

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

July 8, 2009

Dear President Obama,

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, write to express sincere appreciation for your upcoming travel to Ghana, West Africa. Other U.S. presidents have traveled to sub-Saharan Africa while in office, but none has prioritized a trip to the Continent so early in his term. Africa, her Diaspora, and all social justice advocates eagerly look forward to the dawning of a new relationship with the Continent, and believe that your trip can be the first step in establishing new policy, based upon mutual collaboration and respect between the nations of Africa and the United States.

In charting a new course for our country's relationship with Africa, we assert that there are several critical general principles of engagement:

- * A recognition of that our global interdependence requires sustainable, multilateral cooperation.
- * Our long-term security depends on working together with others to find ways to increase common security, including less conventional threats that endanger us all: climate change, epidemics, natural disasters, economic disasters, and even the unpredictable side effects of accelerating technological changes.
- * Our self-interest as a nation and our common humanity require investment in basic economic and social rights for all.

With specific regard to Africa, there is urgent need for the creation of a comprehensive new policy. During the period of the Cold War, U.S. relations with Africa were overwhelmingly dominated by the global rivalry with the Soviet Union. The consequences, in which both superpowers supported their clients with little regard to human rights or development concerns, remain visible today. Today, almost 15 years after Nelson Mandela took office in South Africa, the U.S. requires a comprehensive new Africa policy that builds upon affirmative general principles and fosters multilateral African-led solutions to create a stronger foundation for a mutually beneficial relationship.

There are pieces of such a policy which include the following four strategies:

**1. REFORM STRUCTURES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY TO REFLECT
INTERDEPENDENCE AND COOPERATION RATHER THAN BLIND RELIANCE ON**

MARKET FORCES. Specifically, the United States should accelerate bilateral and international actions to cancel unsustainable debt of African countries. It should also support reform of international financial agencies dealing with Africa to promote democratization and transparency of decision-making, open dialogue on economic policies without ideological preconceptions, and accountability to and input from national and legislative bodies and regional civil society. It should cooperate with UN-specialized agencies and African policy analysts, instead of privileging narrow macroeconomic prescriptions from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

2. RESTRUCTURE U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AGENCIES TO FOSTER COOPERATIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES TO CONFRONT GLOBAL PROBLEMS. It is essential not only to restructure foreign assistance programs for greater efficiency, but also to reframe U.S. contribution to internationally agreed efforts to meet common goals. The Obama administration can adopt a just approach to development, anchored in principles of mutual respects in a range of issues: food security, human rights, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and global health. The United States should: A) contribute its fair share to multi-lateral agencies; B) coordinate bilateral programs with international programs, e.g., the universally agreed-upon Millennium Development Goals, and C) ensure the integration of U.S. funded development programs within broader frameworks of regional and bilateral cooperation.

3. INTEGRATE REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND BILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS TO FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO RESOLVE ISSUES WITHIN EACH REGION. It is urgent to establish frameworks for broader dialogue, including African and U.S. civil society, policy analysts, legislators, and a wide variety of government sectors rather than, as is now the case, to privilege the expansion of military ties through AFRICOM and of trade ties through the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

4. REDUCE U.S. MILITARY SPENDING AND INVESTMENT AND DEFUSE THREATS THROUGH COOPERATIVE SECURITY MEASURES, ARMS REDUCTION, AND MULTILATERAL PEACE INITIATIVES. Importantly, the United States should stop the militarization of U.S. policy towards Africa by suspending all bilateral military cooperation with African states and anti-terrorism initiatives until and unless it can ensure that they do not reinforce nondemocratic regimes, contribute to ongoing conflicts, or stimulate new conflicts. Instead, U.S. security policy towards Africa should focus on strengthening multilateral peacemaking and peacekeeping capacity, by the African Union, African regional groups, and the United Nations.

We thank you for the opportunity to share these views with you and look forward to an opportunity to discuss them in greater depth.

Respectfully,

Jubilee USA Network
African Peoples Action Congress
Africa Action

TransAfrica Forum
Africa Faith and Justice Network
Association of Concerned Africa Scholars
African Security Research Institute
Mennonite Central Committee
Global Aids Alliance
Health GAP
Priority Africa Network
ISODEC
TWN Africa
Africa Alliance for the 21st Century
African Network for African Development (ANAD)
Positive East Tennesseans
TANEPHA
Friends Committee on National Legislation
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
ACT UP/East Bay
California Newsreel
United African Organization
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Just Foreign Policy
International Forum on Globalization
Vermont Global Health Coalition
Federation Council For African Foundation, Kenya Chapter
Institute of the Black World 21st Century
Justice in Nigeria Now
Friends of the Congo
Gender Action

And over 200 individuals who signed the letter on Change.org.