

harshly restricting freedom of religion, which is trampled upon daily in Turkmenistan; groups brave enough to meet risk home raids, imprisonment, deportation, internal exile, house eviction and even torture. The new provisions further empower regime agents to squash religious practice. Now, individuals caught more than once in a year acting on the behalf of an unregistered community can be fined between ten and thirty months of wages, or be sent to hard labor for up to one year. Of course, registration is in effect impossible to obtain, leaving religious communities and their members in a highly vulnerable position.

A recent Niyazov decree on NGO activity makes it punishable for most Turkmen to interact with foreigners. Representatives of non-Turkmen ethnic groups, such as Uzbeks or Russians, face discrimination in education and employment. Niyazov has not only reestablished and strengthened the environment of fear, he has deliberately isolated his country from outside influences. Under his rule, Turkmenistan has no chance of developing normally.

As November 25 approaches, we recall that when a political system centralizes all power in the hands one man, offering no possibilities for participation to anyone else, people may be tempted to change that system by any means. And we have occasion to consider the eternal validity of Lord Acton's dictum: "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Unfortunately, the U.S. response to Turkmenistan's blatant disregard for human rights has been shamefully weak. In August, although Turkmenistan violates freedom of emigration by requiring exit visas, the Administration made the astonishing decision to exempt Turkmenistan from Jackson-Vanik requirements on the free movement of citizens.

Our leverage on this particular dictator may be weak but we have opportunities to express our outrage about these ongoing abuses and to align ourselves with the forces of freedom and democracy. In addition to ending the Jackson-Vanik waiver, the State Department should designate Turkmenistan a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. The regime's well-documented record of "particularly severe violations of religious freedom" unquestionably meets the statutory threshold envisioned when we passed the Act of "systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom."

The United States and the international community must condemn the actions of Niyazov's regime and continue working to bring Turkmenistan back towards civilized and democratic norms. Any other approach betrays our own principles.

ON INTRODUCTION OF THE AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT III

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, Today, I am proud to join with Congressman MCDERMOTT, Chairman ROYCE, Congressman JEFFERSON, Congressman PAYNE and Congressman NEAL in the House, and Senator LUGAR in the Sen-

ate, in introducing legislation to begin the third phase of the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

It has been almost ten years since a bipartisan group of Members came together to help create a trade and investment framework between our great country and the countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

It has been more than three years since the first phase of that effort became law.

In that short time, the results have been impressive:

In three years, AGOA textile and apparel exports to the United States have doubled, rising from \$570 million in 1999 to \$1.1 billion for 2002. This total comprises 9 percent of all AGOA exports.

AGOA exports now comprise approximately two percent of all U.S. textile and apparel imports—a 100 percent increase from 2000, when AGOA took effect.

Africa's 92 percent export growth rate in textile and apparel products is 10 times that for China, Latin America, Europe and other major textile and apparel exporters.

However, we cannot afford to sit back and admire what we have done. So much remains to be done to fulfill the promise of this important legislation and this important trade program—to fill in the gaps that still exist.

So, today, I join with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to call upon the House, the Senate and the President to take the next important step to broaden and deepen the commercial and bilateral relationships between the United States and African countries.

We need to ensure that the benefits of AGOA

We need to do this for so many reasons—bringing Africa more and more into the mainstream of the world trading system, strengthening the bilateral ties between the United States and African countries, giving women and men in the poorest countries in the world the chance to earn a fair and decent living so that the seeds of growth and a better life and a middle class society are sewn, rather than the seeds of discontent that we see in some other regions of the world.

To do this, we need to push forward. Specifically, we need to extend the effective date of AGOA, extend the ability of AGOA least developed countries to use fabrics from third countries, and bring under the AGOA framework the important agricultural products that many countries in the region seek to produce and export.

In the agriculture area, Africa's exports have actually *decreased* by 4.5 percent (or \$25 million) since 1999. While duty free treatment will not completely solve the problem caused in part by large domestic support programs in the EU and elsewhere, this step will certainly help.

In other areas, the bill encourages both responsible conservation and responsible development through a provision in support of ecotourism, an area where many African countries have an important natural and comparative advantage that they are seeking to use in a sustainable and responsible way.

I look forward to working with many others on both sides of the aisle who have been so supportive of AGOA I and AGOA II, particularly Chairman BILL THOMAS and Chairman PHIL CRANE of the Trade Subcommittee, Congressman AMO HOUGHTON in the House, and Senator BILL FRIST and others in the Senate,

along with the distinguished African Diplomatic Corps, and so many in the business community to realize our goal.

Finally, we intend this bill to be a starting point, and that as we move forward, we can work with Ambassador Zoellick and his staff, and Secretary Evans and his staff, to improve the legislation to reflect best the development needs of sub-Saharan Africa.

Also hope we can work together on other initiatives to ensure that the poorest countries of the world—such as Haiti and Bangladesh and Cambodia—are not left behind after 2005.

INTRODUCTION OF A BILL TO ALLOW FOR PRIORITY IN THE ISSUANCE OF IMMIGRANT VISAS TO SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF FILIPINO WORLD WAR II VETERANS

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill that will provide for the expedited reunification of the families of our Filipino World War II veterans who have become citizens of the United States.

This body has many times over recognized the courage and commitment of the Filipino troops who fought alongside our armed forces in the Philippines during World War II. In 1990, we provided a waiver from certain naturalization requirements for these veterans, and many thereafter became proud citizens and residents of our country. And this year we appear poised to provide one further long-delayed and long-denied measure of justice by granting them veterans benefits which were unjustly denied to them in 1946.

But a huge gap still remains, for we did not also permit naturalization in 1990 to the children of these same veterans. What my bill does is allow for the sons and daughters of those veterans that became U.S. citizens through the process established in 1990 to have priority in their respective immigration categories.

These are real-life issues, for the stories of families who have waited years to be reunited are heartbreaking. For example, a veteran and his wife living in Hawaii filed immigration petitions for two of their six adult children; they have waited over ten years for a visa to be issued to either. Another veteran petitioned successfully for his wife's immigration visa, but has not been as successful with the applications for their five adult children. Again, this family has been holding on for ten years with the hope that they will one day live in the U.S. as a complete family.

As we all know, our Filipino World War II veterans are entering the sunset years of their lives. We have done what we can to give adequate veterans benefits for their commendable service. I now urge my colleagues to recognize and provide for the reunification of these families of our Filipino World War II veterans by supporting this bill.