

I also commend former President John Kufuor for his strong stance in support of the Ghanaian democratic march, the principles, and the democratic values that we cherish here in the United States.

It is for these reasons that I stand here today to commend the Ghanaian people, the Ghanaian leadership, and the Ghanaian institutions for their stable, forward-thinking, and mature leadership. I commend them all this evening.

NIGER DELTA CRISIS

Mr. Speaker, on my final note before this body, I rise today to also urge this Congress to pass H. Con. Res. 121, a resolution to save the Niger Delta region, which is located in Nigeria. Over the last few years and months, a lot has been said and a lot has been written about the Niger Delta crisis that is occurring right now in Nigeria as we speak.

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Just about a year ago, the United Nations Environment Program released a report, a startling report, a report calling for an urgent response to reverse the environmental destruction and devastation in the Ogoniland region of the Niger Delta wetlands. That report again was startling, intense, and accurate. It also called for the establishment of a \$1 billion cleanup fund to finance the restoration and the cleanup of the Niger Delta region.

Mr. Speaker, to give you some perspective on the scope of the destruction and on the devastation, it is estimated that the cleanup of the Niger Delta could take as many as 30 years to complete. Of course, Mr. Speaker, strong voices have begun to emerge and strong actions have taken place to do more to publicize these environmental atrocities.

Just recently, I watched a movie directed by a brilliant Nigerian-born filmmaker whose name is Jeta Amata. It was a movie titled "Black November: Struggle for the Niger Delta." This movie raises the awareness of the tragedy of the Niger Delta and the Niger region. "Black November," the movie, is based upon the true story of the people of the Niger Delta, the communities in the Niger Delta that suffer extreme environmental degradation and extreme poverty in this oil-rich Niger Delta region.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this Nation, we cannot, the American people cannot remain indifferent to the struggle of the people of the Niger region, the Niger Delta, as they struggle to clean up the pollution created by mostly American and other Western oil and petroleum companies. Most of the Niger Delta's 31 million people live on less than \$1 a day, although this region is the very backbone of Nigeria's economy, with oil and gas extraction accounting for over 97 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange revenues.

The Niger Delta region, which consists of nine states, makes up about 12 percent of Nigeria's total land mass, and it is one of the world's 10 most important wetlands and coastal marine ecosystems.

Mr. Speaker, the social unrest, the criminality, illegal oil trade, the bunkering, and the general corruption have hindered oil and gas investment and production, as well as the Niger Delta region's development.

Mr. Speaker, these numbers are alarming. The World Conservation Union and the representatives from the Nigerian federal government and the Nigerian Conservation Foundation calculated in 2006 that up to 1.5 million tons of oil had been spilled in the Niger Delta over the last 50 years—1.5 million tons. That is 50 times, that's right, 50 times, Mr. Speaker, the pollution released in the Exxon Valdez tanker disaster in Alaska a few years ago.

This pollution, this oil spill, this devastation has severely limited the local inhabitants' access to clean water and has largely destroyed the fishing stock that the majority of the delta inhabitants depended on to make their daily living. A result also has been that illegal oil and gas refineries have become a source of income for these poor people who have unfortunately diverted their activities from fisheries destroyed by the oil spills. Illicit oil trade and illegal refineries are booming, and they are consequently threatening the economy, the security, and the environment of this very vital region in the world.

Mr. Speaker, more importantly or just as importantly, in too many of the communities in the Niger region, people drink water from wells that are contaminated with benzene, which is a known carcinogen.

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They drink this water, which has been estimated to be 900 times above the level that the World Health Organization uses as its guideline, 900 times above the standards set by the World Health Organization.

Since 2010, Nigeria has become one of our main strategic partners on the continent of Africa. This nation, Nigeria, is our Nation's second-leading trading partner behind Great Britain. Mr. Speaker, these and other facts mean that the struggle of the people of the Niger Delta—the struggle of the Nigerian people—is also the struggle of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, the destiny of the two economies, the Nigerian economy and the American economy, are interconnected, interrelated, and intertwined. We cannot, and I emphasize, this Nation cannot afford to stay indifferent to the struggles of the people of the Niger Delta and the cleanup of the pollution that has been devastating this region for over the past 50 years. The struggle of the people of the Niger Delta is indeed our struggle, the struggle of the American people.

I have led, and with cosigners, have introduced H. Con. Res 121 to urge all the stakeholders in the Niger oil and gas industry to come together, to work together, to collaborate together, and to address collectively the environmental impact of the oil and gas production in the Niger Delta.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that we should commend this Congress—and I certainly commend President Goodluck Jonathan for presenting the new Petroleum Industry Bill, the PIB, to the Nigerian Parliament, which has the support of all the stakeholders and has the input of all of the stakeholders.

I also want to commend President Goodluck Jonathan for announcing the creation of the Hydro-Carbon Pollution Restoration Project, HYPREP, to look into the Ogoni land degradation, destruction, and devastation from the aforementioned oil spills. I applaud President Goodluck Jonathan for taking these initiatives. These are very important, critical first steps. It is my hope that all of the affected stakeholders will again come and meet again soon and collaborate strongly together to make the cleanup and rebuilding of the Niger region become a success story that the world will admire and that the world will celebrate.

The new energy regulatory framework that's being created must be fair, it must be transparent, and it must create an appropriate avenue for the economic empowerment for local Niger Delta communities affected by the industry, including the women and the youth.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot stand by. We must assist in this effort. The clock is ticking. We must support the people of the Niger Delta.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

RECOGNIZING CHABAD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the unique and essential work being done by Chabad. Chabad is known by many for its annual telethon. Where else on the TV dial can one go to see dancing rabbis once a year? Chabad is better known for meeting the spiritual needs of millions, for meeting the economic and counseling needs of thousands who are faced with destitution or faced with the scourge of substance abuse.

I would like to extend my regards to Rabbi Cunin and the entire Cunin family for their tireless efforts on behalf of Chabad and Yiddishkeit everywhere.

For decades, I've had a chance to work with Rabbi Mordy Einbinder and Rabbi Joshua Gordon, and all of the rabbis of Chabad in the San Fernando Valley, an organization that has grown from one storefront to now 25 centers of vibrant communities dedicated to worship and to study across the San Fernando Valley.

Chabad does hugely important work for the local community. They have taken a commercial-grade kitchen and turned it into a one-stop social service center to feed and care for thousands. And Chabad's drug prevention and treatment program, PRIDE, reaches thousands of at-risk youth in the San Fernando Valley and across the Los Angeles area.

For the last decade, I've worked with Chabad to achieve something very important to the Jewish people, the return from Russia of the Rebbe's papers. The Schneerson Library and Archives are of such important sacredness to Chabad and to many others, and yet they are still held in Moscow by the Russian regime.

This Congress passed Jackson-Vanik. There's discussion of us changing that important law to allow for Russian goods to be sold in the United States more freely, but Jackson-Vanik's purpose was to force Russia to let our people go. That process will not, in my mind, be complete until Russia lets the Rebbe's papers go as well.

So I look forward to Russia releasing those spiritually important documents. And I look forward to working with all the Chabad rabbis on issues from Moscow to the San Fernando Valley.

IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING AMERICA AND THE WORLD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of Jan-

uary 5, 2011, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time yielded to me to really cover a couple different issues and areas that have been pending either in the District or in our Nation—or even internationally—and using this opportunity to place into the RECORD and also speak to you—in essence, speaking to the Nation—on the importance of these issues.

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First what I would like to do is really commend Chairman LUCAS and Ranking Member PETERSON for passing an ag bill out of their committee.

Now, what my producers are asking is to pass a full ag bill on the floor sooner rather than later. In fact, I've seen, and I'm sure you've seen, an ag bill now. But we were successful today in helping mitigate a flaw in the last ag bill in ensuring that the livestock provisions and the insurance portion of the ag bill of 5 years ago, it wasn't funded for this last year.

As everyone knows, this is a very challenging year for the agricultural sector. I was able to visit a dairy farm in my district last Friday, the Timmerman family, and there I was able to meet with my producers, both commodity, livestock and dairy, and in my part of the State, sometimes they are doing all of the above.

So I brought down—actually, they brought to me and I brought back to Washington to give an example of the challenges we're under. Here is a good ear of corn that has been irrigated and is what we would expect to see almost every year in southern Illinois. This was what came off of a stalk on the Timmerman dairy farm. And so this gives you, Mr. Speaker, an opportunity to understand the challenges that are faced.

Now, in a dairy operation, like a beef operation, they're growing the corn to feed their livestock. So if this is what's supposed to feed their livestock, they're used to getting this, you can understand why passing this disaster relief portion to fully fund the ag bill to help them out is very, very important.

Another producer brought this, which is the stalk and even a worse—well, it's not even an ear of corn. It's decayed, it hasn't formed, and that's what a lot of our producers are seeing in Illinois during this time.

Now, our agriculture producers are a healthy stock, and they understand that the world is changing and that there are spending and fiscal challenges and difficulties. They're asking for a simple premise. They just want to be able to have an ag insurance product that they can rely on, that they can choose to buy into or not. They don't want to be placed in a position of having no ag insurance and then depending upon if there's a drought on disaster