

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The Senator from Oklahoma.

PRESIDENT PAUL KAGAME

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I am going to talk about something different than anyone else has talked about here, and there is a very good reason for it.

First of all, to try to establish some credibility here, I have had occasion to spend quite a bit of time working on issues in Africa. In fact, I have had occasion over the last 23 years to make 156 African country visits. That is a lot of African country visits. We have friends there. I personally have friends there, intimate friends. We have worked on a lot of the military concerns they have, but this is an area where we have very close friends. So I am going to be singling out one close friend—but not to the detriment of the rest of them because we have many close friends, certainly as many as 32 country Presidents and Prime Ministers to whom we have been very close. But there is a reason for singling out one particular individual, who is Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda—two reasons. First, he is going to be coming in as the Chairman or President of the African Union in the next few months. He has already been elected. Second, he survived the Rwanda genocide, which arguably could be the greatest genocide of all time. On January 28, he will become the President or Chairman of the African Union. This is really nothing short of a miracle. Rwanda is a miracle, and we have Paul Kagame and the people of Rwanda to thank for it.

In 1994, one of the most atrocious genocides ever perpetrated occurred in this small East African country. In a period of about 100 days, nearly 1 million Rwandans were slaughtered. As is always the case, the seeds of genocide were planted many decades before, but when it finally started in April of 1994, many thousands of Hutus used machetes and clubs to slaughter Tutsis. Those are two tribes people are very familiar with. In most cases, it was neighbors killing neighbors, even some family members.

The horror was unimaginable. Fathers and mothers were forced to watch their children being hacked to death. One man was forced to beat his wife to death in order to spare their seven children from being tortured to death.

Many Rwandans were lucky to survive and remember watching their parents and siblings being murdered. One individual whose name is Immaculee wrote a book, "Left to Tell," which gives you an idea of what happened, the fact that there were people in her own community trying to kill her. They killed 70 percent—70 percent—of the entire tribe at that time.

The world just watched as this slaughter took place. They did nothing. The United Nations had peacekeepers stationed in Rwanda, and they were ordered to withdraw and leave all the genocide to take place.

The President of the United States was Bill Clinton. He did nothing. The world just stood by and watched. The horror was stopped only because of one man. That one man was Paul Kagame. In October 1990, Paul Kagame led a group of young Rwandan refugees from Uganda whose parents had fled the country's mass violence three decades before.

You have to keep in mind that the President of Uganda is President Museveni. President Museveni and President Paul Kagame, both, came from the bush. They were good friends. He went there to try to save Rwandans at that time because he saw the genocide coming.

What is even more amazing about Rwanda is their leader and what happened after that. Rwanda had two very different paths it could have taken. They could have taken revenge. Paul Kagame could have taken the strength he had—the new power that he had—and he could have gone after the other tribe that was there, the Hutus, and he could have started another genocide of his own. That could have happened. The other thing he could have done was the path of forgiveness and reconciliation. This is the path of hard work, where the Tutsis who survived the genocide would have to learn how to forgive and live alongside the same Hutus who killed their family members. This is the path of rebuilding a nation from the ground up so that together they could have a common future.

We now know which path Rwanda chose. President Kagame led them down the path of reconciliation. There are a lot of people who helped to make this happen. One of the individuals, who I happen to be personally fond of, who is deceased now, was Chuck Colson. Do you remember him? He spent time in prison. He started a fellowship and was very actively involved in the reconciliation process. In many cases, the Hutus who committed genocide against the Tutsi families would seek forgiveness from that family and then achieve reconciliation by building a home together for the Tutsi survivors who lived through this. It may seem like a small gesture, but it allowed the healing and forgiveness process to work. Together, the Hutus and the Tutsis are rebuilding their nation as Rwandans working together.

I had one experience that I watched after this happened. My wife called this to my attention. In Rwanda, they build a certain kind of basket that is different from that in any other country. After the reconciliation, there they were—the Hutu and the Tutsi young women—making these baskets. Then, Paul Kagame worked out a deal with several department store marketing areas in the United States. Macy's was one of them. They started selling the baskets. It was a great boon for them. But, anyway, Paul Kagame should be credited for this amazing transformation of the nation to a thriving,

successful country. This is paying great dividends.

I was in Rwanda most recently in October. I have been there eight times. Each time I go, I am surprised by what I see. Let me mention five things that are unique to Rwanda. First, there is not a piece of litter anywhere in Rwanda. There is nothing. You can't find any litter. In fact, the last Saturday of every month, they have a program where everybody joins together and they pick up every bit of trash and everything else. That doesn't sound like very much, but you notice the difference when you are there.

The second thing that is different about them is their infrastructure. Rwanda is known as the Land of a Thousand Hills. They don't have any level areas in Rwanda. Not long ago, I remember going for an hour and a half, between the hill area and the mountain area, on a road that was perfectly paved. That is one thing you would expect to see in the United States. There are no potholes—nothing. It was a highway that you would expect to find anywhere except in Africa. They are known for this.

Third, the people are hard workers. I mentioned that there aren't any flat areas there. Every square foot in Rwanda is used to grow something, from the bottom of the peaks. Everything is there. They are hard workers. They grow tea, coffee, potatoes, and other crops. They are all being cultivated across the entire country, and it is all hilly country. There is no place else where that is actually taking place. It is hard work. You do it mostly by hand. They are able to feed themselves and export more valuable crops abroad.

Fourth, it is safe. You wouldn't expect a country that has gone through the most devastating genocide—maybe in history—to be a safe place to walk around. Yet it is. You can walk there at nighttime. It is safer than Washington, DC.

The fifth thing that is unusual about this is that the economy is booming. Everywhere you look in Rwanda, construction is happening. In just the last few years, they built new hotels and a convention center, and they are now working on a new airport to facilitate all the growth and tourism that is coming there.

These are my observations, but President Kagame's leadership is not just resulting in visible changes. Numbers back up what I have seen. Since he became President in 2000, Rwanda has experienced a GDP growth of 8 percent.

This is interesting because we are, through our tax bill, going to be increasing our GDP in this country. There is a formula that no one disagrees with, and that is that for each 1 percent increase in growth in the GDP, that develops into \$1 trillion over a period of 10 years of increased revenue. That is some of the revenue we are going to be using as a result of that.

This is not the United States. This is in Africa. It is an 8-percent GDP

growth. It is geared toward the poor people. That is why the population has lifted people out of poverty.

Rwanda has dramatically improved its ease of doing business. The World Bank recently ranked Rwanda No. 1 for doing business in East Africa, No. 2 for doing business in Sub-Saharan Africa, and No. 41 in the world. That is remarkable when you consider that just a matter of 8 years before, they were ranked 150th in the world for doing business. Now they are No. 41. Today you can start a business and get all the necessary permits to operate in just a few days.

Rwanda has become a model for gender empowerment. Maybe this is going a little further than a lot of the people in this country are comfortable with, but Rwanda's constitution requires that 30 percent of decision-making positions be awarded to women. Today, it is now 60 percent. So 60 percent of Rwanda's parliamentarians and 40 percent of its Cabinets are filled by women, including my good friend the Foreign Minister, Louise Mushikiwabo, and also the Ambassador that many of us know here because she is in the United States, Ambassador Mathilde Mukantabana.

Rwanda has facilitated the development of a technology that no one would expect in Africa. Rwanda enjoys a nationwide fiberoptic infrastructure that will ensure that 95 percent of its citizens have access to high-speed 4G internet. Furthermore, it is integrating drone technology into its healthcare system to ensure that vital supplies, like blood, can reach patients all over the country.

Rwanda has transformed its healthcare system. Life expectancy is now 64.5 years. In 2000, it was 49 years. That has all taken place in the last few years. Child mortality rates are down more than two-thirds. Maternal mortality is down 80 percent. In 2000, there was only 1 doctor for every 66,000 people. Today there is 1 doctor for every 10,000 people. Between those years, since the genocide has taken place, the malaria-related deaths plummeted by 85 percent.

When you ask how these things were possible, the World Health Organization's country director said—and this is a quote, not a quote by me or someone in this country or by the President:

The main ingredient is visionary leadership. It's about having a target, saying we want to be there in the future and understanding obstacles in the way.

That visionary leader is Paul Kagame, and he gets results.

That is the World Health Organization.

Rwanda has established a highly capable and professional military. President Kagame actually studied in Fort Leavenworth in Kansas as part of the IMET Program in early 1990s. The IMET Program is a program where we train people from different countries to be leaders, and, of course, they develop an allegiance to our country. It is very

successful. That is how this guy got started. He started in the IMET Program. His military background is very professional. As President, he has required the same of his forces. In the Rwanda Defence Forces, all military orders and instructions are issued through a chain of command. Rwanda's plan is to have a small, well-equipped army of 20,000 soldiers and a reserve component of 100,000. Their defense strategy is to sustain a combat-ready force capable of rapidly deploying to meet varying contingencies both at home and abroad still.

They are delivering. Rwanda is the fifth largest contributor to the U.N. peacekeeping operations in the world. They currently have close to 5,000 troops deployed in different missions, widely acknowledged as some of the best performing and most trusted peacekeepers in the world.

Rwanda is also a major participant in the Eastern Africa Standby Force. That is a battalion of 850 troops and a police contingency of 140 officers who are on standby for contingencies in East Africa. The countries that have gone together are Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, and Rwanda. These are the kinds of things that are exactly in line with what we should be helping them with and participating in and doing ourselves in the United States in terms of policy goals for Africa. We set up a way to help Africans help Africans, to train and assist regional partners so they will be capable of handling security threats before they become global crises. With the emergence of their peacekeeping mission, the regional cooperation—what we hope would happen—is happening. Paul Kagame is the reason Rwanda is leading the way. Rwanda is a clear example of what a strong, strategic partner should look like to the United States.

It is not just me saying this. Rwanda is recognized around the world for its professional force. In fact, Rwanda's Defense Minister was among the few leaders who spoke at the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in November in Vancouver. Because of these amazing accomplishments, President Kagame is widely viewed as one of the most influential heads of state in the continent of Africa. Many leaders and observers praise him and his record. Benedict Oramah, President of the African Export-Import Bank, said:

[Rwanda] is a country that was all but written off some two decades ago. But just like the phoenix that died and arose from its ashes, it emerges to become the shiniest star on the continent. The shiniest in terms of governance, in terms of the can-do spirit, doing those things that nobody ever thought was possible.

Again, that is the African Export-Import Bank talking about Paul Kagame.

The head of the World Health Organization's Africa department said:

I want to recognize [Rwanda's] remarkable leadership—its creativity, tenacity and resolve—which have delivered significant progress in advancing health and development for the benefit of all your people. Your

achievements in such a short space of time are truly remarkable.

That is the World Health Organization. He is talking about Rwanda, and he is talking specifically about the President.

Some of you may remember former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, who came in after the person who was considered one of the great terrorists of all time, at that time, Sani Abacha. He came in to reform the leadership in Nigeria. His statement was: "Rwanda has made difficult trade-offs, but as an African leader, I tell you that I would make the same trade-offs."

Yet his influence is recognized more clearly not by what people have said about him but by what his peers have asked him to do.

In July of 2016, Kagame was selected by his peers to lead the effort to reform the African Union to make it more effective. He did not take this opportunity to raise his own profile, as most people would do; rather, he used it to build consensus and cast a vision for a future Africa that is no longer reliant on aid from the outside world. This is very significant because when you talk to people in the street about Africa and the things we do with Africa, the first thing they say is that Africa is always having to be supported by us, that we are pouring money into Africa and they are not able to do things on their own.

This was the first time he had made this statement—that Africa should no longer be reliant on aid from outside nations. Within months, he developed a reform package that was focused on four categories. This is significant.

The first one is that the African Union has to be focused on key priorities with a continental scope as opposed to a regional. This is something that has been happening for a long time, but they are moving from regional to starting to look after their entire continent. He wants the AU to focus on fewer but bigger issues that affect everyone on the continent.

The second thing is that the AU must be connected with its citizens. Paul Kagame envisions doing this by establishing women and youth quotas, which I just mentioned a minute ago, across the institutions and by identifying appropriate ways and means to ensure that the private sector, Parliament, civil society, and citizens are participating in the process. He also wants to make the Africa passport available to all citizens so as to allow the free flow of people among the nation-states.

The third thing is that the business of the AU must be managed effectively and efficiently with accountability, called the "Rwanda way."

The fourth thing is to charge the member-states with providing all of the necessary funding to operate the African Union without having assistance from outside donors.

Have you ever heard that before from anybody, let alone Africa? Yet that is what he said. He envisions doing this

by each African country's imposing a 0.2-percent tariff on eligible imports. While not all observers agree, I admire this vision for each seeking its way to ungrip itself from the assistance of other nations to fund its governmental activities. That was his plan.

What cemented his status as an influential power broker in Africa was that at the AU's next meeting, which was January of 2017, his peers at the AU—the African Union—affirmed the recommendations and charged him with actually implementing them. Once again, African leaders unanimously decided to trust Kagame. They chose him as the best leader to put reforms into action. So far, a number of the proposals have already been implemented.

About half of the nation-states have already implemented the most difficult part, which is passing upon themselves a 0.2-percent import tariff and forwarding the proceeds to the African Union. They were paying for all of these things that were happening—that were proposed by Kagame—in the African Union. They actually have what we call real skin in the game. More and more nations are getting on board, and Rwanda is leading the way.

To further cement his standing and influence, in July of 2017, Kagame was selected by his peers to chair the African Union in 2018, and here it is in 2018. So it is going to be happening. With genocide, Rwanda has a dark history, but because they chose the path of forgiveness and reconciliation instead of revenge, President Kagame has had and has used his national platform to be a nation of friendship and reconciliation between nations—nations that normally don't like each other, nations that normally are fighting against each other. Let's take a look at what he has actually done.

First, he and the State of Israel have had a similar past as both having victims of genocide. We all know that. Many African nations—about half of them—are Muslim-majority countries.

President Kagame has used his influence in the region to facilitate Israel's desire to reengage in Africa. Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel referred to Rwanda as the indispensable bridge on which Israel marched to return to Africa. In just the last 2 years, Prime Minister Netanyahu has been welcomed in several of the African capitals. I was with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and I can tell you that he was one who was so impressed with the work that has been done by Paul Kagame that he is able to invest himself in that continent of Africa, which he was never able to do before.

At the United Nations, Rwanda has put itself at risk of widespread criticism in order to stand up for what is right. In 2014, Rwanda rotated onto the U.N. Security Council. While there, Rwanda abstained from an anti-Israel resolution so typical of the United Nations. It is always against Israel. When he did this, Rwanda blocked it from moving forward and prevented the

United States from having to veto it. In this Chamber, we remember that. I remember the fact that we didn't want to be in a position to veto it, but what they were doing was totally unfair. We had one guy who was courageous enough to do it; he was Paul Kagame from Rwanda.

More recently, Rwanda has been one of the few nations not to vote against the United States or condemn our decision to move our Israeli Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Rwanda is willing to take a stand for what is right. It keeps its word. It does not shake with fear at the possibility of intimidation.

Kagame has also brought about the restoration of broken relationships with Africa. In 2016, he led the push to invite Morocco back into the African Union. This is an issue that a lot of people are concerned with. All the way back to the Bush administration, our Secretary of State at that time, Jim Baker, was trying his best to undo the damage that was done by Morocco to Western Sahara. Three decades ago, Western Sahara was taken from its homeland and put out in the middle of nowhere in the desert. I have been there several times. I wonder how a person can live out there.

The problem was that Morocco was very rich, and Western Sahara was very poor. I testified before a House committee not too long ago, and I commented that Morocco has hired the most expensive lobbyists who are in Washington. Obviously, he gets his way on things that other people don't.

Anyway, one of the problems was, because of the advantage that it has had, it has not been willing to come to the table. One of the reasons is that Morocco has been the only country to be considered an African country that is not part of the African Union. So what did Paul Kagame do? He brought them into the African Union. He was able to convince both the African Union and Morocco to allow Morocco to join so that they could get together and get something done. Hopefully, he is on the road to trying to end three decades of trauma that has taken place out in the desert.

Has this effort soured our relations with Kagame? No. In fact, the impact has been just the opposite. Earlier this month, former German President Horst Kohler, the U.N. envoy for resolving the Western Sahara-Morocco dispute, traveled to Kigali to appeal for Kagame's help to resolve the situation. The U.N. recognizes Kagame's bringing Morocco into the African Union as an important step in resolving the problem of the Western Sahara.

It is not just in Morocco that Kagame has made a difference. Let's look at others.

South Sudan is another problem. The Sudan and South Sudan were the same country. South Sudan had been trying to gain its independence. It finally did gain its independence, and we thought everything would be fine when that

happened. Unfortunately, that started a civil war in South Sudan. This is something that has been going on now for 3 years, and Paul Kagame is neck deep in helping resolve that conflict as well. Rwanda has peacekeeping troops in both countries, and the Sudanese and the South Sudanese forces do not target but they protect Rwanda. So we have two countries that are warring against each other, and we have Rwanda going in to try to resolve it. They both welcome Rwanda, and they trust Rwanda's military because they trust Kagame.

It is tempting to think that Rwanda is a small country in the middle of nowhere that does not have a lot of influence, but that would be a mistake. Because of the results Kagame has been able to secure for his people and because of the personal relationships he has developed, Rwanda is among one of the most influential countries in Africa, considering the fact that when Kagame was inaugurated to his third term, no fewer than 22 heads of state from across Africa attended the festivities. That has never been done before—22 countries participating in the inauguration of a President. They came for Paul Kagame. The leaders of African nations that normally fight with each other were actually seen embracing one another live on TV. That just doesn't happen for no reason; that happens because they all trust and admire Paul Kagame.

With all of this, it is no wonder that African leaders are increasingly looking to Rwanda and Kagame for a vision of how to move forward into the future. According to one reporter, the "Rwanda model" is becoming a hallmark phrase in Africa.

Simon Allison writes: "In Africa's . . . corridors of power—in the boardrooms of its banks, in closed-door Cabinet meetings, in donor discussions and interminable governance conferences—it is repeated like a mantra: 'The Rwanda model. The Rwanda model. The Rwanda model.'"

Kagame is advancing a vision of African leadership that is no longer reliant on the aid of outsiders—a total reversal. He wants to move his country and the whole continent away from dependence on foreign aid to bustling free market economies that enable the people to take care of themselves. In fact, he recently complained to his fellow peers at an African security summit meeting that they have relied too much on the international community to deal with their problems.

This is a quote from him: "A major pillar of institutional reform of the AU is a more focused and assertive Africa" that is focused on solving its own problems. He said, "We must take responsibility for ourselves, which doesn't exclude partners but they add to our efforts." He has clearly done that. That is the main thing in all the reforms we have talked about, is to get Africa out of that dependency mode, and he is actually doing it.

Last March, while speaking in London at the Wall Street Journal's Investing in Africa Conference, Kagame said, "I want to see Africa get its act together" so it is not reliant on Western intervention in its affairs. It is the same thing over and over again. He sees a future Africa that is more autonomous and capable of taking care of itself and taking care of its problems. It is kind of a vision that his peers are gathering around.

We shouldn't misunderstand. Kagame is not saying that Africa should have no involvement with the United States or the West—far from it. What he wants is to have a peer-to-peer relationship instead of a donor-based relationship. He wants legitimate business relations between customers and suppliers, to join together African businesses and other international companies, including those in the United States.

In Kagame's vision for a new Africa, African nations will have cooperation on security and on terrorism and on trade agreements with their friends, partners, and allies. He wants to end the days of reliance upon foreign governments to solve their problems. See, there it is again.

Many leaders in Africa have desired this kind of a change, but few have had the position, the influence, or the clarity of focus to articulate with the kind of passion that is persuasive. It is only had by Paul Kagame. There are far fewer who have this kind of record of improving the lives of their own people in the way he has.

This is exactly the kind of partnership that the United States should have with our friends and allies in Africa—should have but that we don't have at the present time. For too long, the United States has had the wrong policy toward Africa and African nations, and most Americans still think there is only 1 country on the continent of Africa rather than 54 independent states that make it up.

U.S. policy toward Africa should be different. U.S. policy should be a partnership that focuses on helping Africans help Africans with three key components: security, trade, and diplomacy.

The security goals of the United States in Africa should be focused on training and equipping key partners to be capable of addressing regional and continental terrorist threats that could ultimately affect the United States and to be capable of addressing regional security threats that develop in regions so that the U.S. military does not have to engage, so that it can do it instead of needing our involvement.

This is AFRICOM's goal. AFRICOM is something that is fairly new. We once were a part of three different commands—the Central Command, the Pacific Command, and the European Command. Now we have AFRICOM as its own command, which was designed for that express purpose. We are in-

creasingly meeting these goals and objectives.

The second thing is that our trade focus in Africa should be on developing free trade agreements with African nations so that they have a reciprocal, peer relationship with our African trading partners. Fortunately, this is already the statutory policy of the United States, but it is not working that way. In 2015, a 10-year extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act was signed into law. This is an appropriate policy for the near term, but long term it is not because we need to have the same kind of access to African nations as we provide to them. In this law, it explicitly states that the policy of the United States is to pursue free-trade agreements with African nations, but it doesn't back it up with anything.

In my travels to Africa, I have seen many countries are ready for free-trade agreements, but the bureaucracies over here in the United States don't agree. They don't think they are ready. So I introduced the African Free Trade Initiative Act, which does two things.

First, it requires a U.S. Trade Representative to articulate what African countries need to do to get ready for trade agreements with the United States. It is one thing for people over here or people who are desiring trade and not desiring trade to say: Well, Africa is not ready. What we are doing with this legislation is saying: We need to know from our Trade Representative what they need to do so they could be a part—they can get skin in their own game.

Second, it requires the U.S. Trade Representative to coordinate with the Millennium Challenge Corporation and USAID so their aid dollars are focused on projects that will help prepare them for free-trade agreements with us. Now these provisions have passed and are signed into law so we are making that headway.

The bureaucracies have all the tools they need, but they aren't willing to use them because they don't take Africa seriously, they don't view them as peers, and they look down on them because they are small, but this is a shame because the economies in Africa are growing faster than any other region in the world.

Then there is diplomacy. Our diplomatic focus in Africa should be focused on building relationships and alignments with countries we can trust, that share our values and help us influence the rest of the continent and the world to be favorable to the United States. For too long, we have ridden on a high horse through Africa. We have been quick to chide them for mistakes they have made, and we have been slow or completely negligent in recognizing their accomplishments.

Take Rwanda as an example. I have already articulated the miracle they have experienced, but when the people of Rwanda decided to amend their Constitution to allow President Kagame to run for an additional term, the Obama

administration condemned them. They publicly shamed Kagame for the country's actions and doubled down when he ran for reelection. That administration did not have a category for the democratic process that was different from ours. They just didn't have the category for a new nation needing help, and so they were not helpful to them. That administration also failed to recognize the amazing progress Rwanda has made to improve their country and the health and education of their people, nor did they recognize the superb security assistance Rwanda provides in the region, and our relationship with Rwanda was negatively impacted by the Obama administration. We have become known as a condescending and unreliable partner in Africa. If we do not catch up and change our approach, our friends will find new partners, and we will be left alone.

It is no secret how engaged China is on the continent. I think we all know that. Every time you travel through Africa, they say: Well, the United States tells you what you need, but we build what you need. Now, they don't do it with African labor and all that, but they have a reason for doing this. They understand how important Africa is going to be in the coming decades so they are treating African nations accordingly, as peers, as we should be doing.

China has surpassed the United States as Africa's largest trading partner. We have been their largest trading partner for many years, but now that has changed and China has taken over. China funded the construction of the African Union's headquarters in Ethiopia. Their aid dollars go toward projects that are actually needed, and the projects happen much faster than compared to ours. The United States is falling behind and at great risk.

Between now and 2030, the economies of African nations are expected to grow by an average of 5 percent a year, meaning the total size of their economies will nearly double in that time. By 2025, the continent will have a combined GDP of over \$2.5 trillion and \$1.4 trillion of that—that is more than half of that—will be consumer spending.

Increasingly, Africa's growing middle class will continue to become highly attractive in the business world. By 2034, Africa is expected to have the world's largest working age population of 1.1 billion people, which could lead to a low-cost labor economic boom similar to what was experienced in East Asia after World War II. Our National Security Council has noted that these demographic and economic shifts will have enormous political consequences and that Africa's role in rural politics will dramatically change because of them.

Implementing this policy will benefit our people, give us greater security, give us a stronger economy, and it will add to our influence in the world in the long run. These things we need to do, and we are not doing them now. So I

am encouraging our administration to do it. We need to get these things. To implement this policy effectively, we must cultivate critical relations of influence with our like-minded friends in Africa. In the Middle East, we have Israel. In Europe, we have Great Britain. In Africa, we have Rwanda and Paul Kagame.

So it is time to catch up. President Paul Kagame will soon be sworn in as the Chairman of the African Union. In him, we have a visionary leader who has accomplished great things for his country. He has also established himself as a highly influential figure among African heads of State because he has set a bold vision for the future of Africa that is autonomous, self-sufficient, and open for business. This vision is 100 percent complimentary to what the U.S. policy should be in Africa.

In recognizing this, it is my hope the Trump administration will embrace him and Rwanda as the American friends they are. We need to bring Rwanda close so we can work cooperatively with them to accomplish our shared goal. Rwanda and America are like-minded friends, and we should treat them accordingly.

Let me conclude with a personal story that expands a little bit on this. I had an experience in 2000. In 2000, I was called by a friend in Rwanda, and his name is Charles Murigande. He called up and he said—there is a program I have been involved in and others have been involved in, where we encourage them to have like we have in the U.S. Senate. We have weekly Prayer Breakfasts every Wednesday, and we encourage them to do the same thing. He called me up, and he said: We would like to have our first National Prayer Breakfast in Rwanda. Will you come over and speak? So I did.

Well, 14 years later—this is quite a coincidence—in 2014, we were on another trip and planned to land in Burundi before going to Ethiopia, but then, for security reasons, we weren't able to land in Burundi so we stopped in Rwanda instead. Without any warning—now, keep in mind, Rwanda didn't know we were going to be there. We didn't know we were going to be there. There was no warning whatsoever, but when we got there, as a coincidence, the next day they were having their 14th annual Prayer Breakfast. They assumed, since I was their speaker at their first Prayer Breakfast 14 years before, I was there to give a speech, and so I did. I say this because Paul Kagame, 14 years before that happened and every year since then and then every year since this took place, was then leading both Prayer Breakfasts. So in addition to all of the virtues of Paul Kagame that I have been talking about—perhaps too long—he is a strong man of faith, and it doesn't get any better than that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF ALEX AZAR

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, very shortly, the Senate is going to take two votes on the President's nominees. The first is to confirm Jerome Powell as the next Fed Chair. Once that vote wraps up, the Senate will vote on whether to begin debate on the nomination of Alex Azar to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

This is one of the key roles in our entire Federal Government in caring for America's sick and vulnerable. Let me begin by saying that Mr. Azar does not come with the staggering ethical challenges of his predecessor, the first Trump HHS nominee, Tom Price.

Here is my concern: Mr. Azar's nomination is a clear symbol of the President's broken promises on prescription drugs and pledge to secure better and more affordable healthcare for all Americans. At the outset of my remarks, I am going to start with the issue of skyrocketing prescription drug prices that now clobber millions of Americans at pharmacy windows across America. It is one thing for a Presidential candidate to have claimed he would just be too busy working to have time to golf and then spend almost 1 out of 3 days in office golfing. It is another thing altogether to promise cheaper prescription drugs to sick and vulnerable Americans who empty their pockets to pay for their medications only to abandon them completely once you are in office.

Now, it was barely a year ago that Donald Trump stood before our country and said prescription-hiking drug companies were getting "away with murder." Those were his words, not mine, not somebody in the news media. The President said the drug companies were "getting away with murder."

Now he has nominated Alex Azar, a drug company executive with a documented history of raising drug prices, to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. From 2012 until last year, Mr. Azar—who is the head of Eli Lilly's American subsidiary; that is, Lilly USA—chaired the U.S. pricing reimbursement and access steering committee, which gave him a major role over drug price increases for every product Lilly marketed across the country.

On Mr. Azar's watch, the price of Forteo, a Lilly drug used to treat osteoporosis, more than doubled. The price of Effient, a Lilly drug used to treat heart disease, more than doubled. The price of Strattera, a Lilly drug used to treat ADHD, more than doubled. The price of Humalog, a Lilly drug used to treat diabetes, more than doubled, and these are only a few of the drugs that were under Mr. Azar's purview.

Mr. Azar told the Senate Finance Committee that he had never—not

even one time—signed off on a decrease in the price of a medicine, and when asked about that statement in his confirmation hearing, Mr. Azar was quick to say: That is just the way the system works, but he didn't give us any concrete examples of how he would buck that system if he became the head of the Department of Health and Human Services. It seems to me, given the fact that he was asked questions about what concrete ideas he had for reforming the system and carrying out the President's promises to hold down prescription drug prices, he came up empty. I guess that says he would fit right in with the Trump administration on prescription drug practices.

In its first year, the Trump administration has made exactly no progress when it comes to tackling these skyrocketing pharmaceutical prices. They don't have any Executive orders that have any teeth in them. There don't seem to be any new initiatives at all. No new legislation has come from the Department or the White House. Perhaps, in my view, that is because the administration seems to be busy on other fronts, like taking healthcare away from those who need it, people who can least afford to have their bills climbing upward because of a decision made by a bureaucracy here in the Nation's Capital.

This nomination, as you are going to hear Senators discuss tomorrow, is about more than just the administration's failure on prescription drugs. It is, in effect, a proxy on an entire healthcare agenda. This is really a referendum on a healthcare policy from this administration that I think is an abject failure.

It is a year in now, and the administration's track record on healthcare is pretty clear. New data came out a few days ago showing that the number of Americans with health insurance dropped by more than 3 million people. That means 3 million Americans are a sudden illness or injury away from the nightmare of personal bankruptcy, having to sell their home or their car or empty a retirement account to escape from under that mountain of medical bills.

A very substantial part of that problem stems from the administration's sabotage on the Affordable Care Act. The administration cut the open enrollment period in half. That meant anybody who clicked on the internet, hoping to sign up this month, has found out that they are just too late. They slashed advertising budgets that helped reach the younger and healthier customers that make the private health insurance market affordable. And they made it harder for those having difficulty signing up for coverage to get a little bit of help in person.

This sabotage agenda, in my view, is an attack on the kind of health insurance this administration says it is for. They say they are for a private health insurance market, but the fact is, what they have been doing is undermining