

Opening Statement of USTR Robert Lighthizer at 2017 AGOA Forum

As Delivered

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Lomé, Togo

AMBASSADOR LIGHTHIZER:

Good morning, Your Excellency, Prime Minister Komi Klassou; Trade Minister Legzim-Balouki; esteemed members of the Togolese Government; ministers and heads of delegations from the AGOA partner countries; and distinguished delegates and guests.

I am honored to be here, and I join on behalf of President Trump and our Government in welcoming all of you to the 16th annual AGOA Forum.

Before I begin, I would like to especially thank President Gnassingbé for hosting this year's AGOA Forum in your capital city. Thank you for your hospitality and the warm welcome we have received. Togo is positioning itself as a transportation hub and logistics center, so it has a clear appreciation of the benefits of trade.

I am pleased that the theme of this year's Forum is "The United States and Africa: Partnering for Prosperity through Trade."

The United States is committed to Africa. We see great potential to grow and deepen our trade relationship, with the goal of establishing a true partnership for the future. By lowering barriers and tackling other constraints that impede trade and investment, we are poised to see U.S.-Africa trade flourish. To realize these gains, however, much more work needs to be done, as we will discuss during this important AGOA Forum.

The U.S. Government has enjoyed a bipartisan consensus for the past 16 years on its trade policy towards Africa, with AGOA providing a framework for our economic engagement.

The Africa of today is not the Africa of 17 years ago. We live in a changing world and much has changed in Africa over this period. For instance, the United States is importing over one billion dollars in luxury automobiles from Sub-Saharan Africa annually. Meanwhile, some

AGOA partners are implementing reciprocal trade agreements with major developed economies that compete with the United States. So let us focus on ways we can achieve deeper commercial engagement now while working towards greater reciprocity in the future to ensure that sustained political support for our trade relationship goes forward.

I look forward to discussing these issues and opportunities further in this meeting. Together, we can create a better business environment and chart a path toward a stronger and more sustainable trade relationship for the future.

Finally, I would like to take a brief moment to announce an example of an AGOA beneficiary country working hard to succeed with an export strategy. I have just signed a letter approving an AGOA textile and apparel visa for Togo. This important step will permit Togolese entrepreneurs to take advantage of the many textile and apparel benefits available under the AGOA program. And we wish them all the best in this endeavor.

We look forward to continuing to develop our trade relationship throughout the region. I thank you very much for this opportunity to be here and to represent my Government.

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