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Senator Scott Slams Biden for Weak Global Leadership, Allowing South Africa to Host the AGOA Forum

WASHINGTON – As the annual African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum begins in Johannesburg, Senator Tim Scott (R-S.C.), Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa and member of the Senate Finance Committee, slammed President Biden for allowing the forum to take place in South Africa, considering the government’s recent actions that undermine U.S. national security.

*“South Africa has harbored sanctioned Russian ships, expanded relations with Iran and issued statements against Israel’s right to defend itself following Hamas’s recent terror attacks,” **said Senator Tim Scott.** “President Biden’s willingness to allow the AGOA Forum to remain in South Africa following these egregious actions illustrates his glaringly weak leadership and undermines our nation’s strategic interests around the globe.”*

BACKGROUND

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has headlined U.S. economic engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa for more than twenty years. To participate in the program, African partners must meet certain eligibility requirements, including a willingness to “not engage in activities that undermine United States national security or foreign policy interests,” according to Section 104 of the AGOA statute (P.L. 106-200, as amended).

Despite its status as the greatest AGOA participant, the government of South Africa has engaged in recent [behavior](#)—including expanding its relations with Iran as the regime’s proxies attack U.S. personnel and Israel—that undermines U.S. national security and foreign policy interests. In addition to allowing the forum to move forward in Johannesburg, this week, the White House [released](#) its 2024 AGOA eligibility determinations that indicate South Africa will retain full AGOA benefits without so much as receiving a demarche.

Reforms to AGOA are critical in order to leverage maximum benefits for American workers and secure U.S. national security interests in a politically turbulent region. As the 2025 sunset for AGOA approaches, Senator Scott has [urged Congress](#) to begin discussion on the renewal process to allow for the time to secure necessary changes to the program and send the signal that the United States intends to remain the partner of choice throughout the region.