

# Furthering Commitment to Africa: The US-Africa Leaders Summit in Review

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### Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Good morning. Let me start by thanking our hosts here at Chatham House. We had to postpone our event once before, so I'm delighted we could arrange this opportunity. I was scheduled to visit London earlier this summer for the trilateral talks that will happen now later this afternoon. If we had gotten together at that moment, I would have been perhaps a bit nervous as we looked ahead to first-ever US-Africa Leaders Summit. The logistical challenges of such a large event with 50 heads of state and some 3000 delegates were daunting. But thankfully, it is September and I can look back a month later on a very successful summit. Today I would like to share a bit about what took place during the summit and give you some more detail on how we are moving forward on the initiatives that were developed there. I have just come from a few days in Nigeria and Cameroon, so I do want to talk briefly about regional security in West Africa. In both places, I met with some of the Mandela Washington Fellows, who are part of the President's Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), and that summit was hosted a week before the African Leaders summit, and also went extraordinarily well.

The African Leaders Summit was a truly tremendous event that surpassed all our expectations. This summit reflected the reality that even as Africa continues to face great challenges we are also seeing the emergence of a new, more prosperous Africa that is being led by Africans. We announced \$33 billion in commitments for new trade and investment from US companies and another \$4 billion for Africa's development, including maternal and child health, and the delivery of vaccines and drugs. But more importantly, this summit reflected the new model for our partnership with Africa. At its core, the purpose of the summit was to honor this partnership, one that focuses on African capacity to solve problems and on Africa's capacity to grow. The feedback following the summit has been overwhelmingly positive. I've heard from my ambassadors in the field, from our conversations with the African diplomatic corps in Washington, and the many leaders who reached out directly about how pleased they were with their time in the United States. They described the summit as unique and particularly highlighted the unusual opportunities to engage with the American private sector. In organizing this summit, we asked our partners to take a leap of faith with us on the format. At President Obama's specific instruction, this was not designed to be a traditional summit. I can tell you African leaders were sceptical, especially when we said there would be no official speeches during the leaders sessions. But afterwards, so many of our partners have told us that they got it. They understood why we wanted this summit to be different. They could see what we gained by focusing on having a real conversation, even about very difficult topics. For me, sitting in the background observing the give and take between President Obama and African leaders, discussing issues of mutual concern to all, was phenomenal.

Many leaders told me directly how impressed they were with the business forum and the mobilization of US business representative in support of increasing trade and investment ties. As anyone who deals with the corporate sector knows, executives don't show up simply because we extended the invitation. They attended because they saw the value in doing so. Their companies want to be more present and more invested in Africa. Most of the top ten fastest growing economies are in Africa. It is home to a burgeoning middle class, with an appetite for US products. There is opportunity for job creation in the United States as Africa grows, and these CEOs recognize that. As part of that \$33 billion I mentioned, President Obama announced \$7 billion in new financing to promote US exports to and investments in Africa under the Doing Business in Africa (DBIA) campaign. The Department of Commerce is responsible for this program, which is designed to connect American businesses with African partners, support American investment in Africa, and expand access to financing options for American businesses that want to export to Africa. The program is also about reducing barriers to trade and investment within Africa. We made it very clear to our African counterparts that they also have to do their part in encouraging investment in Africa. They have to make it a little easier to do business on the continent and deal with issues of corruption and transparency. As I told both the Cameroonian president and my Nigerian colleagues, the only people who have gone for jail in Nigeria for corruption are Americans. We hold American companies accountable for what they do on the continent, and for that reason we want a level playing field for

American companies. They cannot pay the bribes, they cannot build the roads in front of ministers' houses, they cannot send the ministers' children to school. If they do that we will hold them accountable. Underpinning this business development and growth must be expanded access to electricity. That is why the president announced a new level of \$300 million in assistance per year to expand the reach of Power Africa across the continent. The new goal is to power at least 60 million household and business connections. With \$6 billion in new private sector commitments, the total commitments under Power Africa are now more than \$20 billion.

On the first day of the summit, we held the civil society forum as one of the signature events organized to drill down into issues of specific interest. Not only did Secretary Kerry host, but Vice President Biden spoke to the audience, and both President Kikwete and President Mahama were participants in the panel. It shows how important the role of civil society is in the United States and why we work so hard to preserve that space. Secretary Kerry noted that with the complexity of the world today, we need the expertise and creative thinking that comes from the civil society to address these issues. In addition, it is worth noting, there were more than 80 side meetings that took place on the side lines. These events were inspired by our Summit and then organized directly by interested parties without any assistance from the US government – from NGOs, corporations, think tanks and universities. So African leaders were not just engaging with the government, but they were meeting with representatives from all across American society.

The leaders sessions, which took place on the final day of the summit, were focused on topics you would expect to find at a high-level dialogue. But instead of your traditional plenaries and country statements, President Obama led round-table, off the record discussions with his counterparts on three subject areas: investing in the future; peace and regional stability; and governing for the next generation. These sessions brought into focus the fact that Africa's prosperity depends on the efforts made to protect and promote its greatest resource –its people. Whether it is economic opportunity created through trade and investment, democratic reforms that combat corruption, providing space for civil society and ensuring human rights protection for all citizens, or regional security to ends the corrosion caused by terrorist groups – these efforts must be undertaken with the best interests of citizens at the forefront. During the session on good governance, the president stressed the importance of rule of law and accountability. He stressed how critical it is to support strong civil societies and the protection of human rights for all citizens and communities. Nations that uphold these rights and principles will ultimately be more prosperous and more economically successful, as individual citizens can reach their full potential. Part of that session focused on corruption, on this cancer that infects so many African economies. The leaders decided they wanted to convene experts and put together an action plan to promote transparency – the transparency that is absolutely critical for sustainable, inclusive economic growth.

At the summit, the president announced the Security Governance Initiative (SGI), a new joint endeavor between the United States and six African partners to offer a comprehensive approach to improving security sector governance capacity. I will get further into SGI in a moment. We also announced the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (APRRP), a new investment of \$110 million per year for 3-5 years to build the capacity of African militaries to rapidly deploy peacekeepers in response to emerging conflict, a concept that holds powerful life-saving potential.

Last week, I was in Nigeria for regional and bilateral talks on security issues, specifically on the threat posed by Boko Haram. Certainly this has been an ongoing concern for quite some time, even before the world's attention was captured by the brutal kidnapping of hundreds of young women and girls from Chibok. But sadly these are not the only victims of Boko Haram's brutality and terrorism. Recent events in Borno State are evidence of this. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled their homes, some into Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. We recognize, and Nigeria's neighbors know all too well, that Boko Haram is a regional problem. But Nigeria must be in the lead on any solution. It is the responsibility of the Nigerian government to do everything in their power to protect innocent civilians threatened by Boko Haram. The

United States is committed to supporting Nigeria as they address this threat, and we will continue to do so. However, they must take a comprehensive approach that brings both civilian and security tools to the fight.

As it shares a lengthy border with Nigeria including along Borno state, Cameroon is also extremely concerned about a stronger, more brazen, and more brutal Boko Haram. Following my visit to Nigeria, I traveled to Yaounde to discuss regional mechanism to counter the threat. Cameroon has already experienced violent attacks from these individuals. Boko Haram attacked and killed everyone at a Cameroonian police station. They kidnapped the wife of Cameroon's vice prime minister and killed members of his family. Plus, Cameroon is already experiencing an influx of refugees gravely concerned for the situation in Nigeria and the affect on its own northern region. While in Yaounde, I met with the foreign minister, the defense minister, and the president himself. We talked about ways to build regional cooperation capacity. I expect this will be high on the agenda for this afternoon's P3 meeting.

One of the ways we will help our partners in the region is through the Security Governance Initiative, which I mentioned was announced last month at the summit. This initiative emerged from conversations with our partners asking the United States to pursue more systematic support to security sector assistance. So we developed SGI as a multi-year effort to improve security sector governance for partner countries to more effectively address security challenges and create an environment conducive to economic growth and development. SGI will support the development of institutions, systems and processes to increase accountability and improve security and justice through transparent and responsive governance. SGI is not about tactical level training and equipping, although those types of programs will inform what we do. In the first year of SGI, our partners will be Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Tunisia. We anticipate that additional partners will be admitted in the future. An important component of SGI will be engagement plans. These plans will be conducted in consultation with each of the partner countries in order to determine joint priorities and goals. The purpose of these engagements plans is to bring in a broad range of stake-holders, including government leadership, parliament, the judiciary, civil society organizations, the media, women's groups, and representatives of marginalized populations. Over the long term, this model for inclusive engagement will lead to more effective and efficient delivery of security to all citizens.

Before I move on to my final topic, I must mention another threat to citizen security in Africa – Ebola. I stopped in Lagos on Friday morning to thank the individuals working at Ebola Operations Centre. We have representatives from the US Center for Disease Control as part of the Nigerian team. These health professionals are doing amazing work to contain the outbreak in Nigeria. With the exception of one individual who broke the quarantine and spread the disease to Port Harcourt, Nigeria's efforts are working. I urged the Nigerian minister of health, and the Cameroonian government, to do absolutely everything they can to help their neighbours in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, particularly in Liberia where the devastation has been unimaginable. The health infrastructure in those three countries has almost completely collapsed and we have to work to contain this. This is not about bringing in ZMapp or other medicines that may be developed in the future. It is about making sure that we contain the outbreak and end it. It can be done and it has been done before. We see this as a national security imperative for Africa, and particularly West Africa. We are not worried about Ebola spreading to the United States - we have a strong health infrastructure that can respond quickly. What we are worried about is the devastation that this disease will have on Africa.

During my visits both Nigeria and Cameroon, I have had the great pleasure to meet with some of our participants from the Mandela Washington Fellowship program, which is the signature program in President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative or YALI. I hope you are all familiar with YALI and the Mandela Washington Fellowship, but for those of you who are not, let me just tell you a little bit about this program. Out of 50,000 applications, 500 incredible young Africans were selected for six-week academic and leadership training program in one of three tracks: civic leadership, public management,

and business and entrepreneurship. After their six-week training, the Mandela Washington fellows all came to Washington to meet with President Obama. The president is incredibly supportive of this program. The fellows also got to meet with the first lady, the secretary of state, the national security advisor, and many others.

It was interesting that the initial response on the continent was some doubt and suspicion about what the US government was doing with young people. Were we bringing young people so we can train them to take over political leadership in the future? That is farthest from our mind. These young people already have leadership skills beyond anything that we could have done for them. YALI provided a tool to help them refine their leadership skills, to give them support for moving forward on their entrepreneurial ideas, on how to help them build their capacities to support civic education and community organisation and how to make them better public servants in their countries. Will one of these people eventually become a political leader on the continent? Probably. When we look at African leaders of the past, many of them showed leadership skills when they were young. But that's not the goal of YALI. The goal of YALI is to give young people hope, to give them a helping hand as they move forward on their programmes, and to help them in opportunities for networking.

This summer's program is only the beginning of our investment. Now back home, the Washington fellows will have opportunities for networking, on going professional development, and dedicated funding opportunities from the State Department, USAID, and private organizations. Building from the incredible interest in this program, we also created the YALI Network, to provide virtual resources and vibrant physical spaces to equip young African leaders with the skills and connections they need to improve their communities and their countries. During their town hall, the president announced his intention to expand the Mandela Washington Fellowship to 1000 fellows by 2016. But more important than these young people coming to the United States, will be activities that they will be involved in in their countries – the networking they will do, the regional centres we hope to develop so that they have a place to go and provide education opportunities through the internet. We are creating YALI as a tool to serve these leaders and you, and I know they are using this tool already in extraordinary ways.

Coming back full circle to the US-Africa Leaders Summit, the theme we selected for the summit was 'Investing in the next generation.' I can think of no better investment than these young people – they are Africa's greatest resource and we must do everything we can to support them.

So on that note, I want to thank you for your attention here today. I look forward to transitioning now to our question and answer session. Thank you.