

Obama Administration Pushes Forward on AGOA Renewal

Washington DC, August 13, 2014 (ECA) - Progress in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) made headlines at the US-Africa leaders Summit held this month in Washington DC. The Summit unveiled \$14 billion in commercial deals as part of a campaign to improve on a trade relationship in which the US and Africa have up till now, done very little business together. The summit was an effort to highlight the economic potential of the continent.



Speaking at the Summit, President Obama said the United States does not look to Africa only for its natural resources but recognizes that its greatest resource is its people. The President has also directed Congress to start working on the AGOA renewal process in line with the recommendations made by the US and eligible member countries.

According to Stephen Karingi, Director, Regional Integration and Trade Division Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the progress in the US-Africa relations can be attributed to some of the work that the ECA, through its Africa Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) has been undertaking in terms of providing support to eligible African member countries in their efforts to ensure that the trade arrangements play a role in Africa's transformation and remain beneficial to the US as well.

He notes that the ATPC developed AGOA National Response Strategy Guidelines accompanied with an M&E framework to monitor and track the performance of the AGOA eligible countries in the implementation of AGOA. This exercise provided the basis for AGOA eligible countries to use the frameworks to develop their own response strategies. The national response strategies are designed to provide a structured framework to assist AGOA eligible countries to respond more effectively to AGOA.

Note to Editors:

Following the decisions of the 10th meeting held on June 8 2011 in Lusaka, the ECA's ATPC was requested

to develop frameworks accompanied with a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) that will track the implementation of AGOA in eligible member countries. It was also widely acknowledged that through AGOA, the US has contributed to the development of African economies in the recent past even though AGOA is yet to reach its optimal utilization.

The guidelines that have been developed by ATPC are based on analysis carried out in eligible countries that identified gaps between the expectations of AGOA and AGOA's actual impact in beneficiary countries. This initiative has been endorsed by the US as a crucial exercise that will ensure that the post 2015 AGOA will be more effective to both parties. The African Development Bank (AfDB) has also expressed interest in collaborating with ATPC on the exercise. With the technical and financial support by the ATPC, Ethiopia, Zambia, Lesotho, Nigeria have developed their response strategies. Cote D'Ivoire, Cameroon and Benin are still in the formative stages in the development of their own policies.

In addition, ATPC has conducted a series of research papers on AGOA to assess the performance of AGOA and offer policy advice on AGOA Post 2015.

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