

**Remarks by Secretary of Commerce Don Evans to  
AGOA Business Roundtable  
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[As prepared for delivery]

Thank you very much.

I'm delighted to see some familiar faces from the business community.

I believe this is the kind of partnership - between government and the private sector -- that will lead to growth and opportunity for the people of Africa.

Like President Bush, I believe government's role is to create the right conditions, the right environment for economic growth. But it is you - the private sector, workers and businesses - who create jobs, grow the economy, and build prosperity. Let me share with you what we in the Bush Administration are doing, to help create the environment for growth and opportunity in Africa.

"No nation in our time has entered the fast track of development without first opening up its economy to world markets." Those words were spoken by President Bush a little over a year ago, at the first AGOA Forum. President Bush understands that free markets and free enterprise are the keys to unlocking social, political, and economic potential around the world, especially in Africa. To be sure, there is much that government can do. It can provide the legal and political framework. It can build public infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, ports, hospitals and water systems.

Rich countries like ours can provide development aid tonations that are committed to good governance and democratic values. In fact, President Bush is seeking a 50 percent increase in development assistance over the \$10 billion we now provide every year.

But the bottom line is this: if the private sector doesn't invest, economies don't grow. It's as simple as that. So our focus is on helping create a friendly environment for you in the private sector, to invest ... to create jobs and ... to grow the economy. And that means opening markets.

We're making good progress in opening markets and developing stronger trade ties with Africa. Since taking effect two years ago, the African Growth and Opportunity Act has encouraged new investments, jobs and trade.

- U.S. imports under AGOA so far this year are up 20 percent ... despite a decline in overall imports from Africa.
- U.S. exports to Sub-Saharan Africa grew by 17.5 percent last year ... this at a time when overall U.S. exports were falling.
- And economic growth in Africa last year was much faster than the world as a whole ... 3.3 percent vs. 2.2 percent, according to the International Monetary Fund.
- And the IMF says this trend is continuing in 2002.

All these numbers add up to this: AGOA is building stronger economies and stronger business alliances in Africa.

Now, that is not to say there aren't some problems. The road to democracy and free markets is uneven. There will be ups and downs as African nations reform their economies and work to make civic institutions open and accessible. But we must stay the course and build on the progress that has already been achieved.

That is why the AGOA program was expanded in August by providing greater access to U.S. markets for apparel from Sub-Saharan Africa. These new benefits were a part of the trade promotion

authority (TPA) law signed by President Bush. And it's why the Bush Administration will continue to shine the spotlight on U.S.-Africa trade and business development in the coming months.

For my part, I'll be leaving for Africa over the weekend. I first plan to visit Morocco to talk about negotiating a new free trade agreement that would strengthen our commercial ties and grow our economies. Then I'll lead a trade mission to Ghana and South Africa next week. These are among our biggest markets in Africa. We'll visit Accra and Johannesburg.

To give you an idea of how much interest there is in doing business in Africa, some 45 companies applied for the trip. We had room for a dozen companies. Many of them are small-and medium-sized enterprises.

They're in a variety of businesses including medical technology, computer software, construction, environmental services, energy production, and safety and security. All of them are looking for new business opportunities. Some of these companies are represented here today. I look forward to traveling with you next week.

In addition to seeking new business, we'll be highlighting corporate stewardship.

When American companies do business overseas, many of them bring with them the American values of service, of volunteerism, of social responsibility. They support schools, hospitals, distribution centers and those who need a helping hand.

So we'll be visiting some of these projects during the trip, to encourage companies that are doing the right thing, and to spur on others to follow their lead. For those of you not joining us next week, there are other ways we can help you.

Our Foreign Commercial Service at the Department of Commerce has 54 people working in Africa. These folks are on the ground, looking for business opportunities for U.S. companies. They also serve as our eyes and ears when problems crop up. They're the ones who usually hear first about a market access problem or when a company is getting the run-around. So use them. They're insightful, knowledgeable people ... and they work for you.

For the first time the needs of Africa and other developing countries are at the center of global trade talks. We've seen action on a number of fronts ... the WTO meetings in Doha ... the G-8 Summit last summer ... the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September. All these efforts show how serious the world is about integrating Africa into the global economy.

The United States is leading the way.

In January, President Bush hopes to attend the second annual AGOA Forum in Mauritius. The purpose of the summit is to reinforce and move forward the trade and investment agenda. But some of the most important people attending the Forum will be people like you, the people who make the investments and create the jobs.

Being a Texan, I like straight-talk. So here's the pitch: We need you there! We need your leadership. We need your insights. We need your suggestions on how to attract more capital to Africa. The Forum will be the week of January 13.

It will be your chance to have your voice heard by all the major players. And you may even find a new business partner. So check your calendars, and see if you can attend these meetings. Your leadership matters.

Let me end on this. I believe you are stewards of capitalism

Let me explain. I spent all my life working in business. As a young man, I got a job as a "roughneck" on an oil rig. I worked my way up to be CEO of the company. Now I am a public servant. It is my privilege to serve President Bush, and to serve the American people. But the longer I am in this job, the more clearly I see that each one of you is every bit as much of a public servant as I am.

For you are stewards of capitalism. The care-takers of our free-enterprise system. You build the businesses, produce the products, deliver the services, create the jobs, and meet the payrolls. You are the energy driving our growth, our opportunity, our prosperity.

There's a whole world out there that needs that kind of positive energy.

There are more than 3 billion people in this world who are living on less than \$2 a day. The largest number of them are in Africa. Many in Africa also are suffering from AIDS, which is not just a health problem ... its as much a poverty problem. Free enterprise isn't even in their vocabulary. Yet it is free enterprise holds the key to their liberation from poverty ... despair ... and hopelessness.

Now, this is where you come in.

I believe the business people in this room have the power to play a big part in unlocking prosperity and hope for the people of Africa. I believe you have a responsibility to your companies, your employees, your investors, to go after opportunities in Africa.

This is your job. At the same time, you would be doing the right thing for the people of Africa because where American companies go, so go American corporate values. Values like good jobs, labor standards, and health care.

You see it with companies like McDonalds, which go into a new market and tap into the community, creating jobs and using local growers and manufacturers to supply their restaurants. I saw it at a Ford Motor plant in Russia.

And the benefits of doing this come full circle.

Africa is better off and so is America. Both have a higher quality of life because we're in business together. So yours is a noble calling. And I'm confident you will execute it ably and faithfully.

Thank you very much.