



16thUnited State -Sub Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation

(AGOA) Forum

Lomé, 8 – 10 August 2017

African Trade Union Statement

From 8 to 10 August 2017, Togo is hosting the 16th annual U.S.-sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum, commonly known as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum. The purpose of this law is to support the economies of African countries by facilitating access to the American market if they follow the principles of the liberal economy. Adopted in 2010 for eight years, the law has undergone modifications and was renewed until 2025. AGOA plans to create significant opportunities for eligible countries and fundamentally change the structure of economies beneficiaries. The record of implementation of this law appears to be mixed. Indeed, all the countries that are admitted do not seem to have taken advantage of the opportunities of the AGOA even if, overall, African exports to the United States have increased.

The 16th Forum under the theme "The United States and Africa: Partnership for prosperity through trade" will explore opportunities for African countries to maximize in the current context of economic and social change. Trade unions would like this partnership to recognize the important role played by African workers, trade unions and civil society in the development of trade, the promotion of inclusive and sustainable growth, social progress including other fundamental goals such as poverty eradication, combating of corruption as well as the promotion of human rights, political freedoms and democratic governance.

We are of the view that trade and investment strategies should promote industrialization and structural transformation of African economies in ways that advance decent work. Thus AGOA offers an opportunity for African countries to address the decent work deficit, especially for women, youth and migrant workers as well as reduce poverty and inequalities. But this requires that the trade relations between Africa and US are deepened in a manner that allows Africa to grow their industries to produce value added goods that are able to find a niche in the highly competitive US market. In this regard trade facilitation needs to be an integral component of AGOA. Regional economic integration as espoused by the African Union (AU) and its Regional Economic Communities (REC's) should be prioritized to ensure the growth of African economies of scale and facilitate production and consumption throughout the region as well as supply the US market. The development of local and regional value chains to substitute imports and to ensure strong linkages between various sectors of the economy is paramount.

To that effect, in regard to the implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, we recommend:

Human and Trade Union Rights

- Strict adherence to **international labour standards, respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law** should be integral performance benchmarks without exception to all AGOA investments and business practice;

Social Dialogue

- Engagement and active participation involving all social partners and key stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of AGOA Utilization Strategies in permanent and structured national and regional multi-stakeholder platforms;

Information

- Access to information should be to a central principle of AGOA in order to enhance transparency and accountability. To this effect it should be the responsibility of both the US and its African partners to put AGOA information in particular its implementation and performance in the public domain and in medium that citizens understand.

Corruption and Illicit Financials Flows

- It must be an agreed principle to have a zero tolerance to corruption in all AGOA investments and business practice. In the same spirit illicit financial flows must not find a foothold in AGOA. US need to support its African partners strengthen institutions of governance in particular Anti-Corruption Bureaus. Curbing illicit financial flows will help African economies to address supply side issues of governance such as social protection provision, infrastructure development and better industrial capacity utilisation ambience. These will combine to aid and accelerate entrepreneurial capacity improvement and participation. Thus, the US government as a partner to AGOA has roles to play to assist in the defeat of IFFs.

Capacity Building

- That capacity building programs related to AGOA Utilization Strategies go beyond the narrow trade facilitation approach which limits itself to trade authorities, institutions and entrepreneurs, to include capacity building for other stakeholders such as trade unions and civil society as well as ministries responsible for labour and employment labour for knowledge and effective engagement. It is important to involve all labour market actors with the aim of building labour market institutions and systems which enable workers to access and benefit from the potential economic gains from trade as a result of AGOA.

Further, in regard to trade policies designed to deepen the U.S. trade relationship with Africa, we recommend:

- Making certain that future trade policies offer opportunities to promote the aspirations of Africans as articulated in the African Union Agenda 2063 of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena “ and the others and sectoral and cross-cutting continent-wide frameworks as: the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP); the African Mining Vision (AMV); the decision to fast-track the establishment of Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA); and the Report of the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa (adopted by African Heads of State).
- Fostering policies that support the growth and development of the local private sector, productive activities such as manufacturing and value added agriculture, the creation of decent jobs, and encourage the formalization of the informal economy in line with the International Labour Organization’s Recommendation 204 and Sustainable Development Goal Eight of the 2030 Agenda;

The overriding outcomes that AGOA and a deeper African-U.S. trade relationship ought to foster should be sustainable and inclusive economic growth, tied to strict legal provisions that ensure workers share in the wealth they help create, their fundamental rights are respected and all people have the chance to enjoy a dignified life.

Prepared by:

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