The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)

CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK

Signing Ceremony

Cooperation Agreement with the Ministry of Employment and Labor of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Opening Remarks
by
Fred O. Oladeinde

President, The Foundation for Democracy in Africa (FDA), and Chair, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Civil Society Organization (CSO) Network

Your Excellency Minister Massamba Wa Massamba Ferdinand, Minister of Employment and Labor of the Democratic Republic of Congo, distinguished guests, government and private sector partners, civil society representatives, Reverend Doctor Millenge Mwenelwata, Coordinator and Secretary General of SEC, development partners, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to welcome you to this signing ceremony, where we formalize a cooperation agreement to support poverty reduction through stronger public-private partnerships. This agreement mobilizes resources and expertise while upholding the Democratic Republic **of Congo's employment and labor policy**, as set out in the national Labor Code and related protections.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank senior officials from the relevant Congolese ministries, corporate leaders, community representatives, and the technical teams, including the Secretary-General for Employment and Labor and the National Coordinator of the PAO, for their diligence in shaping this agreement. Your presence reflects our shared commitment to

inclusive economic growth and strong labor standards that protect workers and promote decent employment.

About FDA

The Foundation for Democracy in Africa (FDA) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1994 to promote participatory democracy, economic growth, and sustainable development in Africa. The FDA delivers culturally grounded programs that strengthen democratic principles, expand economic opportunities, and support the integration of emerging African nations into the global economy.

In 2003, civil society delegates from the U.S. and Africa established the AGOA Civil Society Organization (CSO) Network to support the effective implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. With the FDA serving as the Secretariat, the Network has mobilized stakeholders, shaped policy discussions, and achieved key milestones, including influencing AGOA reforms and supporting its reauthorization.

The FDA has worked in over thirty African countries and has completed successful projects on other continents. Our team delivers capacity-building, technical assistance, and resource marshaling to strengthen democracy, governance, and the rule of law. We also support job creation, worker rights, and the advancement of trade and investment.

Purpose and Policy Context

This Cooperation Agreement establishes a strategic partnership among the Ministry of Employment and Labor of the DRC, which will lead national policy alignment and monitoring; The Foundation for Democracy in Africa, through the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network, which will support international resource mobilization and capacity building; and the Christian Mutual Aid Union, which will engage local communities and oversee implementation. Together, these partners will mobilize resources at national and global levels to jointly develop and implement the Strategic Plan for the National Program to Support Public and Private Organizations for the Promotion of Employment and Resource Mobilization for Poverty Reduction.

The partnership will prioritize **clear contracts, non-discrimination, safe working conditions, and respect for worker rights**, including social dialogue and collective representation where appropriate. Upholding these principles is essential to ensuring that private sector involvement maintains and advances the highest labor standards.

Principles and Alignment

To align with national employment policy, we commit to the following principles:

- **Legal compliance:** All projects will comply with the DRC Labour Code and applicable regulations.[1]
- **Decent work and inclusion:** Interventions will create **sustainable, formal employment opportunities**, with a focus on women, youth, and marginalized groups.[2]
- **Social dialogue and local participation:** Project design and implementation will engage workers, unions, and community stakeholders to ensure legitimacy and responsiveness. [3]
- **Transparency and safeguards**: Procurement, contracting, and grievance mechanisms will be open and accessible to protect worker rights and public trust.

These principles will be integrated into project contracts, monitoring frameworks, and capacity-building activities to ensure **job creation aligns with labor protection**.

Monitoring, Accountability, and Call to Action.

We will measure success by **jobs created, increased incomes, and improved working conditions**, and will publish regular, verifiable reports on these outcomes. Implementation requires sustained commitment. Public authorities must ensure consistent regulatory oversight, private partners must uphold high standards of corporate responsibility, and civil society must hold all parties accountable.

By signing this agreement, we pledge to align our efforts with the DRC's labor and employment policy, protect workers, and deliver lasting reductions in poverty through responsible public-private collaboration.

Thank you.

References (3)

1. *DRC Labour Code 2002 English - Askari*. https://askariinsure.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DRC-LABOUR-CODE-2002-ENGLISH.pdf
2. *Employee Rights and Employer Obligations in the Democratic Republic of ….* https://generisonline.com/employee-rights-and-employer-obligations-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/
3. *Employment 2025 - DRC | Global Practice Guides | Chambers and Partners*. https://practiceguides.chambers.com/practice-guides/employment-2025/drc