



NEWS FROM

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Statement by the Honorable Bobby L. Rush, Chairman Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection

for the Joint Hearing with the

Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health

on

“U.S.-Africa Trade Relations: Creating a Platform for Economic Growth”

Wednesday, June 24, 2009

WASHINGTON — “The subcommittee will come to order. I want to thank the members of both subcommittees for participating in this important U.S.-Africa trade hearing and, particularly, I would like to thank Chairman Payne for his strong commitment to economic growth in Africa.

“For many reasons, Africa has become increasingly important to the United States. This hearing is our committee’s first step in a process to chart a more productive course between the United States and Africa.

“Recent reports demonstrate that the continent is in the midst of a transformational phase. Africa has multiple faces and is very diverse. There are bad stories as the media frequently reports. But, there are also good stories not so frequently reported by the media.

“Ghana reflects the contemporary African experience. Its successful election and peaceful transfer of power are to be applauded. However, the electorate in Ghana anxiously awaits electricity, health services and access to education, employment and technology.

“I am pleased that the President will visit Ghana and I enthusiastically offer my full support, from Congress, on his far-reaching mutually beneficial trade agenda for Africa.

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“African economies are among the fastest growing, globally, and registered nearly six percent overall economic growth in 2007, the highest in 20 years. The continent’s challenges are amplified by the current global financial crisis.

“Nevertheless, Africa could represent a growth center and a stimulus to the world economy if provided with the proper tools.

“Today, there is a more visible African Diaspora, which reminds us that Africa is ready for business and cannot only be considered as a humanitarian case. The U.S. engagement should far transcend the humanitarian concerns that have frequently underpinned U.S. engagement with the continent.

“In addition, the U.S. government and private sector should jointly promote Africa’s economic development, U.S. trade with the region, and U.S.-Africa business partnerships.

“Our historical connection with the continent does not automatically give us primacy. Other countries like China, the European Union, India, Iran, Brazil, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and others are intensifying efforts to gain access to African resources and advance their ties to the region. It is time for the U.S. to change its perception of Africa. We should strongly address their challenges to economic growth and, at the same time, build upon the opportunities. It is a ‘win-win’ for both regions.

“As the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection, I look forward to working with my colleagues, the Obama Administration, and the private sector to end the paternalistic approach we have implemented in the past. By increasing commerce and trade opportunities that include women, minorities and small- and medium-sized enterprises, on both sides of the Atlantic, we will create a new zone of security and prosperity in Africa.

“I strongly encourage my colleagues to expand their commitment to expand trade and investment, spur economic growth and create job opportunities for both the African and American workers.”

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