



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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The US is committed to helping improve the lives of the Ethiopian people:

The US is committed to helping improve the lives of the Ethiopian people: Deputy Secretary of State.

Deputy Secretary of State for Resources and Management Jacob J. Lew said, Ethiopia is working in a positive direction on poverty reduction, but it faces very difficult challenges.

The Deputy Secretary made the remarks at a press conference he held concluding a day long working visit to Ethiopia



Deputy Secretary of State for Resources and Management Jacob J. Lew giving a press conference

on the June 29,

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U.S. Embassy Provides Grants for Cultural Preservation in Harar

On Thursday, June 25, the U.S. Embassy and the Harari Culture, Tourism, and Information Bureau, signed two agreements on cultural preservation in Harar. Signatories for the two organizations were Mr. Michael McClellan, Counselor for Public Affairs at the U.S. Embassy, and Mr. Yimaj Idris, Head of the Bureau. The event took place at the Teferi Mekonnen Palace in the Jugol area of Harar.



Mr. Michael McClellan, Counselor for Public Affairs at a U.S. Embassy signing the grant agreement

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2009. Mr Lew's visit focused on two foreign assistance initiatives central to both the new Administration and Ethiopia –hunger and global health.

The Deputy Secretary said, "through this Administration's efforts to eradicate hunger, we seek long-term and sustainable agricultural sector growth that boosts farm productivity, increases the availability of food by linking farmers to markets, and raises incomes so more people can afford food. In the global health arena, we seek to build on the successes of our HIV/AIDS program to build durable and sustainable health system, and to concentrate efforts on maternal and child health and diseases that are easily preventable with only a modest investment." Mr Lew further noted, "Ethiopia has made impor-

tant strides in each of these areas, and we look forward to working with the government on additional mechanisms to help us achieve our goals and improve the lives of the Ethiopian people."

During the press conference Mr. Lew said "I am here in Ethiopia on behalf of Secretary Clinton and President Obama because Ethiopia is a key ally in the region and an important development partner. I am here to listen and underscore our commitment to work with the people and government of Ethiopia to provide a more productive and sustainable assistance program that meets the fundamental needs of the Ethiopian people."

Following a wide ranging discussion with Prime Minister Meles, several ministers, and private sector and NGO groups, the Deputy Secretary said, "I heard deep concerns

about the challenges Ethiopia faces. But I also heard encouraging reports of how the international community is helping to improve the human condition of the people of Ethiopia and ideas about ways to do even better." He also said, the Prime Minister and I discussed other challenges where we share common objectives yet may have differing views. Much of our foreign assistance is delivered through non-governmental organization and community society organization, and we are concerned about the restrictions that have recently been placed on their activities." They further discussed the 2010 elections and the importance of interparty talks between the Government and Opposition parties to support these elections in the process of democratization.♦

U.S. Embassy Provides Grants for Cultural Preservation in Harar. . . .

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Representing U.S. Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, Mr. McClellan signed the first grant from the U.S. State Department's 'Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation', which provides USD \$35,000 to preserve the Teferi Mekonnen Palace. The grant provides for a survey of the structure, documentation of the present state of the building and its context, and structural consolidation work required to carry out further conservation and to prevent further deterioration of the Palace itself.

The second grant that was signed, from the U.S. Embassy, provides USD \$ 35,150 to catalog and preserve the collection of Islamic manuscripts currently held at the Palace. This grant will provide the equipment and supplies needed to establish a Manuscript Presentation

Center at the Palace. The Center will protect and conserve this important collection of Islamic manuscripts in Harar. The Embassy is also supporting an American Fulbright manuscript specialist to visit Harar later this summer to do an assessment of the manuscripts and develop a work plan for their preservation and presentation to visitors at the Palace.

In his remarks at the signing ceremony, Mr. McClellan noted that these are just the latest in a series of grants the U.S. Embassy has provided to preserve Ethiopia's indigenous faith cultures, both Muslim and Christian. In 2008, the Embassy provided a grant of approximately USD \$ 10,000 to the Institute of Ethiopian Studies to purchase several Islamic manuscripts and small Christian icons that were in danger of leaving the country. In

2006, the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation also provided USD \$35,000 for the preservation of the Shek Hussen Shrine in the Bale Region, a project that was completed late last year.

In his closing remarks, McClellan said, "The U.S. Government believes it is especially important to work with Faith Communities around the world to preserve and protect monuments and artifacts of culture related to expressions of faith, tolerance, and mutual understanding.

Ethiopia's long history of inter-faith tolerance and co-existence is especially notable in this context and we look forward to further efforts to preserve and protect the monuments and artifacts of Ethiopia's indigenous expressions of religious faith." ♦

United States Seeks Expanded Economic Growth in Africa

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — A central objective of U.S. trade relations with sub-Saharan Africa is to create a platform for expanded African economic growth, says a senior U.S. trade official.

"Sub-Saharan Africa's current share of global trade is less than 2 percent, down from 6 percent in 1980," Assistant U.S. Trade Representative Florizelle Liser testified June 24 at a congressional hearing.

"If sub-Saharan Africa were to increase that share by just 1 percentage point to 3 percent, it would generate additional export revenues of \$70 billion annually, which is nearly three times the amount of current annual assistance to Africa from all donors. This reflects the importance of trade as a critical platform for Africa's economic growth."

Liser said that exports from the continent are concentrated in primary commodities such as petroleum, minerals, cocoa and coffee. She added that "there is little of the manufacturing engine in sub-Saharan Africa that has fueled economic growth and reduced poverty in other regions of the world."

And Liser said that agriculture, which is regarded as Africa's strong suit, has not been a positive contributor to export trade, and that in 2005 the region switched from being a net exporter to being a net importer of farm products.

"We believe that export diversification and further processing of agri-



A five-platform complex pumps crude oil off the coast of Cabinda, Angola.

culture products into higher-value exports could help improve food security in the region by addressing issues of availability and stability of food supply," Liser said.

Liser said that the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a U.S. trade law enacted in 2000 by the Clinton administration, is a tool that has helped to increase both the volume and diversity of U.S. trade with sub-Saharan Africa. Economists believe that striking a critical balance between trade volume and the diversity of the exports is essential to regional long-term economic development and growth.

"AGOA also promotes economic cooperation and trade among the countries of sub-Saharan Africa by encouraging intraregional trade among AGOA beneficiary countries," Liser said. Two-way trade between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa was \$104.6 billion in 2008, counting exports and imports, which was more than triple

the amount in 2001, the first full year of AGOA implementation, she said.

However, Liser told the congressional hearing that the United States recognizes that trade with Africa has declined as a result of the current global economic crisis and declining oil and commodity prices. Many more African nations are taking advantage of the liberal trade opportunities under AGOA, she said, but many more are facing significant challenges in their efforts to increase trade.

"We are continuing our efforts to increase the number of AGOA-eligible countries taking advantage of the program, and we are also trying to address the many supply-side constraints the Africans face and to help them increase the range and quality of products being traded and improve Africa's overall competitiveness," Liser said.

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New Technologies Strengthening Africa's Economy

By Megan Neff
Staff Writer

Washington — Across Africa, new technologies are being joined with local customs to strengthen the continent's infrastructure and economy.

Using information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones and the Internet, Africans are finding business and trade to be easier and more affordable, said Sala Patterson, a policy analyst at the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Patterson, along with representatives of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the African Development Bank and Africare, spoke with Congressmen Donald Payne and Charles Rangel and the European Commission's Ambassador John Bruton June 18 on Capitol Hill. The panel discussed the annual "African Economic Outlook," a study that examines Africa's economic development over the past year and makes projections for the coming year.

In Africa, where communications networks have been limited, things are beginning to change, according to Payne. New ICTs, such as text messaging, are surpassing old communication networks in Africa, which have been handicapped by geography and politics.

These new ICTs are enabling Africans to access information on health and agriculture and services such as online banking, and to connect more effectively with the rest of the world. European companies, such as the United Kingdom's Vo-



A watermelon seller in Kenya talks on her cell phone. Increasingly, cell phone companies are turning their attention to Africa.

dafone and France's Vivendi and Orange, are turning their attention to the African market, where only 40 percent of Africans own a cell phone. By contrast, cell phone usage in Europe is at nearly 100 percent, said Laura Recuero-Virto, an economist for the OECD. Nokia, Intel and Microsoft are also investing in the African ICTs.

Projected economic growth for Africa in 2009 is 3 percent, down from 6 percent last year, said Leonce Ndikumana, research director for the African Development Bank. A report cited by the African Economic Outlook study shows that increased use of ICTs in Africa is helping to sustain parts of the African economy during this time of economic turbulence.

For example, mobile phones in Niger, one of the poorest countries in Africa, are being used as marketing tools. Farmers are able to text and use the Internet to communicate with markets around their farm and find the best prices for their goods. This has helped to reduce prices and it allows farmers to bring goods where they are most needed and

where they will get the highest profit.

Online banking has also helped to sustain African communities through the recession, and there have been significant strides in increasing the affordability of money transfers. Where a Western Union transfer of 1,000 Kenyan shillings (about \$13) would cost the user a 500 shilling transaction fee,

Patterson said, with M-Pesa, a new money-transfer service available between cell phones, Kenyans can send the same amount with a transaction fee of 30 shillings to 75 shillings (about 39 cents to 97 cents). The lower transaction fees offered by M-Pesa have attracted 5 million users to the service in the past two years. M-Pesa is seeking to expand in East Africa and Afghanistan.

Africa still faces challenges with Internet accessibility and technical infrastructure. According to the panel, less than 7 percent of Africans have Internet access, and the Internet that is available is inconvenient and expensive, accessible only along the fiber optic lines laid along the west coast of Africa or through satellites. Limited Internet resources and lack of competition among Internet providers have led to exorbitant costs, the panel said.

But, Patterson said, broadband connections should be more widely available in Africa as the infrastructure expands. It is hoped that a web of fiber optic cables will be

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New U.S. Special Representative Announced for Muslim Outreach

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has appointed Farah Pandith to serve as special representative to Muslim communities, in charge of a new office that is responsible for outreach with Muslims around the world.

According to a notice published by the State Department June 23, Special Representative Pandith and her staff will carry out Clinton's efforts to "engage with Muslims around the world on a people-to-people and organizational level."

Pandith previously was an adviser on Muslim engagement at the State Department, serving as a senior adviser to the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs. She has also served on the National Security Council as the coordinator for U.S. policy on outreach to Muslims, and worked at the U.S. Agency for International Development on assistance projects for Iraq, Afghanistan and the Palestinian Territories.

Pandith, who is Muslim, immigrated to the United States with her parents from Srinagar, India. She told the Italian press agency Adnkronos in 2007 that she sees her personal experience as an illustration of how Muslim immigrants to the United States can successfully integrate themselves into American society.

She said that along with the importance of education, "I also learned ... to balance pride in my cultural heritage with a deep attachment to the values of America."

In his June 4 speech in Cairo to Muslims around the world, Presi-

dent Obama said he was seeking "a new beginning" between the United States and Muslims "based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and ... based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition."

The United States and Islam share common principles of justice, progress, tolerance and "the dignity of all human beings," Obama said. He also urged Americans and Muslims to commit themselves to a "sustained effort to find common ground, to focus on the future we seek for our children, and to respect the dignity of all human beings." (See "Obama Calls for a New Beginning with Muslims Around the World (<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/June/20090603172847dmslahrelle.k0.882641.html>).")

NEW AMBASSADOR TO DAMASCUS A REFLECTION OF SYRIA'S ROLE IN THE MIDEAST

State Department spokesman Ian Kelly announced June 24 that the Obama administration has decided to appoint an ambassador to Syria as part of a "natural evolution" of its reengagement with President Bashar al-Assad's government. The position has been unfilled since 2005 when the previous U.S. ambassador was recalled after the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. The U.S. charge d'affaires in Damascus has been the senior U.S. official in Damascus since then.

"We're prepared to move forward with Syria to advance our interests through direct and continuing dialogue," Kelly said, adding that the

United States continues to have concerns about Syria's role in the Middle East. "[W]e think one way to address those concerns is to have an ambassador in Damascus."

Kelly said Syrian officials were informed of the decision June 23, and said it follows several visits by high-level U.S. officials to Damascus.

"This decision reflects the administration's recognition of the important role Syria plays in the region. And, of course, we hope that they will continue to play such a constructive role to promote peace and stability in the region," Kelly said.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Peace Corps: “Born in America, but Learned to Walk in Ghana”

By Phillip Kurata
Staff Writer

Washington — The Peace Corps, one of President John F. Kennedy’s enduring legacies, was launched in Ghana in 1961. Nearly a half century later, the corps is still going strong in the West African country, with volunteers involved in teaching, health and sanitation training, natural resource management and small business development.

“The Peace Corps was born in America, but learned to walk in Ghana,” Peace Corps director for Ghana Michael Koffman told America.gov.

The first batch of volunteers to go abroad, 52 of them, stepped off a plane in Accra on August 30, 1961. Those young, idealistic Americans had heeded Kennedy’s call to serve in his inaugural address: “And so, my fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country.”

Volunteers in 1961 were assigned to education and literacy projects. In the 1970s and 1980s, the scope of work expanded to teaching math, science, business, and French in secondary schools, as well as providing special education for the mentally disabled, teacher training, and agricultural technology — “a wide, wide range” of projects, in Koffman’s words.

Despite coups and other political upheavals, the Peace Corps has maintained an uninterrupted presence in Ghana, a relationship rare among developing countries.

“Ghana has proven to be a stable place,” Koffman said, “even when Ghanaians were working out internal issues. The government and

people of Ghana have always treated volunteers warmly, and their safety has never been threatened. Ghana has always cherished its relationship with the Peace Corps. As a result, it has been getting stronger and stronger.”

Ghana’s growing political maturity, evidenced by the election in December 2008 that brought John Atta Mills to the Ghanaian presidency, has contributed to that relationship. “The election happened gracefully, without violence,” Koffman said. “It shows Ghana is a peaceful, forward-looking country.” The December election was the fifth peaceful transfer of presidential power and the second time that an opposition candidate has won.

When President Obama visits Ghana in July, 132 volunteers will be at work around the country, with another 63 new arrivals completing in-country training. Forty percent of the volunteers in Ghana are assigned to middle schools and high schools, teaching science and computer technology. “Interest in computers is very, very high. American young people have a lot to offer in teaching computer skills,” Koffman said. The Peace Corps also has volunteers trained in sign language teaching visual arts in a school for the deaf.

In the natural resource management program, Koffman highlighted the work of helping Ghanaians cultivate, harvest and market moringa trees, whose leaves have high nutritional value.

In the health and sanitation sector, volunteers spread awareness of HIV/AIDS and malaria and how to avoid the diseases. Often they travel from village to village on bicycles, meeting people and giving

presentations under coconut trees. “The opportunities present themselves in many shapes and times. We tell the volunteers to work with who you can, when you can, wherever you can,” Koffman said.

To promote small business development, volunteers have been teaching villagers to start savings clubs by accepting contributions of as little as \$1 per week and building the total available for short-term loans. “If a person takes out a small loan and repays it, then money circulates around the village, and that has an extraordinary effect,” Koffman said.

A MATURE RELATIONSHIP

In the nearly half century that Ghana and the Peace Corps have been working together, the Peace Corps has changed, as has the host country.

One of the main changes is that the corps recruits more elderly volunteers now than in the early years, although the basic traits of generosity and zest for adventure apply across the generations. Last year, Ghana had the oldest serving volunteer, 85-year-old Ralph Bernstein, who taught biology, chemistry and physics in a Ghanaian high school.

When Ron Tschetter was Peace Corps director from 2006 to 2008, he launched an initiative to boost the ranks of volunteers aged 55 or older from 5 percent to 15 percent. Although Bernstein has left Ghana, volunteers in their 60s and 70s remain there, complementing the efforts of the younger volunteers. Tschetter said there are tens of millions of Americans born after World War II who are retiring in good health and are eager to contribute

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Obama Praises Demonstrators' "Enduring Pursuit of Justice"

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says the bravery of Iranian demonstrators as they face brutality from their government is "a testament to their enduring pursuit of justice," and he said if the Iranian government wants respect from the international community, it must respect the rights of its people.

"The violence perpetrated against them is outrageous. And despite the government's efforts to keep the world from bearing witness to that violence, we see it, and we condemn it," Obama said in remarks at the White House with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on June 26.

The Iranian people will be the ultimate judge of their government's actions, Obama said, and their rights to assemble and speak freely are "universal aspirations."

Demonstrations have continued in Iran since the official results of the June 12 presidential election were announced. Iranian authorities have said incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won the election by 11 million votes, but his challengers and many Iranians have cited voting irregularities and have not accepted the result. Demonstrators have come under increasingly violent attacks from police and paramilitary forces.

"A government that treats its own citizens with that kind of ruthlessness and violence, and that cannot deal with peaceful protesters who are trying to have their voices heard in an equally peaceful way, I think has moved outside of universal

norms, international norms, that are important to uphold," Obama said.

The president repeated earlier statements that it is up to the Iranian people to make the decisions about



President Obama and Chancellor Merkel, left, both called on Iranian authorities June 26 to respect the rights of their people.

who their leaders should be, and said the United States has "gone out of its way not to interfere with the election process in Iran," despite accusations to the contrary by Iranian officials.

Chancellor Merkel said Iranians must be allowed to demonstrate peacefully, saying the rights of individuals all over the world are "indivisible." She also said Iranians have "the right to have votes recounted and the election results substantiated."

In the 21st century, Merkel said, Iranian officials cannot count on the international community turning a blind eye to what is happening.

"We have seen horrifying scenes, looking at how, for example, the security forces there dealt with demonstrators. We will not forget this. And let me say that we shall do everything in order to identify

the exact number of victims, who those victims were, how they dealt with those demonstrators," she said.

Merkel added that the international community needs to work together so "the Iranian nuclear program is stopped, [so] that Iran does not get possession of a nuclear weapon."

U.S. CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION IS "SEA CHANGE"

The president and Merkel also discussed climate change legislation under debate in the U.S. Congress that would provide a framework for reducing U.S. carbon emissions and promoting renewable energy sources.

Obama said he told Merkel the United States is committed to "stand with Germany and lead in confronting the energy and climate change crisis."

"Europe in many ways over the last several years has moved more rapidly than the United States on addressing this issue. And I've been very blunt and frank with Chancellor Merkel that we are still working through creating the framework where we can help lead the international effort," he said.

The legislation under debate is "enormous progress" from where the United States has been on the issue of climate change, he said. But Obama said there is more to do, and the United States will be working with Germany and others to clarify U.S. obligations, as well as working with emerging economies to clarify their obligations in the

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Michelle Obama Defines Own Role as First Lady

By Elizabeth Kenigsberg
Staff Writer

Washington — The role of first lady is arguably the most powerful and influential nonelected, nonappointed position in the White House. However, despite having a large staff, and one of the most premiere pieces of real estate, the White House, as her office, the first lady has no formal job description and the U.S. Constitution makes no mention of the role of the commander in chief's spouse.

Presidential spouses have traditionally been expected to be the country's social hostess, working to organize White House functions and diplomatic events. In recent years, however, first ladies have taken a more public role in developing policy and pursuing their own initiatives.

An accomplished lawyer, former hospital administrator and self-appointed "mom-in-chief," Michelle Obama serves as a role model for many modern women trying to balance work and family life, as she works to move discussion beyond her wardrobe to engaging the American public on important issues.

ENCOURAGING AMERICANS TO SERVE

Most recently, Michelle Obama has harnessed her role as first lady to encourage Americans to give back through volunteerism.

On June 22 in San Francisco she launched United We Serve, an initiative by the Obama administration that the first lady described as "a nationwide effort calling on all



"Service has been my life's work in many ways," Michelle Obama said recently.

Americans to make service a part of their daily lives."

"It's been said that our true calling in life is where our hearts' greatest gladness meets the world's deepest need," she said, acknowledging the increasing demand for volunteerism during this time of economic recession.

"This new administration doesn't view service as separate from our national priorities, or in addition to our national priorities. We see it as the key to achieving our national priorities," she continued. "We believe that the only way to build that new foundation for our economy is to establish a new role for service in this country."

Obama said she approaches volunteerism and citizen activism "with the knowledge that ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things when given the proper tools."

Those tools include the Web site www.serve.gov (<http://www.serve.gov>), where Americans

can find resources on how to begin their own volunteer project or volunteer for ongoing efforts. The United We Serve projects focus on four areas in which President Obama and the first lady believe everyone can have an impact: energy and the environment, health care, education and community renewal.

"Service has been my life's work in many ways, and it's near and dear to my heart," Michelle Obama said. "There's a feeling that you get when you help someone achieve their goals: the fulfillment of putting your faith into action and feeling that you're a part of something that's bigger than yourself and doing your part for the greater good."

Within one week of the initiative's launch, Michelle Obama has helped construct a school playground and pack 15,000 backpacks for the children of America's service members to take with them to summer camp. The United We Serve program will run through the National Day of Service and Remembrance on September 11.

"She understands that nothing is more powerful than when you enlist the skill and talent and passion of the American people on behalf of helping others," President Obama said. "She's been doing that all her life, and she's doing just a great job as First Lady in making that happen." ♦

AGOA Forum Seeks to Expand U.S.-Africa Trade and Investment

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — The eighth African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum, which will be held in Nairobi, Kenya, August 4–6, is the only ministerial event held annually between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa, said the assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Ambassador Johnnie Carson, who said the Obama administration is seeking to strengthen and deepen America's ties with the region.

Carson spoke to the African diplomatic corps in Washington June 19 at the State Department, along with Peter Ogego, the Kenyan ambassador to the United States, whose country will host the forum. They were joined by a broad array of other senior U.S. officials who plan to attend the trade ministerial. All had gathered to brief the diplomatic corps on the ministerial and to solicit input.

President Obama, with the close support of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, "wants to engage positively, actively with Africa," Carson told his audience, in one of his first appearances before the African diplomatic corps as assistant secretary of state for African affairs. "You are clearly part of our foreign policy agenda," he told his audience. "We value Africa and the role that it plays in the international community, and it is our determination to try to strengthen the relationship, build it as broadly and as deeply as we possibly can.

"In building bridges and in building relationships with countries," he said, "it is indeed a two-way street. We can do our part, and we are determined to do that. We hope

that we will have strong partners on the other side to help work with us to help achieve our objectives."

AGOA is a part of that process, he said. "AGOA is a part of the effort to strengthen the relationship in the area of trade and commerce, and we want to do more. We want to build on this."

Carson, a former U.S. ambassador to Uganda, Zimbabwe and Kenya, said the United States is "extraordinarily pleased" that the government of Kenya will host the eighth AGOA forum, which will be centered on the theme "Realizing the Full Potential of AGOA through the Expansion of Trade and Investment."

Trade and investment, Carson said, are two of the "many important links" between sub-Saharan Africa and the United States, "which share many historic bonds and common objectives."

The Trade and Development Act of 2000, which created AGOA, mandated an annual trade and economic cooperation forum with eligible sub-Saharan African nations to discuss expanding trade and investment relations between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa. The act offers tangible incentives for African countries to continue their efforts to open their economies and build free markets.

At a time of economic crisis, he explained, it is important that both the United States and sub-Saharan African countries "work cooperatively to protect the advances in economic growth that have been made and lessen the negative impact of market fluctuations."

To ensure the widest possible U.S.

government participation, Carson said, members of the U.S. Congress have been briefed on AGOA and have been asked as well for their views. "We have also been working very closely with members of civil society and the private sector to ensure that we have captured their concerns as well," he added.

The AGOA Forum will begin with private sector and civil society events August 4 at the same time the Africa Consultative Group convenes. The ministerial will begin August 5 and conclude August 6.

Carson praised the government of Kenya for doing an "absolutely wonderful job" of organizing what he predicted would be a "dynamic and very successful" AGOA Forum.

Carson thanked the African diplomats for providing their suggestions on the AGOA Forum and, in particular, Kenya's ambassador, Ogego, for his work to make the event a success.

Topics to be covered at the forum range from democracy and good governance to regional trade integration. Discussion topics include "Possible Effects of Global Challenges on AGOA," "Africa Trade," "Successes and Prospects," "Transportation and Supply Chain Infrastructure" and "Meeting Food Markets Poverty Challenges by Transforming Staple Food Markets and Trade Systems."

Carson told the diplomats: "We value your input, your engagement and your activity in making this year's forum a success. I certainly look forward in working with your governments in Nairobi to make this one of the best AGOA Forums that we have ever had."♦

Guinea Worm Eradication Program Gets Results in Ghana

By Lauren Caldwell
Staff Writer

Washington — Guinea worm disease, which has crippled millions in Africa and Asia, is nearly vanquished in Ghana, thanks to the efforts of the Carter Center, which has been working with health workers in that country over the last 20 years.

People contract the disease by drinking water contaminated with Guinea worm larvae. The larvae grow in the body for about a year, reaching as much as a meter in length before exiting the skin through blistering sores. The only method of treatment is extraction of the worm, centimeter by centimeter, over several weeks. Victims feel excruciating pain; some are left crippled. Communities suffer because victims cannot farm, attend school or care for their families. Often, the disease is spread when victims cool their wounds in water. When an emerging worm comes in contact with water, it releases thousands of eggs. Without education and treatment, the cycle of the disease continues.

When the Carter Center began its campaign in 1986, there were about 3.5 million cases of Guinea worm in 20 countries. Now, there are fewer than 5,000 cases in six countries — Sudan, Ghana, Mali, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Niger — and Guinea worm is likely to become the first disease to be eliminated without vaccines or medicines.

Ghana, the first nation targeted by



Sadia, seated in the lap of Lamisi Mbillah, Miss World Beauty With a Purpose 2006, learns to not drink unfiltered water to avoid contracting Guinea worm disease. The former Miss Ghana is a spokeswoman for the program in Ghana.

the Carter Center's Guinea Worm Eradication Program in 1987, had 180,000 cases at that time. It had just 501 cases in 2008. With the effort of local volunteers and simple methods like water filtration and health education, the number of cases continues to drop.

BEGINNING THE CAMPAIGN

The Carter Center is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization established in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn. Its mission is "to wage peace, fight disease and build hope," said Donald Hopkins, a health expert at the center.

Before joining the Carter Center, Hopkins had lobbied heavily, with little success, for a program to eradicate Guinea worm disease. By presenting images of Guinea worm

disease and describing how it could be prevented, Hopkins easily convinced former President Carter that the center could overcome the disease.

"The thought that goes through anyone's mind is, 'Why? Why is this preventable disease still there and causing this indescribable suffering?'" Carter said in a May 2007 interview with the Chicago Tribune newspaper.

When the Carter Center began its work in Ghana, the country was "economically in the doldrums," Hopkins said. "There was Guinea worm all over the place, especially in the north. It was horrific, painful, and severely impeding agricultural productivity."

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Guinea Worm Eradication Program Gets Results in Ghana

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The center partnered with Ghana's Ministry of Health to educate local volunteers about the disease. At first, efforts focused on digging wells for clean water, but that was expensive and did not prevent existing cases from spreading. Center officials focused on providing fine mesh filters to villagers so they could clean their own water. Volunteers also distributed chemicals to kill Guinea worm larvae and taught victims not to enter water, to prevent putting healthy neighbors at risk.

By 1994, these methods resulted in a 95 percent decrease in the number of cases. Ethnic fighting later that year threatened the eradication program, but now it is back on track.

"Ghana is closer than it's ever been" to a clean slate, Hopkins said. "After 12 years of stagnation, now they're having dramatic reductions again."

The Carter Center has not been alone in its efforts. Many U.S. organizations and government agencies work to eradicate Guinea worm disease, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Peace Corps. The United Nations Children's Fund, other organizations and several foreign governments have contributed as well.

LOCAL LEADERS

The responsibility for permanently ridding Ghana of the disease, said Andrew Seidu-Korkor, director of Ghana's Guinea Worm Eradication

Program, lies mainly with one group: Ghanaian volunteers.

"To be effective, they need to be trained and supervised regularly, and this is where the [Ghanaian] health workers have played a significant role."

Village volunteers are supervised by Ghana's Ministry of Health and Carter Center technical assistants, who are mostly Ghanaians. They detect and manage cases, as well as educate communities about the disease.

Volunteers go door to door treating victims and teaching people to protect the water supply. Sometimes, volunteers distribute T-shirts with slogans like "Stop Guinea Worm Now, Ask Me How."

Famous Ghanaians are helping. Sheriff Ghale, a reggae artist from northern Ghana, encourages villagers with lyrics that translate into "Filter your water to prevent Guinea worm." Miss Ghana 2005, Lamisi Mbillah, has visited dozens of villages and raised thousands of dollars to bring attention to the disease.

"The fight against Guinea worm is unusual because it creates positive change in people's lives at the grass roots, that you can see immediately," Hopkins said. The Guinea Worm Eradication Program not only prevents disease, he said, it improves Ghana's economy, allows children to attend school and gives villagers a can-do mindset.

After eradicating Guinea worm, young volunteers will "take this experience and go on to do other great things," Hopkins predicted.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web

Obama Praises Demonstrators' "Enduring Pursuit of Justice"

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effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The German chancellor described the U.S. legislation on climate change as "a sea change" and said it shows that the United States is "very serious on climate."

Merkel said the legislation could help at the global conference on climate change in Copenhagen, scheduled for December.

"We are both convinced that this question of climate change amounts to much more than just numbers and targets. It means that we take a commitment and shoulder a responsibility for those countries in the world that will be far more heavily affected by climate change," Merkel said.

Germany and the United States "also feel committed to ensuring energy security, for our own countries' dependence on raw materials, on commodities," she said, adding that dependence can be "very unpleasant."

A transcript of remarks by Obama and Merkel (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/June/20090626154718xjsnommis0.5205609.html&distid=ucs>) is available on [America.gov](http://www.america.gov)..♦

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See also

<http://www.america.gov/>

Telling America's story

United States Seeks Expanded Economic Growth in Africa . . .

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U.S.-AFRICAN TRADE PROFILE

U.S. total trade with sub-Saharan Africa, which includes both exports and imports, rose 28 percent in 2008 from the year before, as both exports and imports grew, according to a U.S.-African Trade Profile published by the Commerce Department's International Trade Administration (ITA). In 2008, U.S. exports totaled \$18.6 billion, compared with \$14.4 billion in 2007, and imports last year reached \$86.1 billion, compared with \$67.4 billion in 2007, the ITA report said.

Exports were driven by demand for machinery, vehicles and parts, wheat, noncrude oil, aircraft and electrical machinery, which included telecommunications equipment. U.S. imports of African products were led by crude oil and passenger vehicles,

the report said.

The top five African destinations for U.S. products were South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Benin and Ghana. U.S. imports from the oil-producing countries grew in every case from Nigeria, Angola, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Chad and Gabon, the report said.

The 8th Annual AGOA Forum will be held August 4-6 in Nairobi, Kenya, at the Kenyatta International Conference Center.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog. (<http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/>)

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov/>) ♦

Peace Corps: "Born in America, but Learned to Walk in Ghana". . .

(Continued from page 6)

to a better world. Many have said they joined the Peace Corps in their later years because they never forgot President Kennedy's original call to step forward and serve.

"Older volunteers can't match the energy of the young ones, but they have the experience to get so much done without wasted movement. They are just as effective, if not more effective, especially in

a place like Ghana where age is revered," Koffman said. "The older volunteers lend perspective that allows younger volunteers to be more successful."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov/>) ♦

New Technologies Strengthening Africa's Economy. . .

(Continued from page 4)

able to connect all of the main metropolitan areas in African by 2012.

For this expansion to take place, the African Economic Outlook study found, local government involvement will be extremely important to ensure

that price drops are passed on to the consumers, and that ICTs are properly integrated into overall infrastructure development.

The findings of African Economic Outlook (<http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/>) are available on a Web site of the report's sponsors.