

Statement of Constance Berry Newman
Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs) – Nominee
Before the
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
April 28, 2004

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today. I am grateful to President Bush and Secretary of State Powell for nominating me to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with Congress and particularly with this Committee on the matters relating to sub-Saharan Africa.

I would like to make the following four points: (1) Sub-Saharan Africa is important to the United States; (2) There is good news and there are challenges associated with sub-Saharan Africa; (3) The policies and actions of the United States Government have in the past and can in the future have a positive impact on sub-Saharan Africa; and (4) I am seeking confirmation because my interest in Africa, my experience, and my support for this Administration's Africa-related policies could result in my adding value to our Nation's efforts related to Africa.

(1) Sub-Saharan Africa is important to the United States

Let me begin by quoting Secretary of State Powell who on many occasions has spoken of the importance of Africa to the United States. In June 2003 at a Corporate Council on Africa Business Summit he said:

Africa matters. Africa is a continent of boundless potential, and we will continue to do everything in our power to help Americans realize that potential, to help Africans realize that potential, and together create a more hopeful future.

The United States has a responsibility and opportunity to help ensure that sub-Saharan Africa improves the lives of the people on the continent. This is important because a basic American value is to help people of the world have a better life. This is also true because the countries of sub-Saharan Africa are important to the interests of United States. Let me suggest three ways.

- Many sub-Saharan African countries are major players in the world affairs policy arena such as the United Nations General Assembly. The United States, then, should look to partner with Africa nations on key policy issues.
- Sub-Saharan Africa nations are participants in the efforts to ensure peace and security around the world, particularly in the counter-terrorism fight.
- Sub-Saharan Africa is a potential growth area for United States trade and investment. There are the rich natural resources of the continent and the extraordinary human resource potential that can make Africa one of our most valuable trading partners.

(2) There is Good News and There are Challenges Associated with Sub-Saharan Africa

The Good News of Africa

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an initiative steered by African leaders signals a fresh and promising approach to addressing the challenges on the continent. This is because many African leaders have a common vision that it is their duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development, and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politic.

This Administration supports the NEPAD principles. At the 2002 Summit in Kananaskis President Bush noted that NEPAD was a dynamic, hopeful program adopted by Africa's leaders to spur the region's economic and political revival. The White House statement noted that NEPAD's foundation is a commitment to consolidate democracy and sound economic management, promote peace and security, and boost investment in people. It reflects an understanding that Africans must determine Africa's future, and Africa's leaders must hold themselves and each other accountable for their actions.

The overall trend in Africa toward building freer democratic societies and transparent accountable governments remains positive, and despite constant challenges and numerous setbacks, Africans increasingly advocate for political rights and civil liberties. The Freedom House 2003 report noted that:

In 1972, there were 2 Free countries in sub-Saharan Africa, while 9 were Partly Free, and 28 were Not Free. Today, 11 countries are Free, 21 are Partly Free, and 16 are Not Free. Africa has seen progress in terms of the decline in the number of Not Free countries. The region has seen enormous political dynamism and significant instability, with steps forward in some countries often followed by reversals. Nevertheless, the general trend for freedom in sub-Saharan Africa has been positive over the last thirty years.

Democracy is emerging in countries like Kenya and consolidating in Ghana, Senegal, and South Africa. Botswana still stands as the best example of what is possible when democratic practices are strong. Free market reforms are delivering real benefits to people in places like Ghana, Uganda, Senegal and Mali, among others.

AGOA continues to bolster the U.S.-sub-Saharan African trade and investment relationship. Total trade between the United States and the region was nearly \$24 billion in 2002, with U.S. exports of \$6 billion and U.S. imports of \$18 billion. U.S. imports under AGOA were valued at \$9 billion in 2002, a 10 percent increase from 2001. The U.S. direct investment position in sub-Saharan Africa increased 5.8 percent at year-end 2001, to \$10.2 billion.

There is good news on the education front: In Botswana, for example, before independence no more than 10 percent of the population had achieved basic literacy. Today the youth literacy rate stands at about 90 percent. Also, that country devotes 25 percent of its budget to education and training. In Malawi, primary school enrollment has reached 3.3 million, a dramatic jump from just 1.5 million in 1964.

Sub-Saharan countries are working to protect the environment and preserve the extraordinary natural resources. There are interesting examples of people in the villages of Guinea and

Namibia co-managing the forests with the national government leading to the preservation of the forests.

Countries are now beginning to concentrate on the important role women play in every aspect of society. The global commitment to tap into the full capabilities of Africa's human resource is paying off. The number of African women entrepreneurs as well as elected and appointed officers is on the rise. There has been a major increase in the number of women elected to parliament in sub-Saharan Africa. Lesotho and South Africa now are over 30 % women in parliament compared to 24% and 17% in 1997. This understanding has led to more emphasis on girl's education.

Not all countries in Africa are being decimated by HIV AIDS. Countries such as Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Benin, and Mauritius have 3 percent or less of their adult population (age 15 to 49) infected by the HIV/AIDS virus. Also what is most encouraging is that through strong and creative leadership and support of the three-pronged approach –abstinence, be faithful and correct condom use - Uganda is reported to have brought about a significant decline in the incidence of HIV/AIDS from 18% in 1990 to 6% in 2002.

The Challenges of Africa

There are, however, serious problems on the continent – some of the problems have come totally by fate, such as the 1984 drought in East Africa where over 300,000 died and over 7 million people were affected.

Some of the problems are totally man-made such as corruption. Other problems are mean-spirited violent conflicts leading to the death and disruption of millions of people as in northern Uganda, Sudan and the genocide ten years ago in Rwanda. Over one-third of sub-Saharan Africa's countries have experienced violent conflict in the past five years. Violent conflict in sub-Saharan Africa threatens the health and livelihoods of millions; threatens investments and advances in development; and requires costly humanitarian assistance. A working paper prepared for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2000 noted that while Africans constitute only 12 per cent of the global population, around 28 per cent of the world's refugees and just under 50 per cent of the world's internally displaced persons are to be found in Africa. The paper notes the reasons for these percentages are armed conflict, persecution, or violence.

Additional statistics covering mortality rates, illiteracy rates, and school enrollment levels tell more of the story of the desperate lives of many people on the continent of Africa. For example,

- Half the population lives on less than US \$1 per day.
- The mortality rate of children under 5 years of age is 140 per 1000, and life expectancy at birth is only 54 years. The female adult mortality rate is 383 out of 1,000.
- Malaria cases in Africa account for approximately 90% of malaria cases in the world.
- Only 58 per cent of the population has access to safe water.
- The rate of illiteracy for people over 15 is 41 percent. Adult illiteracy for females 15 and older is 49% in 1998, down from 72 percent in 1980.
- Immunization levels are declining in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and under-five mortality levels are increasing in a number of countries.
- More than one-third of Africa's children do not have access to schooling.

And then there is the pandemic of HIV/AIDS that is beyond labeling. It is estimated that, 29.4 million people are currently living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. That is two-thirds of HIV/AIDS cases reported globally. Over 13 million African children are already orphans as a consequence of HIV/AIDS. Also, HIV/AIDS will have a serious impact on the economic viability of many African countries with the erosion of their human resource base resulting in the loss, for example, of valuable teachers, health care workers, and agricultural workers.

Whatever the causes, caring and wise women and men of the world must participate in solving the problems of sub-Saharan Africa and participate in removing the despair and raising the standard of living of the children and their families in every part of the continent. This is even more compelling since September 11, which leads me to my third point.

(3) The policies and actions of the United States Government have in the past and can in the future have a positive impact on sub-Saharan Africa

The three pillars of the Bush African Policy are: 1) A strategic approach requiring engagement with key African anchor states, sub regional organizations, and the African Union; 2) Clear policy priorities to include combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic; advancing political and economic freedom; and promoting peace and regional stability; and 3) Furthering the principles of bilateral engagement to include good governance, economic reform, promotion of health and education, and the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act.

Among the actions taken and to be taken in this policy context are:

1. Working with African sub-regional organizations, the African Union and the United Nations to resolve conflict, both through bilateral assistance to African peacekeepers and through our support of international peacekeeping operations in Liberia, Congo, Ivory Coast and other countries.
2. Supporting the principles of the New Partnership for Africa Development, which mirror in many ways the principles of the Millennium Challenge Account - good governance, investing in people and developing sound economic policies that foster enterprise and entrepreneurship.
3. The successful funding of the first program activities under the \$15 billion Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.
4. Doubling the financial commitment to education, bringing total basic education spending in Africa to \$630 million over five years.
5. Building on the success of the African Growth and Opportunity Act with a commitment to its extension and funding trade capacity building programs
6. Targeting support for an Initiative to End Hunger in Africa that will focus on harnessing science and technology and increasing small-holder agricultural productivity. At the same time, continuing to provide emergency assistance to meet food crises on the continent.
7. Launching the Congo Basin Forest Partnership with pledges of \$53 million over four years to provide support for a network of national parks and protected areas, well-managed forestry concessions, and opportunities for the people to benefit their communities through conservation efforts.
8. Supporting the Pan-Sahel Initiative in Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania to assist them in detecting and responding to suspicious movement of people and goods across and within their borders through training, equipment and cooperation.

9. Training and equipping selected African militaries to carry out peace support and humanitarian relief operations under the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program.

4) Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Designee: Experience, Interest and Plans

My final topic is the question: Why should this Committee consider confirming me for the position? In order to help you answer that question I would like first to talk about my interests and experience. And finally I will talk about what I would hope to accomplish if confirmed.

For a very long period of time, I have had a strong interest in Africa and in pursuing the United States' interests in developing a partnership with Africa. In fact, I have been in an extensive and varied training program for this very position hoping for the opportunity to add value to the work of the extraordinary people at the United States Department of State.

The position that I held for the last two and half years under the leadership of Administrator Andrew Natsios was that of Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Africa, USAID. In that position I gained an understanding of the important role foreign assistance plays in foreign policy and in enhancing our national security. I have reinforced my belief that development will only be sustained with African leadership in the forefront - which is why NEPAD is so important. But the challenges of Africa can only be met with the support of the international organizations and other donor nations. My experience as President Bush's Personal Representative to the G8 has taught me that change will take place only with the coordinated approaches to development.

From 1987 to 1988, I lived and worked in Lesotho on a World Bank project for the Cooperative Housing Foundation. The objective of that project was to establish a housing corporation by merging two existing corporations. There I had borne out the theory that outsiders are only effective when they work with, and I emphasize "with" the people who know their country, know what is needed, and know the best approach to getting things accomplished. There, also, I had confirmed the fact that people are the same the world over – they want something better for their children; they want an adequate standard of living for themselves; they want fairness; and they want peace and freedom, including freedom from corruption and conflict. They want not to be discounted. They want hope. What is different from what we in the United States want? Not one thing.

Since my work in Lesotho, I had many other opportunities to work on issues affecting Africa. Among the most relevant were: advising members of the government of South Africa about civil service policies and helping on a country assessment of South Africa for the World Bank prior to Nelson Mandela becoming President. Also, I participated in the observance of two elections in Nigeria in February 1999.

In addition to my Africa-specific experiences, I have had extensive experience managing large/complex organizations as Director of the United States Office of Personnel Management; as an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; as Director of VISTA; and as the chief operating officer of the Smithsonian Institution.

My last points address the question: What would I want to accomplish if I were confirmed?

Let me begin by saying, that I believe that active engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa advances significant U.S. interests such as enhancing our capacity to fight terrorism and improving the

opportunity for trade and investment. Importantly, the United States has the will and capacity to contribute to ensuring a better quality of life for the people of Sub-Saharan Africa by investing in the development of the African countries, by assisting them in recovering from conflict, by assisting in the efforts to bring about enduring peace, by encouraging the establishment and maintenance of democracies. I would want to contribute to all of that. Specifically, I would want to:

1. Assist in carrying out the initiatives of the President and the Secretary of State such as the East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative designed to increase the regional counterterrorism capacity of Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Uganda, Tanzania and Eritrea; the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership
2. Build a new relationship/partnership with the countries of Africa in support of the principles of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. This will require understanding the expectations and plans of the African leadership with regard to carrying out their own objectives such as the establishment of an African Peer Review Mechanism and African efforts to ensure that electoral processes are credible and transparent, and that elections are conducted in a manner that is free and fair and in accordance with the NEPAD's commitment to uphold and respect "global standards of democracy." This will also mean forging new and effective relationships with nongovernmental organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders worldwide.
3. Support with Economic Support Funds implementation of peace agreements, reintegration of combatants into society, development of political pluralism and democracy, resolution of long-running and new conflicts, economic growth democratization, anti-crime and anti corruption efforts.
4. Assist the countries of Africa play an effective role in combating terrorism through cooperation in such key areas as modernization of the justice systems.
5. Support peacekeeping efforts and work with other USG departments, African regional organizations, and international partners to ensure that countries coming out of conflict stay out of conflict and are reconstructed. Those countries include: Angola, Burundi, DROC, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and hopefully Sudan.
6. Help in the resolution of conflict where it exists or could exist such as Somalia, Northern Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia.
7. Contribute to solving the Zimbabwe problem. Zimbabwe is an example of a nation where there is total lack of concern for the people. The deplorable situation in Zimbabwe requires concerted regional and global attention to ensure that the people of that once-productive and now economically crippled country have a voice in their government to bring about new and positive change.

My vision for Africa and Africa's relationship to the United States should not be and is not different from Africa's own. The African leadership speaks in its statement of NEPAD principles of forging a new international partnership that changes the unequal relationship between Africa and the developed world. The objectives of NEPAD and this changed relationship are: To eradicate poverty; To place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development; To

halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process and enhance its full and beneficial integration into the global economy; To accelerate the empowerment of women. If confirmed, I will make every effort to contribute to meeting those objectives. Because having them met is in the interest of the United States. If confirmed, my highest priority, then, will be to ensure that the United States' policies and interests are being advanced by the actions of the Department of State Bureau of African Affairs. This will require working closely with Congress and the relevant Departments and agencies of the United States Government.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee. I would be pleased to serve in this important position at this time. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary of State, I would work closely with Congress, the stakeholders in sub-Saharan Africa, other donors and potential donors, and people with an interest in Africa. I will commit to you that at all times my goal would be to advance the foreign policy objectives of the United States.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee I welcome your questions and comments.