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Assessing the Biden Administration's U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa
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Good morning, Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the new *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*. I appreciate your longstanding bipartisan commitment to the African continent.

I arrived at USAID only a few weeks after the new Strategy was launched—without question an exciting time to be joining the Africa Bureau. The core of the Strategy underscores something I have advocated for throughout my career—a recognition that the future of the United States and the future of the African continent are inextricably linked. Our partnership is critical to addressing shared global challenges.

The new *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* comes at a crucial moment. The COVID-19 pandemic has overwhelmed fragile health systems, caused tremendous loss of life, erased several years of development gains, and thrown millions of Africans into poverty. Insecurity, violent extremism, and conflict in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, Central Africa, and northern Mozambique have killed thousands and displaced millions more, resulting in humanitarian crises compounded by climate change. Approximately 21 million people are on the brink of starvation in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia due to a historic drought caused by an unprecedented four consecutive failed rainy seasons. Furthermore, the continent is witnessing setbacks to democracy and the increased role of malign international actors, especially the People's Republic of China and Russia.

Yet the Africa that I know is also characterized by resilience, transformation, and promise. Africa is home to some of the fastest growing markets in the world, and the world's largest population of young people. This is a generation of young people with the potential to power the continent's recovery from the pandemic, while combatting climate change and building a more equitable future for their communities. Africa also holds the planet's second largest rainforest, the Congo Basin - a vast rainforest is critical to stemming climate change and is home to 30 percent of minerals needed for 21st century renewable energy.

African women are leading in more spaces and at more levels of government and society, working to safeguard and accelerate gender equality gains, even as they lead the response to COVID-19 as frontline health workers. The nations of Africa hold significant political heft at international organizations as one of the largest regional voting groups in the UN, holding three seats on the UN Security Council, and African leaders as directors of the World Health

Organization and the World Trade Organization. The recent formation of the African Continental Free Trade Area created the world's fifth largest economy with a GDP of \$3.4 trillion and growing influence in global entertainment and digital finance.

And despite democratic setbacks, African citizens are demanding governments that respect the rights and dignity of all people. The recently elected presidents of Malawi and Zambia are leading the way, after unseating autocratic incumbents by running on platforms promising to fight corruption, spur economic growth, and strengthen transparency and accountability.

The *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* recognizes both challenges and opportunities facing Africa, and reflects Africa's influence on the international stage. With African agency as a guiding principle, it lays the groundwork for a true partnership with African nations founded on mutual respect, strong economic and security ties, and promotion of and respect for human rights and rule of law for all people.

The Strategy is centered around four objectives: fostering openness and open societies; delivering democratic and security dividends; advancing pandemic recovery and economic opportunity; and supporting conservation, climate adaptation, and a just energy transition.

Let me walk through how USAID is aligned with the Strategy, and highlight our way forward.

Fostering Openness and Open Societies

First, the Strategy commits to promoting fair and open societies.

USAID will continue to partner with governments and civil society to strengthen governments, civil society, and citizens' capacity to advance transparency and accountability. This includes tackling issues of digital authoritarianism, anti-corruption, and mis/dis/mal-information. In places such as Mali, where this type of content is rife, USAID is already working with trusted local civil society partners to improve the information ecosystem and combat misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation by training journalists and individuals, especially young people, to recognize and not spread such information.

We will also help countries take on the challenges of digital infrastructure to ensure that their Internet and information and communications technology is secure, reliable and interoperable, and protects users from digital abuse or harassment.

Our programming will increase accountability, governance, gender equality and social inclusion across all sectors in which we work—from enhanced oversight of health commodities procurement to strengthening the business enabling environment. We will increase transparency on large infrastructure transactions by strengthening government procurement laws and developing the tools and expertise needed to analyze complex international infrastructure projects, including safeguards against human rights and other abuses.

We will strengthen the rule of law and independent judiciaries to address corruption and safeguard individual rights against a backdrop of democratic backsliding.

In Malawi, for example, we are working with the government to implement its commitments to combat corruption and reform institutions. Through the joint U.S.-UK Tackling Serious and Organized Corruption project, we work with Malawian law enforcement to investigate and prosecute complex financial crimes. We are also partnering with local governments and communities to address bottlenecks to effective delivery of services such as health and education.

Meanwhile, in Ghana, our programs strengthen the effectiveness of dozens of metropolitan, municipal, and district assemblies, improving their responsiveness to citizens' priorities, feedback, and concerns, strengthening social cohesion between and among groups. This has made a real difference, especially in agriculture, where women's access to land and cultivation of marketable crops has grown as a direct outcome of these efforts.

We will cooperate with countries and encourage them to use their natural resources in a transparent and equitable manner. USAID is actively engaged in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, a voluntary global partnership between governments, extractive industry companies, and civil society to promote the transparent and accountable management of oil, gas, and mineral resources. We have supported country-level implementation in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Zambia. This collaborative oversight is foundational for harnessing the benefits of extractives so that they serve the people.

Delivering Democratic and Security Dividends

The Strategy's second objective is to advance democratic efforts and tackle security challenges by anticipating, preventing, and addressing emerging and long-running conflicts. This link between democratic and security dividends explicitly recognizes the essential role that effective democracy and governance play in advancing peace and security in Africa.

More importantly, we will look to African countries and regional and multilateral institutions to advance peace and security in Africa. The African Union, regional communities such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and other African-led organizations are already playing critical roles in securing and maintaining peace in the region.

USAID partners closely with governments, communities, and local leaders to amplify their efforts to address conflicts at the local level before they spread. We look to reduce opportunities for other state and non-state actors (including Al Shabab, JNIM, or the self-styled Islamic State in West Africa) who may sow chaos to advance their ill-intended goals.

In places such as Somalia, USAID programming addresses the drivers of extremism by helping governments efficiently provide services and by giving citizens access to greater economic, social, and political representation opportunities, while also investing in resilience.

We will continue to support locally-led prevention and peacebuilding efforts to mitigate conflict through the Global Fragility Act in Coastal West Africa and Mozambique. Under the *U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability*, we will work with the Departments of State and Defense and other Departments and Agencies to address the underlying causes of violence and instability to prevent conflicts and crises from emerging or worsening. As we finalize and begin to implement 10-year plans in partnership with local stakeholders in Mozambique and Coastal West Africa, we are also drawing from lessons learned in the Sahel and elsewhere, and putting local sources of knowledge at the center of our planning.

Advancing Pandemic Recovery and Economic Opportunity

The Strategy also emphasizes the need to continue our response to the COVID-19 pandemic while countering its economic and social impacts. Millions of African citizens who were thrown into poverty by the COVID-19 pandemic are still working to recover. Their plight has become increasingly dire as Putin's unjustified war on Ukraine has exacerbated food insecurity and supply chain problems.

Building on long-standing support for health and health systems, USAID will continue to close the gaps in pandemic preparedness and response capacity. As a result of the U.S. government vaccine effort, Global VAX, which prioritized 11 countries in Africa, over 229 million vaccines were delivered to Africa and 23 percent of Africans are now vaccinated for COVID-19. We continue to partner with health authorities to address vaccine supply chains and uptake, as well as diagnostics, surveillance, and training. Public-private partnerships and our engagement with key regional organizations, such as Africa CDC and the West Africa Health Organization, will continue to be essential to this effort.

USAID works closely with countries in the region to strengthen health systems. Strong health systems are the foundation upon which effective pandemic preparedness must be built. Beyond providing quality services to respond to ongoing health needs, ranging from maternal health and family planning services to routine childhood immunization, strong health systems allow countries to mitigate the spillover of viruses from animals to humans, detect outbreaks early through strengthened diagnostics and surveillance systems, and respond quickly to control infectious disease outbreaks through infection prevention and control; risk communication; vaccines and therapeutics.

And when it comes to expanding economic opportunity and investment, the U.S. government, through Prosper Africa, Power Africa, and other USAID trade and investment activities, assists

businesses as they rebound, strengthens trade ties, and improves the business enabling environment to attract sustainable financing.

Both Prosper and Power Africa have already yielded impressive results. Since Prosper Africa's launch in 2019, the U.S. government has helped to close 800 trade and investment deals across 45 African countries for an estimated value of \$50 billion. Through a partnership with USAID, Virginia-based Red River Foods, a leading global supplier of plant-based food, is bolstering the production and processing of cashews in West Africa. With a \$3 million investment from USAID, Red River Foods is investing an additional \$47 million to expand and establish exports of cashews sourced from nearly 11,000 farmers, processors, and suppliers working in Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Benin, providing value chain actors with a steady and higher income. This co-investment will create nearly \$32 million in exports and at least 482 jobs in the United States and Africa.

Going forward, the Prosper Africa initiative will scale up partnerships with the private sector to facilitate deals, mobilize U.S. private capital, empower women economically, and sustainably strengthen business and investment climates that benefit both sides of the Atlantic.

Power Africa has connected more than 33 million homes and businesses to on- and off-grid solutions, bringing first-time electricity to over 159 million people across sub-Saharan Africa. Power Africa continues to promote mutual economic prosperity between the United States and African partners through technical expertise, innovation, investment, and enabling environment reform.

We will also invest in people through quality education, skill development, and nutrition and food systems that have been undercut by the pandemic and Russia's war on Ukraine. Feed the Future has expanded to eight new countries in Africa and will continue to build stronger food systems and improve nutrition across the continent. Our investments in education and youth prioritize increasing access to quality, relevant, and safe learning opportunities, and promote social well-being, particularly for vulnerable populations. The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) has trained more than 22,000 youth across the continent since 2015. These YALI alumni bring innovation, creative energy, and opportunities to civil society and economies across Africa. It is worth noting that half of YALI alumni are women, and YALI continues to increase recruitment of LGBTQI+ youth and youth with disabilities.

Support Conservation, Climate Adaptation, and a Just Energy Transition

Finally, the Strategy recognizes the need for climate adaptation, conservation, and restoration of the continent's ecosystems and rich natural resources. The impacts of climate change are being felt across Africa—from devastating flooding in Nigeria, South Sudan, and Sudan, to crippling drought in Madagascar and the Horn of Africa. Although Africa has extremely low emissions per capita, it will suffer some of the most severe effects of climate change.

USAID will expand engagement on climate change issues, especially adaptation, and build on our longstanding work in conservation and biodiversity. Together with the interagency, private sector, and civil society partners, we will identify an appropriate mix of energy solutions for the countries of the region.

Already, USAID is working to address the impact of climate change in Africa. Programs like those in Burkina Faso and Niger have helped farmers improve soil fertility, which has led to an average increase of 700 percent in their sales.

With the help of our partners, we will focus on conservation of the region's rich forests and ecosystems. Local engagement will continue to be particularly critical as more than half of Africa's population depends on forests for their livelihood, and more than one-third of Africa's population depends on wild fisheries for food security.

Efforts such as USAID's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) help galvanize local communities, civil society, the private sector, and governments to protect natural resources that are critical to reducing the impact of carbon emissions and climate change. The U.S. government recently renewed its longstanding commitment to the protection, conservation, and sustainable management of the Congo Basin with the launch of the fourth phase of CARPE. CARPE IV will build on earlier successes and lessons learned, and support the vision of a Congo Basin with healthy ecosystems and dynamic local leadership that supports stability and prosperity in communities.

Power Africa will work closely with countries across the region to diversify energy sources, advance the use of renewable energy, and increase the efficiency of existing systems while balancing gas-to-power infrastructure to help the countries advance their energy security. USAID's support to Power Africa's Just Energy Transition work in South Africa will soon be augmented by an additional \$45 million. We have also used smaller amounts of funding to leverage much-needed investment across the region.

As you can see, USAID's programs in Africa are well positioned to support the objectives in the *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*. Yet it will not be business as usual.

In fact, how we will accomplish these objectives is as important as what we will do. For starters, we must step up our engagement with African partners, affirm their agency, and elevate our partnership. Relationships matter. Even when we disagree on issues, we must be able to discuss areas of common interest and areas of concern. We must listen more, diversify the breadth of countries that we work with in Africa, and engage with medium and small states to advance our shared priorities, including the AU's Agenda 2063.

The U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, which President Biden will host next month, demonstrates our commitment to elevate and engage with senior African government officials, private sector

actors, civil society organizations, African women, youth, and diaspora to provide opportunities to coordinate and advance our shared interests. The Summit will include the U.S.-Africa Business Forum, which will focus on advancing two-way trade and investment partnerships that bolster Africa's role in the global economy. The Business Forum will feature a Deal Room, hosted by Prosper Africa, for announcements of bold, new commitments from U.S. and African businesses, governments, and investors. The Summit will also include a Civil Society Forum, highlighting the vital role that civil society plays in the region and in the partnership between the United States and African states.

We will place a renewed focus on public-private partnerships and new ideas. Our approach has proven that U.S. states and cities can indeed play a vital role in moving our shared development agenda forward in Africa. In fact, Prosper Africa and Power Africa have helped secure investments in Africa from the City and County of San Francisco Employees' Retirement Fund.

The new Strategy marks an important first step in the journey of transforming the U.S.-Africa relationship. It calls for expanding and modernizing U.S. partnerships in Africa, working together to find innovative solutions to new challenges, harnessing new research and technologies, and investing in long-term sources of strength while meeting immediate needs. It calls for deeper engagement with the continent, and Africa-led solutions. This Strategy reinvigorates and modernizes our relationship as it strengthens our longstanding historical and cultural connections based on shared values.

I am deeply committed to USAID's mission and our role in advancing the *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*. Thank you for your continued support of USAID's work in Africa, and the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome any questions.