

**Statement by Molly Phee**  
**Assistant Secretary for African Affairs**  
**House Foreign Affairs Committee**  
**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International**  
**Organizations**  
**“FY2022 Budget and U.S. - Africa Relations”**  
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Chair Bass, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Biden-Harris Administration’s priorities for U.S. engagement across sub-Saharan Africa. As this is my first time appearing before you in my role as Assistant Secretary, I’d like to take this opportunity to thank the Subcommittee for your longstanding, bipartisan support for the important work of the Bureau of African Affairs. I am honored to lead the incredibly dedicated public servants who work tirelessly and under challenging conditions to build partnerships across Africa that advance U.S. interests and contribute to a safer and more prosperous world.

I joined Secretary Blinken in mid-November on his first trip to the African continent as Secretary of State. During his trip, Secretary Blinken signaled a fresh approach to U.S.-Africa policy. In meetings with government officials, civil society activists and business leaders in Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal, he shared the following messages: The United States considers the countries on the continent to be major geopolitical players; we acknowledge that they will shape not just the future of Africa but of the world; we welcome voices from the continent offering innovative solutions to global challenges; and we do not seek to limit African engagement with other countries but to offer them more and better choices that reflect America’s competitive advantages. As the Secretary said, when tackling U.S. foreign policy priorities -- such as global health, climate change, economic growth, democracy and human rights, and peace and security – we will not succeed without the partnership of African governments, institutions, and peoples. His visit demonstrated that the United States values our relationships in Africa, and we’re invested in making those partnerships even stronger.

When delivering his foreign policy address in Abuja, Secretary Blinken announced the White House will host a U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in 2022. The purpose of the summit is to elevate our engagement and enrich and energize our collaboration on shared goals and interests. President Biden’s FY 2022 budget request for Africa of \$7.4 billion would provide the critical resources needed to advance these shared goals.

To be able to operate in support of these goals, we must remain focused on ending the COVID-19 pandemic and improving health security. I know you are closely watching the impact of the Omicron variant. In the past week, we all benefited from the quick action by South African scientists to identify and swiftly report the new variant. A successful global COVID-19 response is not possible without a strong local COVID-19 response, and I want to commend South Africa’s leaders for their transparency and swift action on this important matter. In coordination with our African partners, including the Africa CDC and the African Union, we are actively working to fulfill our commitment to provide COVID-19 vaccines and other critical supplies. So far, we have provided more than 90 million doses to 48 countries in Africa with more deliveries

and critical investments on the way. Through the Development Finance Corporation, we're also enabling South Africa and Senegal to manufacture vaccines themselves.

The pandemic has underscored the value of historic U.S. investments in supporting African health systems but also highlighted the need to better prevent, detect, and respond to current and future health security threats. The President's FY 2022 budget requests \$5.5 billion in critical funding for health programs in Africa, including \$3.9 billion for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). We look forward to our collaboration with Congress as we confront this unprecedented public health challenge.

Before COVID-19, Africa was home to nearly half of the world's fastest-growing economies and the source of enormous potential. Today, many of those same economies are struggling. By providing more than \$1.9 billion in COVID-related assistance for emergency food and other humanitarian support, we are seeking to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic, which has also led to a "shadow pandemic" of gender-based violence in Africa and across the globe. Likewise, we have supported the suspension of debt for 32 African countries to date, providing urgent financing, and supporting the IMF's allocation in August of \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights to ensure countries have resources for domestic programs to combat the pandemic and revive economic growth.

Looking ahead, we are focused on galvanizing investment from the American private sector, supporting workforce development and job creation, and tapping the energy, innovation, and ambitions of young people across the continent. The African Continental Free Trade Area is an immense opportunity which, once fully implemented, will be the fifth-largest economic bloc in the world and a driver of jobs, technological innovation, and an engine of the global economy. The President's budget request supports these important priorities, including \$80 million for Prosper Africa to increase investments for American businesses and accelerated two-way investment and trade across Africa and \$57.5 million for Power Africa.

To ensure these shared opportunities are realized, we must address the disturbing rise of anti-democratic trends and capitalize on democratic progress. Corruption, lack of transparency, election-related violence, and the use of technology and social media to fuel hatred, spread misinformation, and stifle freedom of expression undermine societies. We know that societies are stronger when the rights of all are respected, including traditionally marginalized communities like women and minorities. Stability and prosperity flourish when citizens' voices are heard, and governments are held accountable to the people they serve. The President's budget request includes \$251 million focused on strengthening democratic institutions, promoting respect for human rights, and directly addressing democratic backsliding across the continent. The \$10 million request for the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) will help develop and support young leaders who can advocate for peace, security, and democratic governance in their countries for generations to come.

Insecurity and threats posed by violent extremism threaten African ambitions. The President's budget request focuses on strengthening the capability of African regional and sub-regional organizations, government institutions, and civil society to address state fragility and armed conflict. Our goal is to help professionalize African security forces, including military units and

civilian law enforcement, which means helping our partners with training, equipment, and governance, including by strengthening accountability for instances of abuse. When security forces abuse the faith and trust placed in them by citizens they are sworn to protect, it erodes their legitimacy and therefore their effectiveness. And while security assistance is vital to bolstering the capabilities of African partner institutions, we recognize that addressing the root causes of conflict is just as important – maybe even more important – and the challenges faced on the continent, as anywhere else, almost always required whole of government solutions.

As you know well, stability in East Africa is currently threatened by the devastating conflict in Ethiopia and the assault on Sudan's transition to democracy. I look forward to discussing U.S. efforts to help these countries get back on track. But we should also keep in mind the positive trends and opportunities across the continent. Examples include democratic milestones set by President Hichilema's election in Zambia and Niger's first-ever peaceful transfer of power. It's also exciting to watch African trendsetters in technology, culture, and civil society.

Underpinning all these efforts is our most important resource: our people. In my confirmation hearing before the Senate, I promised to be a champion of the people of the Africa Bureau, to unleash their full potential with a vigorous commitment to diversity and inclusion and to cultivate the special esprit de corps that has traditionally defined the Bureau. At home and abroad, the Africa bureau faces significant staffing challenges and other constraints which inhibit our work. While we have a responsibility to do better, we would welcome additional input, resources, and flexibilities from Congress to improve our capabilities in order to achieve our ambitious agenda.

In particular, funding for Africa is heavily earmarked. There is only a limited amount of discretionary funding for bilateral and regional programming; discretionary programming would enable us to seize opportunities and respond quickly to rapidly changing conditions.

In closing, let me reiterate the importance and value of this dialogue. I understand the Africa Bureau has a strong record of regular engagement with you and your staff and I look forward to maintaining that essential tradition.