

Organised Labour Read Out: AGOA Forum

Special Note: Happy 37th Anniversary to COSATU. Formed December 1985

03 November 2023

Programme Director,

President Cyril Ramaphosa,

United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Katherine Tai,

South African Minister for Trade, Industry and Competition, Ebrahim Patel,

Leadership of government, business, labour and civil society from America and Africa,

For the first time an AGOA Forum, included a dedicated Organised Labour leg. We appreciate the efforts of Ambassador Tai and Minister Patel to ensure the trade union movement has been part of this important journey.

Working class communities face many daunting challenges, from the effects of climate change on food security in Chad, to the absence of job opportunities for young women in Sierra Leone, to the fears of coal workers in Pennsylvania.

The trade union movement is diverse, but we are united in support of AGOA as Organised Labour in the African continent and the United States.

AGOA has helped create millions of jobs from clothing factories in Lesotho to farms in Kenya. It has been a mutually beneficial relationship with components produced in Botswana included in vehicles manufactured in South Africa, to critical materials exported to factories in Louisiana, thus supporting the economic integration of the continent and economic growth in both America and Africa.

Whilst we welcome the support AGOA offers Africa, we are concerned that exports to the US are dominated by petroleum, minerals as well as exports from South Africa.

Organised Labour engaged extensively on a common position as the trade union movement. We believe it is critical that:

- *Congress be encouraged to not only renew but expedite AGOA's extension.*
- *Additional support be unlocked to enable emerging African sectors to exploit the opportunities AGOA offers; including finance, logistics and beneficiation.*
- *The scope of products AGOA covers be extended.*
- *Measures to strengthen decent work, fair labour practices and compliance be pursued.*
- *Further engagements take place on how a new AGOA can complement the African Continental Free Trade Area.*

The AGOA Forum is an important step in the journey to renew and enhance. This momentum must be maintained. Labour will continue to consolidate our proposals on a new and improved AGOA. We will work with government and business in support of an early renewal and to campaign to place the needs of workers, sustainable economic development, job creation and decent work at the centre of a new AGOA.

Thank you. Obrigado. Gracias. Merci beaucoup. Asante.