

AAUC BRIEFING BY AMBASSADOR JOHNNIE CARSON

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Response:

Ambassador Carson, please accept my sincere thanks for your detailed comments. I have had the advantage of being able to hear you talk about U.S. Africa policy on two different occasions in May 2009 – with South African diplomats and visitors at the Woodrow Wilson Center, and then on the release of CSIS’s new book *Africa After the Bush Years*. I always walked away feeling better about the direction that the Obama administration is likely to be moving on Africa policy in the future, and I can say that same thing today. Therefore, my comments take off from much that you have said, and they are designed to help propel the ship of Africa policy further ahead. My AAUC colleagues are being modest today, but I am building on their earlier comments for the April AAUC conference in which they laid out some important Africa policy issues. There were heightened expectations that President Obama would “raise the level of engagement between America and Africa” – to use Greg Simpkins’ phrase. So as the conversations with you and Secretary Clinton, and others at the White House are proceeding, there is increased hope that we will see new kinds of diplomacy, creative interpretations of how to deal with African development and food security, and new ways of approaching governance and conflict resolution challenges in Africa.

Clearly we are looking for an indication that Africa policy really matters to us, and that Americans will see that focusing on Africa really is in our national interest. Much has already been said. My focus here is to raise questions and tweak some of your suggestions about diplomacy, food security, and conflict prevention and mitigation, with a goal of making American initiatives more successful, and yielding productive results for our African partners. These issues often cut across each other and are interlaced in ways that increase their significance. Yet, in particular, I suggest that we:

- 1) Examine carefully what U.S. diplomacy means for Africa now, in contrast to the past. What new ideas for engagement with Africa are being proposed, how should they be implemented, and what do we expect them to yield?
- 2) Expand our approaches to governance and conflict prevention and mitigation so that they build capacity on the ground in Africa, utilize local cultural capital, and acknowledge the link between development and conflict.
- 3) Broaden our definition of development within our Africa policy, so that it includes food security, but also enhances economic sustainability, trade, and MDG goals such as poverty reduction, gender equality, and conflict prevention.

Diplomacy:

What are the new forms of diplomatic engagement that are envisioned within the Africa Bureau? Ideally, this ‘engaged diplomacy’ would tie into the Secretary of State’s vision for Africa and enhance President Obama’s goals for African diplomacy during his Administration. For example, in the CSIS’s *Advice to the New Administration* in 2000, one of the requests we made to the Bush Administration was for increased diplomatic resources for Africa, since the post-cold war marginalization of African countries had contributed to heightened conflicts and lessened development. Africans had expressed anger that when embassies closed, their situations were ignored, and perhaps largely unseen.

Condoleezza Rice created ‘transformational diplomacy’—a plan to address the new global realities within which President Bush’s foreign policy emphasis on democracy promotion and preemptive security in the post-911 world would play out. As those plans operationalized, Africa did gain diplomatic resources in the form of 17 more personnel slots for Africa, and a few consulates. But transformational diplomacy did not alter the State Department’s organizational structure or how things worked, and therefore it usually did not create new approaches to African diplomacy. There were no attempts to remove structural limitations to effective Africa policy within the Department, and African initiatives remained relatively isolated.

Now, your new initiatives and the vision are broader. Structurally, what would be necessary for the Africa Bureau to act on its concerns for governance and democratic progress, supporting human rights and the rule of law, deepening economic transactions and increasing energy security, focusing on agricultural development and climate change? What changes would have to occur within State for there to be new openness to African capacity building in foreign policy? How do we deepen diplomatic engagement, so that we reach beyond the regional giants (South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt), and get to know the smaller countries. Regional engagement allows us to gain their perspectives on regional issues. It will also provide ‘early warning’ of either opportunity or crisis.

The mainstreaming of African issues within the State Department is an important priority. Traditionally, each regional bureau handles their own issues, until they cut across the Global Affairs division, which focused on rule of law, gender, nuclear issues, infectious diseases, science and technology, environmental issues, etc. Often, this means that important issues for Africa, perhaps that it shares with other parts of the world do not gain visibility. Even the issue of women’s human rights, that was so important for the Islamic world, did not get emphasized sufficiently for Africa. The exceptions are HIV/AIDS and a few others. Former Undersecretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, congratulated the Congo government for the protection and growing numbers of lowland guerilla in the Congo Basin, but noted that other wildlife species – ones that do not rank high on the tourist list – are succumbing to pressures. What would it take for the issue of trans-boundary shipments of hazardous waste, which

is a serious environmental problem for African countries that link them to Europe and Asia, to be given the visibility it deserves?

PEPFAR was a major Congressional and foreign policy success for the Bush Administration. George Bush's commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS and Laura Bush's sincere concern for girl's education and human issues, helped earn Bush such high popularity ratings in Africa and a highway named after him in Ghana. Clearly, Michelle Obama shares these concerns for health, education, and strengthening civil society, so we need to hear from her on these issues. The challenge for the Obama administration is preserve and expand PEPFAR beyond the preferences given to religious organizations, and to allow PEPFAR funds to help reinforce and build health system capacity in African countries. Conversations with ordinary people on health issues will be essential in visits that the President makes to African countries. Health issues are ideal for mainstreaming across State, and hopefully health in post-conflict situations in Africa will be looked at and addressed from many programs and Bureaus.

President Obama has emphasized the importance of multilateralism, and we are hoping that he will work enthusiastically with global partners on African issues, especially the ones outlined below.

Governance, Conflict Prevention and Mitigation

African conflicts are often the results of governance failures. Americans are now wiser now than we were eight years ago, and thus we know that 'electoralism' as a form of democracy promotion does not in and of itself yield good governance or stable states. The key is to assist civil society in its organization, so that it can weigh in on electoral issues, choose the government it wants, and then apply the pressures that hold elected officials accountable. We should have learned in Algeria, Somalia and in a number of other places that we should not get the leaders we want, but those that people think are best for them. Corrupt leaders do not make good allies because they are incapable of good governance, and in their shadow states slide into conflict and war. The issue is how to reinforce good leaders and hold them up as shining examples that other African countries might be inclined to emulate. Thus, former Secretary General Kofi Annan and Nelson Mandela made enormous contributions to good governance in backing the Mo Ibrahim Foundation awards to former African presidents for good governance.

President Obama will be visiting Ghana – a country near and dear to my own heart – on his first official visit to Sub-Saharan Africa. This is an excellent choice. Over the last two decades, Ghana had done things right – made the transition from military rule to competitive elections, liberalized the economy through the tough medicine of structural adjustment, rebuilt the legislature and judiciary, created conditions for foreign direct investment, and partially liberated civil society. I use the word partial deliberately, because when the party in power fears losing an election, the slide back toward autocracy is possible. During the 1980s, UNDP and the U.S. State Department put considerable resources into women's NGOs and local groups which were the core of organized civil society in Ghana, and this enabled them to hold Ft. Lt. Jerry Rawlings' feet to the fire on

elections. The strategy succeeded, and Rawlings succumbed, even though he remained a thorn in the side of Ghanaian presidents for more than a decade.

As we know, stable democracies do not always remain stable. It is incumbent upon us to assess the problems of transition that confront young states, provide diplomatic counsel and monitoring, and offer the civil society supports that enable consistent democratic transitions. While in Ghana for the Carter Center in February 2008, I discovered that Ghana was indeed facing a transition crisis, and we understood that Ghana was too important to be allowed to fail. Indeed, it took considerable international pressure led by the Carter Center to temper President Kufour's NPP, reinforce electoral commission autonomy, and back Ghanaian civil society's determination to see free and fair elections. The reward was that Ghana had the best elections ever in December 2008. But the challenges continue, and on the pending trip to Ghana it will be important to hear all the political parties and the civil society voices that have kept transitions on track in the past. Do all our foreign policy interactions reinforce good governance? Do they encourage gender and ethnic equality, political representation, strengthen constitutions, encourage corporate transparency, and level the playing field for domestic and international capital?

Your recent visit to Kenya was important for that kind of consistent monitoring the conversations that alert everyone that negotiated agreements should be respected by the entire government. Of course, the situation in Kenya in 2008 taught us the lesson that we must always ask the hard questions, and find ways to let reinforcement for equality and democracy can run through all of our foreign policy interactions with African countries. In addition, it taught us that moral leadership, such as that provided by former Secretary General Kofi A. Annan was critical to bring the President ___ and Prime Minister Odinga together in negotiation. Now we are challenged to work with Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangurai in Zimbabwe to hear what ordinary Zimbabweans want, and then to hold the Unity Government's feet to the fire. Imani Countess of TransAfrica had an important article in today's *Washington Post* that asked us to find ways to support Zimbabwe's civil society, help improve the conditions confronting its citizens, without rewarding President Mugabe for the human rights abuses of ZANU-PF over the past few years. Zimbabwe's prior decline had regional implications and costs, so now a new relationship with Zimbabwe may be possible. These initiatives may also provide us an opportunity to put together a regional conversation on Zimbabwe – to hear the new leadership in South Africa, but also to listen to Botswana, Zambia, and others reflect on the issues. Now is the time to provide support for African peer review mechanisms (APRM) that encourage good governance.

Engaged diplomacy requires a focus on the African Union, its future potential to contribute to development and good governance in many African problems, and yet its lack of capacity, infrastructure, and funds to carry out many contemporary initiatives. There is a lesson to be learned from how Kofi Annan worked with the OAU/AU to create respect for governance standards, and then to utilize the resources of component UN agencies to educate and build capacity for economic and political governance. The

regional organizations (ECOWAS, SADC, EAC, IGAD, COMESA, etc) are important capacity nodes that must be further developed.

The US and international partners should give additional attention to capacity building in Africa, in order to prevent conflicts from multiplying. Certainly, another issue worthy of multilateral discussion is how to assist maximum participation in the AU so that all African states are capable of being sustained dues-paying members. Currently, Gaddafi in Libya frequently pays the lapsed dues of African countries, ensuring their participation, but thereby distorting the dynamics of the AU.

Two very different conflict resolution questions arise in the case of crisis-ridden Sudan and Somalia, whose importance has increased as global Islamic extremism rose. Just on the verge of successfully ending a two decade war of the North against Southern Sudanese independence, that country became the site of atrocities against the people of Darfur in 2002-3. Fortunately, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) for Southern Sudan of 2004 was not deferred in order to include Darfur in it. The CPA has proven itself to be a relatively effective agreement over the last few years. People who ask whether the Darfur situation must be given priority over the situation for Southern Sudan pose a false dichotomy. I would frame the issue differently by suggesting that the issue for this Administration is going to be one of achieving balance in Sudan. How do we balance the critical necessity of supporting the CPA with the important goals of preventing atrocities in Darfur and stabilizing Darfur in the future?

Today, an important meeting is being held in Washington with the Sudanese to assess the progress of the CPA. The Obama administration is joining the international community in working very hard on the two issues that now endanger the CPA. The issues are how oil revenues should be divided between the Government of National Unity and the Southern Sudan; and preventing the term 'genocide' from being used to describe the atrocities in Darfur. The North is insecure about its 'Arab identity,' which Egypt and others deny, and unwilling to allow southern dominance. The oil is entirely in the South, especially in the Abeyei region, and the North fears losing access to this revenue which has fueled Khartoum's development. Complicating the issue is that the label 'genocide' is important to the liberal and religious coalitions that supported President Obama, and therefore it complicates the relationship between the White House and the State Department.

Careful diplomacy and strong domestic public advocacy will be essential to resolving this Sudan/Darfur dilemma. Were all the parties to the Darfur Crisis – not just JEM and NCP, invited to today's event? The presence of the smaller parties as observers would do much to instruct them about the future potential of multilevel negotiations on Darfur, and it would help to build confidence in this route to conflict mitigation.

The solution to the Sudan problem will also require the use of African social and cultural capital combined with multilateral supports for the CPA, the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), as well as the emerging hybrid United Nations/African Union force (UNAMID). Although morally correct, the ICC warrant for the arrest of President Omar

al-Bashir is considered unprecedented and galling to Africans. AU leaders abhor the Darfur atrocities, but they appear to fear that the ICC warrant would challenge state sovereignty and drive the Sudanese back to war. At issue here is how to encourage an even-handed AU response to international human rights violations. If the U.S. doesn't get the balance and pressure points right on CPA and Darfur, there could be hell to pay.

Yesterday, UN Representative Ashraf Qazi and Andrew Natsios (the former U.S. Special Envoy on Darfur) pointed out that the Darfur issue is distracting our diplomats, at a time when our attention should be on sustaining the CPA. In today's *Washington Post*, Natsios argues that the conflict is a botched insurgency involving fighting among tribal groups, rather than genocide. Only half as many deaths occur in Darfur as in the Southern Sudan, and if support is not given to the CPA so that elections can occur in 2010 and the Referendum vote can occur in 2011, Southern Sudan is prepared to go back to war. Time is of the essence. How can the thinking of the State Department and the White House align, so that a coherent Sudan policy emerges?

The second major crisis is Somalia, especially the problem of piracy off the Somalian coast, in which an American vessel and its crew was seized, and then freed. Despite a long history of problems – 'Black Hawk Down' and an incoherent diplomacy on Somalia, there is hope in the emerging multilateralism. The US and its international partners created the *Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast on Somalia* on January 14, 2009. Recently, at the third meeting in New York city, the Group commended Kenya for its leadership in seeking justice for suspected pirates, endorsed the creation of a trust fund to defray prosecution expenses, collaborated on naval/military counter-piracy mechanisms (SHADE), agreed to promulgate best practices for protection of ships against piracy, and discussed the UN Secretariat's presentation of land-based counter-piracy projects.

Missing from this list of international maritime approaches and multilateral agreements are initiatives to gain a better understanding of the local conditions that create piracy. In addition to the list, the US needs to be searching for local solutions that involve the use of Somali social and cultural capital. Piracy is an economic strategy born of economic desperation and anger about colonial-cum-international infringement on Somali territory and waters that is not being addressed. The absence of an effective state means that their fishing resources decline as international poaching without legal concessions impoverishes coastal communities. Somali pirates operate as an extension of on-land networks based on lineage/kinship, friendship, and patron-client relations to provide food, jobs, and other critical resources to economically strapped people living in a crisis-ridden state.

Therefore, part of the solution must be found on-land, while President Omaar admits that the rest of the solution lies in a stable Somali government. However, the use of African social capital needs to accompany other institutionalized responses. Appeals must be made to the important local leaders of the areas from which the pirates come. In addition to working through IGAD, the use of local institutions for justice must take place. Care should be taken that these are not out of sync with existing constitutional,

parliamentary, and legislative frameworks in the region, less they be rejected. Such an endeavor would rally significant local support for anti-piracy efforts, and strengthen regional mechanisms for conflict resolution. In this way, we prevent the issues of legality that plagued the Sierra Leone tribunal in 2005 from arising here on the Somali piracy issues.

How the Obama administration deals with AFRICOM is another security issue. After many years of talk about an African Stand-by Force and two years of controversy about an African Command, AFRICOM stood up in October 2008. African countries had feared that AFRICOM would find a base on the African continent, that it would securitize U.S. relations with the African continent, that it would support dictators perceived to have resources that were in its national interest, and that its anti-terrorism thrust would drive all its initiatives. The Obama administration has continued the support for AFRICOM initiated by the Bush Administration, and is trying to clear up misconceptions on the ground. Meanwhile, AFRICOM has tried to correct its original strategic mistakes, clarify that it is like any other regional command except that it has a strong humanitarian and peace function, and clarify that the State Department, not DOD, takes the leadership on all foreign policy.

AFRICOM's base in Stuttgart Germany, as opposed to an African country, provides temporary comfort. There is some agreement that a base in Africa now would be counterproductive for Africans, even though there have been speculations about Liberia and Ghana – an idea which Ghanaians uniformly reject. For its part, the African Union has become more accommodating, and appears interested in seeing how it could benefit from the AFRICOM presence. But enabling an AU stand-by force to deal with African crises has always been the real issue, and it remains to be addressed. How will we utilize local cultural capital and contribute to African capacity building? Now the Obama administration has an opportunity to put its own touches on AFRICOM and the African stand-by force issues.

Development and Food Security:

Given that resources and trade are entangled at the core of many African conflicts, our State Department may have to find ways of dealing with this ensemble. For example, in the conflict surrounding the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) the weak Congolese state has often been used as a base for rebels and other fleeing capture, and then endured incursions onto its soil by surrounding states to exploit the vast Congolese resources. The peacekeeping operations in the DRC have been the largest in UN history. They have allowed a shift toward governance, but there were blunders, and they have not brought about a resolution of Congo's problems. It has been important for our State Department to be transparent, so that it does not appear that we favor parties, alliances, or countries in the ongoing conflicts.

Larger questions remain... do incursions provide opportunities for resource extractions that partially fund the military and help sustain surrounding states, or are they part of a larger strategy aimed at the balkanization of DRC. In the past, State Department

officials have considered this a sovereignty issue, and implied that when DRC is strong enough, it will create the legal regimes that prevent exploitation. Meanwhile, citizens suffer and the conflicts continue to benefit the many international corporations that do business in the DRC, since there are few state pressures for accountability in that political climate. It may be time for the U.S. to pursue multilateral discussions on a strategy for a regional framework for peace and development in DRC.

Obviously, there is a need to rebuild USAID so that it can weigh in on these development issues. But going beyond that, other parts of the State Department should also begin to pursue the links between resources and conflicts that lie at the heart of many African crises. U.S. civil society and business can provide the leadership in moving the global community toward a new set of ‘Sullivan Principles’ that deal with the contemporary business-state interface in African countries. But if they could achieve resonance from the Department of State (and Treasury or the Federal Reserve), we could begin to kinds of declines in conflicts that we saw following the Kimberly process for illicit diamonds in early 2000.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) was a critical piece of legislation for this decade, and it is good to see that the State Department representative will attend its meetings in August. Yet AGOA did not yield as much as originally envisaged for African countries, and energy products continue to be the bulk of African imports into the U.S. Only a select set of African countries were able to utilize the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) initiatives, and ways must be found to broaden the access of others to MCC project initiation. But there are other institutional and project concerns as well. The dynamism of the Departments of Commerce and Transportation on African issues during the Clinton Administration has receded, and question now should concern how to rebuild some of that outreach to Africa. With new opportunities for jobs and access to capital, illegal drug activities become less attractive. Priorities such as these would mesh well with Secretary Clinton’s concern to see new approaches to development, gender, and conflict resolution.

Assistant Secretary Carson has talked about Africa’s missing ‘Green Revolution’ and the briefing on food security within the State Department that is trying to address this important gap. The Obama Administration has already gained domestic points by working on issues related to health and jobs in the U.S., but it could win African hearts and minds by making specific commitments to addressing the situation of women and children in agricultural and trade development. It would need to be ‘smart agricultural policy’ that does not repeat the errors of the Green Revolution in Asia during the 1950s and 1960s, and that helps offset the rural to urban migrations that took place during the economic restructuring in Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. Sporadically, our Department of Agriculture has been helpful to African farmers in dealing with new crops, with pests and environmental issues. But imagine the impact if Obama created an Agriculture Corps that helped African women farmers to restore traditional/sustainable food crops. Imagine if this Administration backed agricultural transfers for debt relief, and provided advanced educational training in agricultural sciences in our land-grant historically black

colleges and universities. Africans are demanding the rejection of genetically modified (and probably patented) seeds, and returning to crops that have cultural resonance.

Assistant Secretary Carson has also emphasized the importance of environmental security, and of crafting a foreign policy that reinforces positive ecological balance in Africa. This is a laudable goal, and one that would strengthen the agricultural initiatives mentioned above. When I am in Tanzania each year, and I look at what is happening to Lake Victoria, I am reminded of the importance of the environmental issues. As the international fishing trawlers collect the tons of tilapia from the Lake, freeze and ship it to western ports, they leave behind an impoverished and devastated marine environment. Populations along the Lake have less affordable protein, work harder to feed themselves, and encounter greater health challenges as a result of the devastation. These environmental challenges have many international components, and work on them would allow us to demonstrate the kinds of multilateral approaches that Africans would welcome. Of course, the bonus is that it would strengthen American support for the Millennium Development Goals that aim to stem African poverty by 2015.

Throughout most of this decade, security initiatives rather than development were NEPAD's calling card in the regional organizations. In the current financial crisis, no country can deliver the amounts of foreign aid that were envisioned in the past. Yet, there is no justification for cutting foreign assistance budgets, even if they cannot grow as desired. Working cooperatively, it is possible for to address many of Africa's development needs through creative mechanisms.

Over the past two months, I have heard a number of African diplomats comment that anti-American and anti-British sentiment is often fueled by public perceptions that we have not lived up to Western commitments (especially G8) to assist with development. Often the comments arise out of discussions of what is happening with NEPAD and whether it is falling victim to the economic crisis. Both American and British officials often respond that this is a misperception... the G8 Africa Action Plan did not make infrastructural commitments such as those normally contained within NEPAD, because this is the responsibility of the state. Ordinary Africans see things differently, and many Americans respond that the Africans are correct. Support from the US, the British, the French, the Chinese, the Indians, and others for NEPAD should be axiomatic, unless we want NEPAD to seek funds in Libya or Saudi Arabia, or elsewhere.

It now appears that the G8 is not longer as effective because of the economic crisis, and partially because a new set of players are involved. Now China and India are most involved in infrastructural developments in Africa. Since they are doing the most in agricultural, transportation, and technological investments, it may be time to move such discussions to the G20 where they are intrinsic members. The Obama Administration needs a sound Africa strategy on how it will work China, India, and other new players in the G20 as it deals with African issues.

In Conclusion:

Ambassador Carson, you have outlined an impressive agenda for Africa over the next few years. You and others in the Obama Administration will find that you have many knowledgeable and able partners willing to work with you to create and implement U.S. foreign policy for Africa. We hope that you will institutionalize the links to a constituency like AAUC as you proceed to craft a new type of diplomacy with Africa, create sound approaches to conflict prevention and mitigation, and forge new links between African development and conflict resolution.

