

Remarks at the Ubungo Symbion Power Plant in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
July 2, 2013

Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, it is wonderful to be here with President Kikwete. I want to thank everybody from Ubungo Power Plant for this visit. We are here today to focus on one of the biggest hurdles to Africa's economic development: the fact that nearly 70 percent of Africans lack access to electricity.

And that's why in my speech in Cape Town, I announced a major new initiative, Power Africa, to double access to electricity here in Africa. Now, the first step that we're going to take is to try to bring electricity to 20 million homes and businesses.

And this plant represents the kind of public-private partnership that we want to replicate all across the continent. This facility was idle. But the Tanzanian Government, under President Kikwete's leadership, committed to making reforms in the energy sector. With support from the Millennium Challenge grant, General Electric, and Symbion, they got it up and running again. More Tanzanians got electricity.

So Power Africa embraces this model. Public and private resources will be matched with projects led by African countries that are taking the lead on reform. In this case, African Governments commit to energy reforms, the U.S. is committing some \$7 billion in support, and private sector companies have already committed more than \$9 billion. And this is just the beginning, because we look forward to even more companies joining this effort.

So this is a win-win. It's a win for Africans: Families get to electrify their homes; businesses can run their plants; investors can say, if we locate in an African country, that they're going to be able to power up in a reliable way. All this will make economies grow. It's a win for the United States because the investments made here, including in cleaner energy, means more exports for the U.S. and more jobs in the U.S. And obviously, a growing market in Africa will mean more opportunities for all countries.

And this reflects—is representative of my new approach when it comes to development. I believe that the purpose of development should be to build capacity and to help other countries actually stand on their own feet, whether it's in agriculture, in health systems, in electricity. Instead of perpetual aid, development has to fuel investment and economic growth so that assistance is no longer necessary or some of the more successful countries in Africa can start being donors instead of recipients of assistance.

But development isn't just about big projects. Sometimes, simple ideas can bring about transformational change. Some of you saw the Soccket, the soccer ball that we were kicking around that generates electricity as it's kicked. I don't want to get too technical, but I thought it was pretty cool. And this is developed by two young women from the U.S., so Soccket turns one of the most popular games in Africa into a source of electricity and progress. And you can imagine this in villages all across the continent.

So that's just the example of the kind of creativity that is possible if we've got the public sector and the private sector and the not-for-profit sectors all working together.

Now, in order for this to work, though, we all have to feel a sense of urgency. One of the things, Mr. President, that I learned around the business roundtable is: if we are going to

electrify Africa, we've got to do it with more speed. We can't have projects that take 7, 8, 9 years to be approved and to get on line. If we're going to make this happen, we've got to cut through the redtape, and that can only happen with leadership like the leadership that President Kikwete has shown.

We've got to be able to say, when the environmental studies are done, when the planning is done, when the paperwork is done, we can move this approval process, clear the redtape, make sure that the regulatory structure is in place, and get these things up and running in a timely way. Because it's hard to attract private-sector business if they feel as if their money is going to be tied up forever in uncertainty. So we want to focus on speed, but we also want to do it right. And the United States intends to be a strong partner in this process.

This is my last stop on my trip. We're going to be heading home right after this. And as I think about the week that we've spent here, I think about the farmers in Senegal who are harnessing new technologies and, as a consequence, increasing yields; women who started off with 1 hectare now having 16 and doubling or tripling their income and buying a tractor for the first time, and suddenly, they're employing people, and the entire community is benefiting.

I think about amazing young Africans that I saw at the town hall meeting down in Soweto, and their eagerness to promote trade, not just to seek aid, to be entrepreneurs and start businesses, and just hoping that the Governments will support them and that the efforts will be made to increase transparency and accountability and to eliminate corruption.

I think about the visit here to Tanzania: the incredible progress that's been made in reducing malaria and HIV and tuberculosis, the progress that's been made in terms of education and agricultural improvements, and progress that's being made as represented by this power plant.

And I think of all these things, and I see leaders like President Kikwete who are making every effort to do the right thing, and I'm inspired. Because I'm absolutely convinced that, with the right approach, Africa and its people can unleash a new era of prosperity. And that's what Power Africa is all about. That's what Feed the Future is all about. That's what all our efforts are going to be about, is making sure that Africans have the tools to create a better life for their people and that the United States is a partner in that process. It's going to be good for Africa, it's going to be good for the United States, and it's going to be good for the world.

So thank you very much, everyone. And most of all, thank you, President Kikwete, for your wonderful hospitality. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. at Ubungo Plaza. In his remarks, he referred to Jessica O. Matthews, cofounder and chief executive officer, and Julia Silverman, cofounder and advisory board member, Uncharted Play.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Ubungo Symbion Power Plant in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

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