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Remarks by APNSA Jake Sullivan at the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum

U.S. State Department

Washington, D.C.

MR. SULLIVAN: Well, thank you, Joy. I will not tell you that story tonight. I need, like, two or three drinks before I tell it. So — (laughter) —

And now I'm the one standing between you and the refreshments, so I will not try to speak for too long.

But I really did want to come over from the White House, on behalf of the President, to say: Thank you all for being here. It's really great to be surrounded by so many longtime supporters of the U.S.-Africa partnership, from ministers to ambassadors, to colleagues from Congress who have come through over the course of the day, the private sector, and of course, civil society.

And, you know, I just want to start by taking us back to almost exactly 25 years ago. At that time, President Clinton was urging our nation to adopt AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act. And his argument was powerful. It was persuasive. It was, really, pretty simple. He said, "Congress has a chance to pass a bill that can transform our relationship... for the better...based on mutual respect and mutual responsibility."

And there was a senator at the time named Joe Biden, who seized on that chance. And as Vice President, he continued to transform and grow our partnership for the betterment of all

of our people. And as President, he's tried to ensure that that partnership is grounded not only in mutual respect and responsibility, but also in mutual values and a common vision for the world. And the impact has been considerable.

At the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, the Biden-Harris administration committed to invest over \$55 billion in Africa over three years, helping to elevate our partnership beyond development and security, to address global challenges together.

And I'm proud to say, oftentimes you put out these big numbers and you kind of walk away from the summit. We are 80 percent of the way there, well ahead of schedule, and Joe Biden intends to do what he has said he was going to do — and not just hit that 80 billion [sic] — \$55 billion mark over three years, but go far beyond it.

We've also helped close more than 500 new private sector deals, which have led to over \$14 billion in two-way trade investment between the U.S. and African countries.

And with the President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience, or PREPARE, we've provided over \$3 billion annually to help countries strengthen their resilience, especially to climate shocks. And this has had a profound impact because the lion's share of this money is going to African countries who are suffering the worst effects of these climate shocks.

And, of course, these resources matter. But representation also matters. So we pushed, before many others did, for the African Union to become a permanent member of the G20. Got that done. We're now pushing for African representation on the U.N. Security Council, and we intend to get that done too.

We've launched the first-ever President's Advisory Council on Diaspora Engagement to ensure that we're shaping our policies in a way that both reflects, reinforces, and leverages the deep ties that we have with the African continent.

And the President has sent an unprecedented number of leaders from his Cabinet and administration, including Vice President Harris, to visit more than 20 countries across Africa.

Earlier this summer, President Biden stood side by side with President Ruto at the White House to launch a vision document about debt relief that will be a game changer for African countries. And we will carry forward at the G20 Summit this fall — working with Brazil, South Africa, the current and next chairs of the G20 — to try to take that vision to the next level so that we have a framework for debt relief that really works and delivers for countries that have been suffering under debt for too long, compounded by the post-COVID overhang.

So when you take what we are trying to lay out, especially in this debt relief space, we know that there is so much more unfinished business that we have to do. And President Biden has told us: Run through the tape, get it done over the course of the next six months, and then continue to support Vice President Harris in her future efforts to continue delivering for the African continent.

So the opportunity that we see sitting before us to really think about the relationship between the public sector and the private sector and civil society may be best exemplified in the concept of corridors that lies at the heart of the President's initiative, the PGI, the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment. And we're especially proud of the Lobito Corridor.

Already, we've mobilized more than a billion dollars for railway lines that will extend from Angola to Zambia to the DRC and, ultimately, to the Indian Ocean, connecting the continent from east to west. It's the biggest American rail investment in Africa ever.

And it's not just about physical infrastructure.

On digital infrastructure, we're building fiber optic cables across the region to connect communities and businesses.

On energy infrastructure, we've mobilized almost \$3 billion in clean energy projects, from solar energy plants to battery energy storage — battery energy storage systems.

Now, I want to be clear: There's more that we have to do, more partnerships to form, more challenges to overcome, more potential to seize. But over the past three and a half years, that's just some of the progress that we've made together.

And that's in no small part because of AGOA — and not the direct impact of AGOA, though it has been profound, but because AGOA has really been the platform, the foundation upon which we have built so much of our other economic partnership work.

And I want to pause here for a moment. I know you've heard this a few times over the last couple of days, maybe not just over the last couple of days, but the last couple of months, even the last couple of years. But it bears repeating and we mean it: The President, myself, the entire Biden-Harris administration is committed to working with our Congress to reauthorize the law.

And in line with the theme of this forum, we're also committed to reimagining it, modernizing it, and ensuring the legislation promotes resilient supply chains, high-standard investments; ensuring that it supports our efforts to confront a range of emerging challenges and opportunities, whether it's artificial intelligence or the clean energy transition; ensuring that it incorporates voices across industry, including small businesses and entrepreneurs; and ensuring that it reflects the dynamism of our economies and the diversity of our peoples.

Because at its core, that is what the U.S.-Africa Partnership is all about, what this forum is all about. It's our people. The ones who stand up decade after decade, generation after generation, for the things that we hold dear: our country's shared values of liberty, democracy, freedom, prosperity, innovation. The ones who brought our nations together in fields like technology, medicine, education, and trade. And the ones who have transformed what is a geopolitical partnership into an unbreakable friendship between peoples, because that really is what should and can define the future of the relationship between the United States and the nations of Africa.

And we're going to keep that friendship strong by coming together in communities all across Africa and America to exchange ideas and innovations.

So I said I would be brief. I was a little longer than brief, but let me close with this.

Twenty-five years ago, when President Clinton urged Congress to enact AGOA, he ended his statement with a call to action: “Seize this opportunity.” That’s what he said. “Seize this opportunity.”

The United States will continue to answer that call to action. We will seize this opportunity now to reauthorize, modernize AGOA, and reinforce the foundation it provides to all of the other work that we do together.

We’ll continue to work with nations across Africa to build a world worthy of our people, one that is more free, more secure, and more prosperous for all.

And we will continue to stand with you, everyone in this room, in partnership and friendship, to seize all of these opportunities in the years ahead. Because as President Biden often says, there is nothing beyond our capacity if we do it together.

So, thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here tonight. I hope you have a wonderful evening. I’m so grateful to you for all that you’ve done and contributed here so far. And let’s get to work.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)