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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**
Committee on Foreign Affairs Hearing:
“Development, Diplomacy, and Defense: Promoting U.S. Interests in Africa”
December 12, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

“Today we’ll hear from the administration on U.S. policy in Africa. This is particularly timely, as tomorrow it will roll out a new Africa strategy.

There is longstanding bipartisan consensus in Congress that the U.S. must be fully engaged in Africa. U.S. diplomacy and assistance saves lives, increases our security, builds capacity, advances conservation and spurs economic opportunity for both Americans and Africans.

Africa is a continent of immense opportunity and challenge – blessed with tremendous resources, newly empowered consumers and entrepreneurial youth. In many places, this means significant potential for U.S. companies to increase their trade and investment.

In other areas, however, despotic leaders continue to exploit power and pilfer resources for personal gain, ignoring pressing social and economic needs. Meanwhile, unfortunately, in some parts of Africa, terrorist groups and transnational criminal organizations have found safe haven in vast ungoverned spaces.

This committee has been at the forefront in responding to these opportunities and challenges. Landmark legislation like the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act and Electrify Africa have energized U.S. economic engagement on the continent and, more recently, the president signed into law the BUILD Act, which increases our ability to support private sector investment.

These and other initiatives are helping the next generation of entrepreneurs and civil society leaders to create jobs in their communities and demand more accountability from their governments. Improved health – thanks in large part to programs like PEPFAR and the Global Food Security Act – means Africans are living longer and healthier lives.

The committee has also been a leader in efforts to crack down on poaching and illicit trafficking so that elephants, rhinos and magnificent natural resources are preserved and local communities benefit, rather than be plundered by criminal and terrorist organizations.

In tackling these challenges, we shouldn’t engage with only the countries who are our friends. Our interests are diverse and continent-wide. We simply must work in the toughest places to defend these interests. And we know what happens when the U.S. fails to engage – China and Russia fill the void.

They already are – by ramping up business investment, access to finance, arms sales and military partnerships. Several of us on the committee have seen this first-hand. Last year, China opened its first permanent military base, co-located with the U.S. base in Djibouti.

We must get this right. Our diplomatic, economic, and national security interests are at stake. We must deploy adequate resources to support our interests in Africa. We must continue, not back away from, building partner capacity to improve security, foster trade and economic development, strengthen health systems, combat wildlife trafficking and support good governance.

We must be steadfast in our support of the men and women – Americans and Africans – working to advance democracy, stability, peace; to ultimately create better lives. That’s the foundation of an effective Africa strategy.

I would like to thank my Ranking Member, Eliot Engel, as well as Chairman Chris Smith and Ranking Member Karen Bass of the Africa Subcommittee, for their dedication to these issues.

This is my last hearing as chairman of this committee. It has been the honor of a lifetime to work with my colleagues to strengthen our country and advance neoliberal values worldwide. I am forever grateful for your support. Lastly, I want to thank staff director Tom Sheehy and chief of staff Amy Porter, who are leaving the committee; they have been essential to our many successes.”