

United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Chairman Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for the hearing on the
Report of the Commission for Africa
May 17, 2005

The Committee on Foreign Relations meets today to review the report of the Commission for Africa issued on March 11 in preparation for the July G-8 Summit at Gleneagles, Scotland. The Commission for Africa was established by Prime Minister Tony Blair to review international policy towards Africa. Prime Minister Blair has stated his intention to make Africa policy a priority of the G-8 during the United Kingdom's Presidency in 2005.

The G-8 already has taken steps to examine international policies related to Africa. The Africa Action Plan was introduced at the Kananaskis Summit in 2002 and adopted at the Evian Summit in 2003. President Bush hosted the G-8 Summit at Sea Island, Georgia, in 2004, where the plan was augmented by the Global Peace Operations Initiative to train peacekeepers. For 2005, Prime Minister Blair has chosen to elevate Africa issues to the top of the agenda at the Gleneagles Summit. The report of the Commission for Africa echoes the Prime Minister's contention that now is the time for the international community to respond to the challenges of Africa with a concerted and coherent program.

Today, we intend to consider the varied recommendations of the Commission. The report is an ambitious blueprint for harnessing the efforts of the G-8 and other nations on behalf of African development and reform. It recognizes that African governments must be partners for change within their own countries and within regional organizations. It is significant that of the 17 members of the Commission, nine come from Africa. There has been considerable effort to include in the report the input of African civil society, as well as the private sector.

I met last week with Nobel Laureate Ms. Wangari Maathai of Kenya, whose tree planting campaign has contributed greatly to the reforestation of Kenya. Her individual initiative not only has been an environmental triumph, it has provided resources for the basic needs of women and children, because trees are essential to shelter, fuel, and water conservation. She and other individuals can have profound impact on Africa's future, but must be enabled through good governance that facilitates citizen participation.

I have been encouraged recently by the growing interest in Africa in the United States. Our nation sees more clearly in the post-September 11 world how our own well-being is connected to progress on the African continent. Americans are coming to understand that a stable and prosperous Africa can better cooperate on a range of shared concerns, from weapons proliferation and terrorism, to environmental challenges and contagious diseases.

These changing attitudes have bolstered the work of those in Congress who regard Africa as a priority for action. During the last several years we have been able to put in place the building blocks for a sustained American engagement in Africa that can complement international efforts.

Last June, Congress passed a bill that I had introduced to extend the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. Thanks to AGOA, which has exempted 1,800 African products from U.S. tariffs, the African textile industry now employs tens of thousands of workers. Moreover, non-oil trade between the U.S. and Africa is expanding significantly.

In 2003, Congress passed legislation creating the President's Millennium Challenge Corporation. This bold new approach to aid will funnel extra assistance to developing countries that are making improvements in economic reform, promotion of the rule of law, and anti-corruption measures.

Eight African countries are among the first 17 candidates declared eligible for MCC funding, which builds on a key lesson of AGOA -- namely, that private investment will flow to countries that create a stable, predictable investment climate.

In 2003, Congress also pledged \$15 billion over five years for the most serious crisis facing Africa, the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In support of this initiative, I have introduced additional legislation to address Africa's AIDS-orphan crisis and a resolution backing global cooperation on an HIV vaccine.

More work needs to be done to provide incentives for private investment in Africa, to ensure that the revenues from Africa's oil boom will go to all of its citizens, and to relieve Africa's international debt burden. We also need to promote agricultural development. Wealthy countries must modify their own farm subsidies, so that Africans can both feed themselves and compete in a fair world market for exports.

The legislation Congress has enacted and the proposals underway have the potential to form the type of sustainable, comprehensive program that we have previously lacked. But enactment of a legislative framework for Africa is not an end in itself. Initiatives must be carefully managed to ensure that they work well and enjoy strong support. They also must be coordinated with broader international efforts like the forthcoming discussions of the G-8.

Today, we are joined by three distinguished witnesses to discuss the Commission's report entitled - *Our Common Interest*. It is a great pleasure to welcome our close friend and former Foreign Relations Committee colleague, Senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker. She served with distinction for many years as the Chair and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on African Affairs. She brings extraordinary experience, understanding, and compassion to the challenges facing Africa. We are also joined by her colleague on the Commission, Mr. Tidjane Thiam from the Ivory Coast, who has served at the World Bank and as his country's Minister of Planning and Development. Our third panelist is the President of the Center for Global Development, Ms. Nancy Birdsall, whose insight and experience in development will lend an important perspective to our discussion.

We welcome our distinguished guests and thank them for joining us in this discussion. We look forward to hearing their insights on the Commission's report.

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