



Women- Economic Freedom --Inclusive Development Citizens Engagement and Democracy.

Remarks By: Fred O. Oladeinde, President, the Foundation for Democracy in Africa (FDA)
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PROTOCOLS

Let me begin, by bringing warm greeting on behalf of the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Dr. Gershwin Blyden, the staff and members of The Foundation for Democracy in Africa, and the staff and members of the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network. They (my chairman, staff and members) are delighted to have me address the 8th International Congress of African Women under the High Patronage of H.E. President Alpha Conde President of the Republic of Guinea, and Chairman of the African Union. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to stand before you, today, in Conakry, as a pro-democracy, pro- free market activist, and to connect the dots between Women Economic Freedom—Inclusive Development and Democracy.

Our sincere gratitude goes to Madam Patricia Secke, President of the Africa Femmes Perforantes, and Advisory Board Member of the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network, her staff, and members for inviting me to speak during this important Summit, and providing me with the opportunity to underscore the importance of Economic Freedom in achieving Inclusive Development and Citizens Engagement in a Democracy, particularly for women.

The mission of The Foundation is to implement the principles of culturally based democratic government within the African society, bringing the countries of Africa into the mainstream of the global economy through free enterprise, thus cultivating the pathway for peace and prosperity from resulting economic opportunities

Our objectives as a group have never been as crucial as they are today. The Foundation was founded in 1994 as a post-cold war civil society institution with the intent to vertically integrate culturally based programs aimed at strengthening and enhancing the fundamental principles of democracy, freedom, and economic plurality in Africa, and integrating African economies into the mainstream of the global economy

Mr. President, Your Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, by 2060, Africa's population is projected to reach 2.8 billion, from the current 1.26 billion; today, sixty percent of the population is below the age of 35, and Africa's middle class is growing. Currently sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing an expansion in small and medium enterprise development. Today MSMEs with the strong participation of women create approximately 80% of the regions' employment and MSMEs are establishing a new middle class and fueling, demand for new goods and services.

However, African MSMEs face a number of supply chain constraints, logistical and governance issues, lack of access to financing, and other barriers that limit their

competitiveness locally, and regionally as well as, their export competitiveness to the United States.

In July 2016, U.S. Congress re authorized AGOA benefits, the preferential treatment of apparel articles, and the third-country fabric program duty free treatment of apparel articles through 2025, under the Trade Preferences Extension Act (TPEA). This amendment to AGOA improves the rules of origin and encourages regional integration; requires out of cycle reviews for transparency and accountability and requires the President of the United States to provide sixty days advance notice to withdraw, suspend, or limit the duty-free treatment of eligible countries. These changes clearly provide the predictability and sustainability required for expansion of US-Africa trade and economic cooperation, and encouraging Americans to trade more and invest more in Africa. It is therefore in our mutual interest, Mr. President, as the Founding Father of Guinean Democracy and the Leader of African Union; which is dedicated to the economic, social, and political uplifting of African people both at home and abroad, to collaborate on national and regional initiatives, with our Foundation, the Africa Femmes Performantes and other members of the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network to tackle the problems and challenges we confront in the area of economic growth; development, regional integration and cooperation and put an end to the current illegal and unsafe migration of African youth, our sons and daughters to go through in humane and terrible conditions in search of jobs that we can create here in Africa through expansion of the private sector and AGOA can assist.

Mr. President, Your Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me, for the sake of emphasis, to outline some of the specific objectives of the Foundation, and other events that underscore that there is no better time than now to take advantage of what AGOA has to offer.

1) The AGOA Civil Society Organization (CSO) Network Secretariat, was established in January 17, 2003 at the end of the AGOA Civil Society Forum in Phoenix, Mauritius with AGOA eligible countries and the Government of the United States for the purpose of organizing the Civil Society Session of the Annual US-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum (also known as the AGOA Forum), and ensuring that the voices of women, youth and labor are forcefully and clearly heard during the Secretariat's official readout and presentation to the Ministerial Session of the AGOA Forum. The AGOA CSO Network, is an initiative of The Foundation

2) Promote close consultation with Network members across eligible AGOA countries on eligibility compliance; the impact of AGOA, specifically, and trade in general, good governance, transparency, legislative and policy reforms in AGOA eligible countries to support AGOA implantation, and provide technical assistance, and capacity building through training workshops, conferences, and one on one consultations

3) Create demand for micro, small and medium enterprises products in the United States and other lucrative markets in the Western Hemisphere by providing distribution support for export ready MSMEs from AGOA eligible countries, through our Africa Trade Development Center (ATDC).

Since the AGOA Forum in August 2017, in Lomé, Togo, we have seen an increase in optimism in the region regarding AGOA, as a result of Ambassador Robert Lighthizer's, U.S. Trade Representative, and address to the AGOA Ministerial Forum.

The 19th US Africa Trade and Investment Conference and Trade Show, AfrICANDO 2017, in Miami, Florida, during which, Nigerian, Kenya, Cameroon and Ghanaian and seven Guinean businesses were selected during a competition to utilize the services of the Africa Trade Development Center and our partners and affiliates to export under AGOA

The recent visit by the African Union Commission Chairman H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat with Foreign Ministers from across Africa with the U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to discuss US-Africa Policy under the Trump administration.

These crucial opportunities for engagement and consultations, Mr. President need to be leveraged under your leadership as the President of Guinea, and Chairman of the African Union and can only result in economic, social, and political upliftment for the people of Guinea, all Africans, at home and abroad, and for the American people.

In this regard, we commend the President of the Republic of Togo, and Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States, H.E. President Faure Gnassingbé, and the people of Togo for the successful and impressive organization of the 16th AGOA Forum in Lomé.

We congratulate the African Union Commission, Chairman H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat for the organization of recent US-Africa bi-lateral Summit in Washington , DC, USA.

Mr. President in your capacity as the President of the Republic of Guinea, we request that the government the Republic of Guinea adopt for implementation the Communiqué and recommendations as presented by AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Secretariat to the AGOA Ministerial Forum on August 9, 2017 in Lome, Togo, and that the government of Guinea work closely with the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Secretariat in its full implementation in Guinea.

Mr. President, in your capacity as the Chairman of the African Union, we request that the African Union Commission adopt for implementation the Communiqué and Recommendations as presented by the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Secretariat to the Ministerial Session of the AGOA Forum on August 9, 2017 in Lomé Togo. And that the African Union Commission work closely with the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Secretariat for its implementation throughout Africa.

Mr. President, Your Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, since arriving in Conakry, I have visited with women entrepreneurs that were selected during AfrICANDO 2017 in Miami to use our Africa Trade Development Center platform to expand Guinean exports under AGOA and (May I ask the distinguished women entrepreneurs rise to be recognized?),

Mr. President, the commitment and enthusiasm expressed by our Guinean colleagues and partners clearly reflects the fact that Guinea is ready for business.

Once again, Mr. President, I thank you for supporting the 8th International Congress of African Women, Thanks to the Africa Femmes Performantes for inviting me, and to AWEP, members, the people of Guinea for the hospitality and generosity I enjoyed during this

visit. May God Bless The Republic of Guinea, May God Bless Africa and May God Bless the United States of America.

Thank you very much.