

Statement of
Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee
U.S. Department of State
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee Hearing
“FY 2025 Budget Request for Africa”
May 15, 2024

Chairman James, Ranking Member Jacobs, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Biden-Harris Administration’s FY 2025 Budget Request for Sub-Saharan Africa. Fundamentally we assess partnering with Africa is not only mutually beneficial but also essential to our national interests.

It is sobering to consider the decline in peace and security in Africa over the past year, especially the outbreak of civil war in Sudan, the intensification of the long-running conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and the rise of military governments in the Sahel. We must ask why this is happening and where we should invest our finite resources for maximum impact.

First, democracy scholars have documented worldwide a recession of democratic governance and a growth of authoritarian power. While acute in Africa, Africa is not alone. Second, we are now seeing the impact of destructive decisions made years ago. In Sudan in 2013, Omar al-Bashir set up competing militaries by establishing the Rapid Support Forces as a counterweight to the Sudan Armed Forces; now we witness the two struggle for dominance at the expense of their people and nation. The complex conflict in eastern DRC can be traced to the unresolved ethnic and state tensions that arose in the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The collapse of governments in the Sahel is linked to the 2011 overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi, which resulted in a flood of arms and jihadists into west Africa, testing the ability of local governments to provide security.

In response to these crises, the Administration named Tom Perriello to the position of Special Envoy for Sudan; enlisted the unique capabilities of DNI Director Avril Haines to promote de-escalation in eastern DRC; and deepened collaboration with Nigeria and Coastal West Africa, including by drawing on the resources of the Global Fragility Act. We are also employing the new African Democratic and Political Transitions initiative in west Africa. We strongly recommend increasing U.S. investment in democracy programming to strengthen resilience through institutions such as the judiciary, civil society and the media.

But this is not the only narrative in Africa. I want to lift up the underreported narrative of promise and potential that is in our interest to strengthen. Across Africa, with American support, we are seeing meaningful improvements in health, education, trade, infrastructure, food insecurity, governance and physical security. Since the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in December 2022, the Vice President, as well as an unprecedented number of cabinet and other senior officials, have traveled to the continent to advance our collaboration on this range of issues. In November, President Biden welcomed Angolan President Lourenco to the White House, and he will host Kenyan President Ruto for a state visit next week. Secretary Blinken made his third trip to Africa in January and Deputy Secretary Campbell co-hosted the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission in Abuja last month. We are seeking to deepen our investment in countries which are choosing to move forward, to allocate U.S. resources where they will lead real results.

Not only are we increasing bilateral ties, we are promoting African voices in global conversations such as AU membership in the G-20, a permanent African seat on the Security Council, and increased funding from international financial institutions. To tap the rich resources of the African diaspora, we launched the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement, who this summer will travel to Nigeria, home of the largest community of Africans in the United States. We are investing in Africa's greatest resource, its people, through education, educational exchanges, and youth programs. Our 160 American Spaces across Africa welcomed 1 million visitors last year. In FY23, we hosted 465 Africans in our International Visitors Leadership Program; the number for FY24 dropped to 372. Competitors and allies alike are becoming increasingly active in this space. The United States must not draw back at this critical moment and risk losing contact with Africa's youth.

We are steadily elevating our economic and commercial links, whether under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), continental or regional trade arrangements, or through other bilateral initiatives. We have fostered \$15 billion in deals first announced at the U.S.-Africa Business Forum in December 2022. Just last week, at the U.S. Africa-Business Summit held in Dallas, we announced more than \$2 billion in U.S. government investment from the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, the Development Finance Corporation, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and EXIM – project support for Malawi, Sierre Leone and the President's flagship infrastructure investment known as the Lobito Corridor which will benefit the critical minerals-rich countries of Zambia, the DRC and Angola by supporting transportation infrastructure to move minerals and other products to market, along with clean power and radio connectivity. Investment in

Africa is essential if we want to diversify global supply chains of critical minerals. The Lobito Corridor development and the Mineral Security Partnership support our private sector to build those diverse supply chains.

We provide substantial security assistance to Somalia and Kenya to combat al-Shabaab and to Nigeria to confront the threats from ISIS and Boko Haram. We remain the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance in Africa. Supplemental resources from Congress have been crucial to prevent famine and save lives.

This Budget Request maintains investments in landmark American programs such as Feed the Future, Power Africa, and Prosper Africa. We also seek support for new programs and initiatives such as the Digital Transformation with Africa Initiative, the MOU signed with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, and the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils. We remain committed to our flagship programs – AGOA and PEPFAR. We co-hosted the AGOA Forum with South Africa in November and will host African trade and finance ministers this summer as we work collaboratively with you toward reauthorization of AGOA in 2025. We also seek ongoing Congressional support for PEPFAR. The recent launch of the Administration’s Global Health Security Strategy will allow us to build African capacities to stop disease outbreaks abroad from reaching American shores.

Finally, as we collaborate with Africans to confront foreign mercenaries, propaganda and corruption, we welcome the tools provided by programs such as the Countering People’s Republic of China Influence Fund, and the new Countering Russian Malign Actors in Africa (CRMAA) Fund.

We want the continent of today and the future to share universal values such as democracy, accountability, and human rights for all, and to identify the United States as the preferred champion of human development, prosperity and security. The Department and USAID must have adequate resources to remain Africa’s partner of choice.

