

National Statement from the Togolese Republic
on the occasion of the US Africa Leaders' Summit
State Department, Washington DC – August 6th, 2014

I would like to thank President Obama and the American people for taking this initiative to host the inaugural US-Africa Leaders' summit.

Togo and the United States of America may appear to have little in common. The United States is a vast country with substantial wealth. My own nation is half the size of the New York City area with a smaller population. What the Togolese share with the people of America is intangible, but fundamental; a high regard for freedom, peace and diversity. These values underpin both our societies.

Togo is a nation that prizes peace above all else. It is built into our DNA, our customs, our humanity and it encompasses our national policies for sustainable development. Though we do not have the same wealth of resources as some of our neighbors, we are on a steady path to economic prosperity. While we journey on a sustainable development path that can bring inclusive growth to our nation, we take succor from our ability to serve as a beacon of peace and stability in our region - an asset that we prize above all else.

We do not take this peace for granted in Togo. It is not a passive virtue. It is an asset that we have actively developed for generations. It is a condition that we have invested in and will continue to invest in for the benefit of our people and the entire region.

Allow me to turn to my continent for a moment. Africa's growth is impressive. It is the envy of much of the world today (certainly of investors looking for good returns). At the same time, it is not universal and it is not equal. For this reason, it is fragile. Wherever there is exclusion and inequality, stability will be threatened and livelihoods will be placed at risk. Growth alone cannot cater for all our needs.

From the Horn of Africa to the Gulf of Guinea, our security is threatened today by groups who nurture extremism, radicalism, and who engage in the trafficking of arms, drugs and persons. They thrive where our populations are poorest. Their actions have implications for the whole world.

In the face of this threat, Africa and the International community need to reinforce their cooperation. We need to increase the spectrum of our efforts to ensure the protection of our populations and the ability of an entire continent to seize this historic opportunity to act as a new pole of growth for the entire world.

To harness the economic opportunity that Africa represents for the world today, we need strong institutions, good infrastructure and jobs: strong institutions to promote good governance and ensure that the rule of law is respected; good infrastructure to facilitate enterprise and develop our private sector; and jobs, for the immediate stability of our societies and the empowerment of our future generations.

Much of what we will discuss with investors, US companies and the government of the United States over the course of this summit will be geared towards finding partnerships to address Africa's infrastructural deficits and our mutual socio-economic needs. Joint cooperation must also address our peace and security needs. Failure to do so would present the single greatest threat to our partnership. Through cooperation with the United States, we stand to gain from your invaluable experience in the prioritization of peace and stability as a cornerstone of development.

Some of the investment we seek to catalyze from this summit should be directed towards our military and armed forces, both on a national and continental basis. In that regard, I want to thank the American people for their support of our peace keeping institutions on the continent through a dedicated command, and call for an increased cooperation with Africom to build the capacity of our African Standby Force. In the face of increased terrorism activities, I also want to reassure the American people that their help is not only geared towards resolving African problems, but is indeed part of the solution to global peace.

As I call for this increased cooperation, it is only fair for your country to expect ours to do their part, so allow me to highlight my government's existing investment in peace. We have recently doubled the capacity of our patrol boats to fight maritime insecurity and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, and we will host an AU Summit on this critical issue in the coming months. Beyond maritime security, our investment is directed towards protecting the maritime resources of this Gulf, and enabling our deep sea port of Lomé to serve as a maritime hub for the entire region. Equipping our customs officials with the necessary equipment and resources to fight trafficking networks of all types, be they arms, drugs or ivory, and increasing our cooperation at a regional and international level to ensure these measures deliver secure means of passage for manufactured goods and natural resources in and out of the region.

As we invest in the 'value chain' of peace, I want to invite American businesses to partner with us, each in their own area of specialization, but united in the knowledge of the interdependency of all these efforts and our resolute and active pursuit of peace and development. Such an approach is, I believe, paramount for ensuring sustainable shared prosperity between our two countries, and vital for the continued development of the African continent at large.

I thank you.

Faure E. Gnassingbé
President of the Togolese Republic