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Democracy, Development, and Defense: Rebalancing U.S. – Africa Policy
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Good morning, Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and members of the Committee. I am pleased to be joined here today by my colleagues from USAID and the Department of Defense. Our engagement across Africa is truly a team effort. I would also like to recognize the men, women, and families currently serving the American people across our missions in Africa and within our offices in Washington. I am grateful to represent such a dedicated and talented group of public servants.

When speaking to audiences, be they Americans or Africans, I often tell them that the best way to view Africa is through the windshield, not the rear-view mirror. It is certainly a time of challenges and opportunities in Africa, and I look forward to sharing with you what we at the State Department are doing to advance U.S.-Africa foreign policy priorities.

I spent the vast majority of my 32-year diplomatic career in Africa, with postings in seven different countries, and I fell in love with the continent and its people. Since I assumed my current role last September, I have visited Africa three times, with another trip planned next month. During my trips, I have engaged with government officials, business leaders, civil society and average citizens, in order to better understand each country and subregion through a broad range of people and perspectives.

As I said before this Committee last December, the potential for increased engagement with Africa economically, culturally and diplomatically is truly limitless. I am a firm believer that with every challenge there is opportunity, and we must capitalize on our successes.

We have seen significant, positive signs in numerous areas that are important to recognize. Prime Minister Abiy in Ethiopia continues to impress and inspire with his leadership, and we have seen progress in our relationship with Eritrea. President Lourenço of Angola has demonstrated a commitment to fight corruption and to foster citizen-responsive governance and dialogue that can - and should be - replicated elsewhere. Just six months ago, discussions about the Democratic Republic of the Congo revolved around how to promote the will of the Congolese people in the face of a government trying to cling to power through unconstitutional means. By contrast, when Secretary Pompeo recently met with President Tshisekedi of the DRC following the historic transfer of power, the new President's priorities were fighting corruption, strengthening governance, advancing human rights and combatting human trafficking. And we continue to watch the dramatic events unfold in Sudan, where for the first time in 30 years a transition led by civilians representing the diversity of Sudanese society seems possible.

To underscore the U.S. commitment to Africa, the Administration announced a new Africa Strategy in December 2018 to re-calibrate our engagement with the continent. This strategy seeks to promote trade and commercial ties to increase prosperity in the United States and in African countries; counter radical Islamic terrorism and violent conflict; strengthen efforts to advance peace and security, by prioritizing resources and promoting effective and efficient peacekeeping operations; and by supporting stability, democracy, good governance and self-reliance. Ultimately, the success of this strategy will build on our strong relationships with individual countries, effective regional organizations, and most importantly, the people of Africa.

One enduring issue that I believe will be most significant in setting the course for a more prosperous and secure Africa, is harnessing the potential of Africa's tremendous youth bulge as a force for economic ingenuity and prosperity. Their education, training and successful integration into the economic futures of their countries will create viable alternatives to the poverty that leads to violent extremism and despair. Looking ahead, the population in Africa is expected to double in just a few short decades to 2.2 billion people, of which over 60% will be under 25 years old. The enormous potential of these young people creates a wealth of economic opportunities that will determine the continent's future.

We are not the only international actor that is interested in Africa, and we are justifiably concerned about certain countries that seek to exploit the resources of African nations and subvert Africans' desire for democracy for their own economic or geopolitical advantage. As you will hear today, no other nation matches the breadth and depth of the United States' engagement on the continent, or our earnest promotion of partnerships, sustainability and self-sufficiency. We go beyond simply investing in Africa, to investing in Africans. Africa is the dynamic continent of the future, and the direction it takes will have a major impact – for good or ill – not only in Africa but the rest of the world.

As the subject of today's hearing suggests, this is not a role for the State Department alone. We must constantly evaluate our approach and ensure a proper balance between "the three D's." Properly aligning our diplomatic, development, and defense tools and resources is critical. Successful engagement – and true partnership – with the people and governments of Africa comes from this coordinated and fully integrated approach.

I would like to thank the Committee for your bipartisan support and engagement on issues in Africa. I look forward to your questions.