UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON DOING BUSINESS IN AFRICA (PAC-DBIA)

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WEDNESDAY
APRIL 18, 2018

The Advisory Committee met at 3:00 p.m. in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, 1650 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington D.C., Room 350, Jay Ireland, Chair, Presiding.

PAC-DBIA Members

Jay Ireland, President and CEO, GE Africa (Chair)
Mimi Alemayehou, Managing Director, Black Rhino Group; Executive Advisor and Chair, Blackstone Africa Infrastructure LP
Kimberly Brown, CEO, Amethyst Technologies
Kusum Kavia, President, Combustion Associates, Inc.
Barbara Keating, President, Computer Frontiers, Inc.
Bill Killeen, President and CEO, Acrow Bridge
Jack Leslie, Chairman, Weber Shandwick
Andrew Patterson, President for Africa, Bechtel Overseas Corporation
Fred Sisson, CEO, Synnove Energy
Andrew Torre, Regional President, Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East & Africa, Visa Inc.
Rahama Wright, Founder and Chief Executive Director, Shea Yeleen
Department of Commerce

Wilbur L. Ross, Secretary
Gil Kaplan, Under Secretary for International Trade
Erin Walsh, Assistant Secretary for Global Markets and Director General of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service
Holly Vineyard, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Global Markets

National Security Council

Cyril Sartor, Senior Director for African Affairs
Adrian Bogart, Director of African Affairs, Southern Africa

Other U.S. Government

Cheryl Anderson, U.S. Agency for International Development
Scott Birdwell, Securities Exchange Commission
J. Steven Dowd, African Development Bank, Department of the Treasury
Mark Dries, Department of Agriculture
Thomas Hardy, U.S. Trade and Development Agency
Mark Koumans, Customs and Border Patrol
Jesse Law, Export-Import Bank
Jack Leslie, Export-Import Bank

C.J. Mahoney, United States Trade Representative
Eric Meyer, Department of the Treasury
Jonathan Nash, Millennium Challenge Corporation
Ray Washburne, Overseas Private Investment Corporation

Don Yamamoto, Department of State
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(3:09 p.m.)

CHAIR IRELAND: I will call this

session to order. My name is Jay Ireland, the
Chairman of the PAC-DBIA and CEO of GE's
operations in Africa. I don't have a gavel so
that will do.

I would like to welcome you all to our
second meeting with the Secretary and the team.
And we're very excited about talking today about
the trip and some of the recommendations that we
have. So we'll just get started, and I will turn
it over to Erin Walsh, the Assistant Secretary of
Commerce.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Jay, very much.
each time the Council meets is another time --
sorry, the testament of importance of the
commercial relationship in Africa.

Before turning the meeting over to
Secretary Ross, I would like to take a moment to
introduce our new Under Secretary for
International Trade Administration, Gilbert
Today marks Gil's fourth week in office, but he's no stranger to ITA. He spent almost five years in ITA during the Reagan administration. Gil was the Acting Assistant Secretary and Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Import Administration, the predecessor to Commerce's Enforcement and Compliance Unit.

Gil is a skilled trade negotiator. As a partner at King & Spalding where he just came from, he focused on trade and trade cases and policy.

We have been anxiously awaiting his arrival at the Department of Commerce and are thrilled to have him here today. Thank you, Gil.

MR. KAPLAN: Thank you, Erin, and welcome to all of you to this very important meeting. The President has laid out the top line goals that drive his administration's work. One of these is promoting American prosperity.

In that context, the International Trade Administration, ITA, has a key role to play
in promoting free, fair and reciprocal economic relationships.

Specifically, ITA will pursue this goal through one, strengthening the competitiveness of U.S. industry. Two, ensuring fair and reciprocal trade through the rigorous enforcement of our trade laws and trade agreement.

Three, growing exports above products and services. Four, attracting investment in U.S. communities and finally transforming American trade policy.

I am pleased to be back at the ITA to lead this process of strengthening our national security by bolstering our economic security.

I am also glad to have the opportunity to engage with the Council as it provides guidance to the President on how to expand the U.S. commercial presence in African markets.

For me, this harkens back to my first endeavors in international affairs. Years ago as a student, I had the opportunity to visit Ghana
and Cote d'Ivoire. At the time, I was a volunteer with Operation Crossroads Africa, a precursor to the Peace Corps.

I recall driving north from Accra, Ghana, and then over into Cote d'Ivoire where I spent eight weeks working in the Town of Adzope. I was quite impressed to have the opportunity to meet there twice, the President of the Cote d'Ivoire, Felix Houphouet-Boigny during my stay.

Returning to the present day, I am extremely pleased to introduce Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross under whose sponsorship the Council is meeting today. The Secretary, on behalf of President Trump, has taken a keen interest in leveraging the work of the PAC-DBIA to deepen trade and investment relationships between the United States and African countries.

You all know that the Secretary is one of the core members of the President's team. In this context, he is working tirelessly and vociferously to promote American industry and American exports.
Secretary Ross has taken the lead on improving trade and commercial ties with Africa. Even tomorrow, he will be giving keynote remarks at the US-Morocco Trade Forum, at the annual meeting of the Export-Import Bank for which Africa is an important market and at a meeting of the US-Nigeria Council.

I know the Secretary looks forward very much to leading the trip by Council members to Ethiopia, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana as a concrete manifestation of the Trump administration's commitment to close deals and to eliminate trade barriers to strengthen the U.S. - African commercial relationship. Secretary Ross.

SECRETARY ROSS: Thank you, Gil, and thank you, Erin, as well. Thank you, Jay, as always for your continued leadership of the President's Advisory Council on doing business in Africa.

I'm sorry Laura can't be here today, but I'll send her in absentia my thanks to her for her dedicated work as Vice Chairman of the
Council.

Thank you also to the staff for the National Security Council for hosting the fifth meeting of the PAC-DBIA.

Today we're at the White House under the auspices of the NSC. Their budget can afford it. Mine cannot. We're saving up for the trip.

This provides you with a clear indication of the importance the Trump administration places on the U.S. relationship with Africa. So I thank you to my U.S. government colleagues for your involvement in these deliberations.

At our last meeting in November, I was interested in learning about the issues the Council identified as the top obstacles for U.S. companies in doing business with African customers. I also asked you to take a step further and develop recommendations of actions the U.S. government can take to eliminate those obstacles.

In parallel, as representatives of the
American private sector, I ask you to determine four African countries that would be of greatest interest for a fact finding trip as a means to provide insights into how we can promote U.S. trade throughout the continent.

I agreed to lead the Council members on such a trip given the importance of Africa to the future of global commerce. You have merged those two tasks and developed a set of recommendations tailored to the four countries you proposed for the trip this summer, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Ghana.

Developing close commercial ties between American companies and African customers is becoming increasingly important. And I hope that this trip will not only be a fact finding trip but a fact making trip. We need some deliverables. We need some things to announce. And I think we'll get more into that as the meeting progresses.

Meanwhile, we recognize that Africa is home to 6 of the 10 fastest growing economies in
the entire world. And its population is
projected to double by 2050 to 2.4 billion
people.

It is a fast growing market with many
young consumers, but it has been targeted by
authoritarian countries intent on exploiting its
natural resources and raw materials.

We stand ready to help counter these
threats and to help Africa achieve sustainable
growth and development through strong trade
relationships.

But we have our work cut out for us.

As you know U.S. exports to Sub-Saharan Africa
have declined by 44 percent over the past four
years from $26 billion in 2014 to $14 billion in
2017.

Driving this trend, China's exports to
Africa have more than doubled since 2009, growing
at an average of 14 percent annually since 2010.
We must reverse these two trends.

In addition, Chinese lending has
ballooned and that's no small portion of the
reason for the swing in numbers. So I'm very 
happy to see Ray Washburne from AID come in. 
Where are you, Ray?  Good. 

    Ray is going to be going to Africa 
also this summer. And we're looking to him to 
help close the funding gap and the product gap. 
So thank you for coming, Ray. 

    This morning, IMF noted that Chinese 
lending globally has surged from $1.7 trillion in 
2001 to an incredible $25.5 trillion in 2016 and 
with the One Belt, One Road, I am sure it will be 
quite a bit bigger in 2017. 

    That accounts for three-fourths of the 
increase in global debt over the period. So we 
realize that's a big hurdle to operate against, 
but we're going to do what we can. And much of 
their effort, as you know, is increasingly 
focused on Africa. 

    I was just down in the conference in 
Lima, and they're also pushing Latin America 
pretty hard as well. So it's something that's a 
global contest that we have with them.
But in response, we must develop and implement a real strategy to build U.S. commercial ties with the continent to open markets to U.S. made exports and strengthen our cultural exchanges based on our common and deep historical bonds.

We must work together to make it possible for all American companies to succeed in Africa and to spread knowledge about the opportunities that exist there. Your recommendations will be taken under very careful consideration by all of the agencies represented here today.

All of us in government will work together to determine how to implement these ideas. The ideas are great, but implementation, as we all know, is the key. And that's the phase we really have to move into now. And it's imperative that we do so.

I look forward to the discussion. But before I turn it over, I want to highlight a recent win for American businesses in Africa.
Just over a week ago, the Yatra-led Albertine Graben Refinery Consortium signed a project framework agreement with the government of Uganda for the development, construction and operation of the new oil refinery.

This project is a joint venture with the Uganda National Oil Company and is financed in part by the African Development Bank, the International Finance Corp, OPIC, thank you, Ray, and your friends, and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency. Valued at $2.85 billion with $1.55 billion in expected U.S. content, this project will support more than 8,000 U.S. jobs and is the kind of scale of activity that we really have to see more of.

The deal is a major win for U.S. commercial interest in Uganda. Our advocacy team did an outstanding job countering attempts by Chinese staked-back enterprises to influence the decision. God knows what techniques they were using in the process.

I wrote two letters on behalf of the
Consortium to President Museveni and called the
President a week before the signing of the PFA to
highlight U.S. support for the project.

      We had a very good and very long
conversation, and I promised him it was just the
start of many such begging by me.

      These are the types of deals we hope
to strike on our trip this summer that represents
what we can achieve when government acts as a
facilitator, not just as a regulator.

      Now, I turn it over to our host, Cyril
Sartor, for any opening remarks.

      MR. SARTOR: Thank you, Secretary
Ross. I'd also like to thank your other
colleagues here from the Commerce Department.
I'd like to thank Jay for his leadership and
chairmanship. And I'd like to thank Secretary
Ross for his vision, not just with the PAC-DBIA,
but for his other efforts to promote the
importance of Africa within the administration.

      We do need to develop a real strategy
for Africa, and we are working on one. And this
meeting is very much a part, an integral part of
that overall strategy.

While we may have enough money to pull
together a shindig like this and invite all of
you, we, in fact, do have very limited resources
when it comes for developing an Africa agenda.

So that means our ability to
collaborate efficiently and to coordinate within
the U.S. government and to collaborate and
coordinate between the U.S. government and all of
you here in U.S. industry, that's going to be our
critical comparative advantage in working to
build a U.S. presence in Africa and to in some
ways, if not quite counter, but to compete
vigorously with China, Russia and even some
Middle East players on the continent.

So two pillars of the President's
National Security policy are promoting
prosperity, as Mr. Kaplan has identified, and
advancing U.S. influence.

And I think the work that you all have
been doing and what you will achieve later this
year in your visit to Africa, again, are going to be fundamental in advancing those pillars and in advancing our strategy for Africa.

So I want to thank you all for your ongoing work, and I want to assure you that the NSC-Africa directorate, our door is open to you. We welcome your phone calls in any way in which we can assist you. And we will be your partners as you move forward in this endeavor. Thank you.

Jay.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you very much, Cyril and Secretary Ross. I want to thank you as being a member, or company being a member, of that consortium in Uganda, that your help was instrumental in pushing it over the line along with some negotiating tactics from the ambassador as well as others. So it was very helpful. So thank you.

So I'd like to move to the presentation of our findings from the last meeting. To that point, I think they form in three main categories.
One is looking at procurement practices within the countries that we will be visiting and what the U.S. government can help us. Two will be skills development and capacity building across those four countries, but across the rest of the African continent as well.

And I think probably the most important is we look forward to really combating other countries, as the Secretary has mentioned, is really a holistic and encompassing U.S. approach to drive private sector and U.S. government maximum impact.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over. We'll first talk about Ethiopia. And with that, our first recommendation to Fred Sisson.

Fred.

MR. SISSON: Thank you, Jay. Mr. Secretary, as we looked across the different markets in Africa, we saw a huge opportunity in Ethiopia. We've got a country that -- I'm sorry. Is this better?

In Ethiopia, we've got a country with
105 million people, 60 percent under the age of 30, a GDP of over $78 billion in 2017 and an average growth rate of over 10 percent over the last 12 years. So we've got a rapidly growing market with a large young population.

The Ethiopian government has been struggling to keep its economy growing fast enough to put those people to work.

It's been able to facilitate the rapid growth and infrastructure and other investments in the country, largely through borrowing. But at this point, the borrowing is over 60 percent of its GDP. And borrowing is now limited by the government's own balance sheet.

The government is currently looking at other opportunities to continue the growth curve, and they're looking towards private sector. We now have a new Prime Minister in Ethiopia that's very open and willing to Western partnerships.

In addition to that, and I think that this is probably one of the more important things, is we have decades of strong U.S.
intervention in Ethiopia. Help and goodwill that the U.S. people, in the U.S. government has put into Ethiopia. And so that helps prioritize potential partnerships, and I think that that poses a great opportunity for us.

What the Council is recommending is we're recommending a government-to-government memorandum of understanding focusing on strategic industrial sectors.

These sectors are currently sectors that are identified by the Ethiopian government, but they're also sectors that agencies, U.S. agencies and U.S. businesses, have helped prioritize over the last couple decades, in particular over the last five years. And they've now managed to move into the policy of the Ethiopian government.

The sectors that we're recommending are infrastructure, transportation, logistics, agricultural processing, power generation, pharmaceuticals and financial services. This last one, financial services, is a relatively new
Under the old Prime Minister and old government, there was a resistance to opening up the financial services sector. The new Prime Minister is now indicating a willingness to open up the financial services sector so that they can help clear some of the forex issues.

One of the biggest challenges in Ethiopia is actually getting paid. You have money in birr, but you can't do anything with it outside of Ethiopia. And they realize that this is a constraint to infrastructure growth and just to the growth of their economy. And now they're opening it up.

And I think the U.S. has some of the strongest financial institutions paired with some of the best technology providers. And I think we really have a good strategic position.

In short, what we're recommending is that we're recommending that U.S. agencies participate and put together an MOU that can be executed during our June trip.
We think that it's great timing within the market. And we think that there will be both bilateral support from both our folks on the ground there as well as the Ethiopian government. And we think that there's a backlog of U.S. projects that can take advantage of this very quickly and start proving it out as a positive policy move.

On that, that wraps up our recommendation for MOU.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thanks, Fred. I'd like to recognize some administration officials that will provide comments. Gil, I believe.

MR. KAPLAN: Thank you. And thank you for all those growth numbers and the opportunities you present are very persuasive in terms of what we want to do.

The government of Ethiopia has defined a path for the country's development in its growth and transformation plan and is moving aggressively to reach its target.
As you noted, key to this has been heavy public investment underpinned by foreign loans. But the government is keenly aware this is not sustainable. At the same time, U.S. companies are eager to increase their footprint in Ethiopia, Sub-Saharan Africa's fastest growing economy.

This MOU is the ideal mechanism to help the government of Ethiopia and U.S. companies meet their goals. By creating a more attractive business environment and ensuring that U.S. companies are aware of Ethiopian government priorities and the associated project opportunities, both parties benefit with the additional long-term benefit of Ethiopia receiving American know-how technology and standards.

It is the early access to Ethiopian ministry development goals and spending plans is critical here and getting this information in front of U.S. companies with technologies and services that can fill the project needs.
With the recent appointment of 
Ethiopia's new Prime Minister Ahmed and the 
progressive economic reforms he proposes, this 
MOU could not come at a better time.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you. Ray?

MR. WASHBURN: Hi. I'm Ray

Washburne. I'm the CEO of Overseas Private 
Investment Corporation. And OPIC currently has 
$22 billion in 90 countries around the world, 675 
projects, 25 percent in Africa, but only $3 
million in Ethiopia.

An MOU would serve as a signal to the 
business community that the United States is 
serious, and Ethiopia is open for business.

The lack of infrastructure in the 
country is something that OPIC is postured to 
support, power, agriculture and health care. If 
the Prime Minister opens the financial services 
sector, OPIC will be prepared to look at that 
market as well.

We are actively seeking new projects 
today. And if we get the MOU done, we'll be
prepared to execute something soon. Thank you.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks, Ray. Cheryl Anderson.

MS. ANDERSON: Cheryl Anderson from the Africa Bureau of USAID. Let me say at the outset that we're very pleased to be a key interagency player working closely with the Department of Commerce and the Advisory Council.

We note that the PAC-DBIA itself, as well as the recommendations here, fit very well with our administrator's vision of working with countries on their journey to self-reliance as well as enterprise driven development.

So on the MOU, I think we're supportive of the MOU. I think the highlighted sectors are appropriate, and we've shared it with our team on the ground.

We've got a pretty substantial USA team in Ethiopia. And I think they would really welcome further discussion about the focus of the MOU and possibly opening it up to other sectors where we have common objectives.
And I would add that through the Power Africa interagency initiative, we did enter, as the U.S. government, into an MOU with the government of Ethiopia in 2013.

And this MOU had the intent that was similar to what we're talking about today. It presented a whole of government approach in partnering with the government of Ethiopia to develop its energy sector in a way that challenged the government of Ethiopia to make critical reforms to increase private sector participation.

So maybe as a bonus on the trip, we thought maybe it would be an opportunity to revisit that MOU from 2013. And we might want to make sure that any additional MOUs with the government of Ethiopia take into account the existing MOUs that the U.S. government already has in place.

And I guess I would just add as an agency that has some experience with MOUs with African governments, we would caution that any
MOUs should include specific deliverables and very clear commitments that are achievable by both parties.

CHAIR IRELAND: Excellent point at the end. I agree as the Secretary just said the same. Oh, great. C.D. are you?

MR. GLIN: Mr. Secretary, Mr. Chair, thank you for this opportunity. C.D. Glin with the U.S. African Development Foundation. ADF is supportive of the establishment of a U.S-Ethiopian government MOU focusing on strategic sectors.

USADF currently provides grant financing and business management support to 10 Ethiopian small and medium sized solar and wind energy firms.

Our provision of grant financing, small grants, to local early stage enterprises linked to the development of private investment projects, has the potential for significant U.S. imports especially in the agriculture and energy sectors which both USADF and the Ethiopian
government have prioritized.

Our focus on local enterprise
development provides linkages to the local market
and opens up marketing and distribution channels
for U.S. Energy related businesses.

The Foundation's core continent-wide
competency is in the agriculture sector and under
a prospective government-to-government MOU, we
would use the fact-finding trip to assess
provision of our support to Ethiopian's
government agriculture production and processing
sectors as well as to expand and enhance our
investments in the energy sector.

Lastly, as a member of the Power
Africa interagency team, I'd like to acknowledge
that the U.S. African Development Foundation is
co-funding and investing in solar energy in
Ethiopia alongside PAC-DBIA member GE. And we
appreciate GE Africa, and we appreciate that
collaboration. Thank you.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks C.D. Jesse Law
from EXIM.
MR. LAW: Thank you. EXIM Bank has a congressional mandate for Sub-Saharan Africa. And when the Senate allows EXIM to become fully functional by confirming our Board nominees, we will be active in supporting the transactions across the continent.

But not operating since 2015, EXIM has established a pipeline of $14 billion in Sub-Saharan Africa, which would, in fact, double our export capacity at the stroke of a pen.

As our USG partners can confirm, there are many opportunities that have, in fact, been lost. But we do look forward to EXIM functioning again.

You know, EXIM supports the fact finding trip to counter the challenge from China and other countries across the continent with a realistic and purposeful whole of government approach that includes MOUs, the USTDA Global Procurement Initiative and the trade facilitation efforts.

It's well-known that the Made in the
USA brand is recognized in Africa for quality and better value. And through these whole of government initiatives, we at EXIM want to make sure that U.S. companies can compete and secure the contracts on a level playing field.

Our competitors are well ahead of us, though, with their exports. And leading the pack is China, which is Africa's largest single trading partner, having overtaken the United States since 2009.

Yet it's not only China. We are fully aware of the competition from European and other Asian countries. These countries are playing with a game that we refuse to acknowledge is a superior game plan at least in some ways until now. And how do we know it's superior? They've been winning on the field.

The Chinese companies and the other countries are using more sophisticated tactics, more blended financing, weaponizing trade finance as a national strategy to promote their domestic export products and to pull in more personnel.
from their respective financing agencies on the
ground to get involved in whatever projects
exist.

These other countries are responding
to this new dynamic and ever changing competitive
landscape by being fully engaged with government-
to-government agreements in support of their
exporters with financing and other commercial
means.

So we at EXIM are committed to the
same in the support of U.S. jobs and realize
Africa's potential. America's exporters in their
supply chain need a coach to make our halftime
game adjustment so we can lead and mount a
comeback.

The fact finding tour for EXIM and
from our perspective is that first official step
in that direction. And I do hope that it will
help us learn what our African friends would like
to see the USG do to be more competitive.

And with those around the room and the
leadership that we have, I am convinced that we
can adjust our game plan in the direction of success.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you, Jesse. Is there any other comments from the Council on this specific recommendation? Okay. I would also like to echo the support of getting a fully functioning EXIM. It's absolutely critical.

Let's go to the second recommendation, which is around USTDA Global Procurement Initiative. Bill Kileen.

MR. KILEEN: Thank you, Jay. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. This is a topic that's near and dear to Acrow.

Many of you may not know we supply sealed bridges around the globe. And we're pretty much daily trying to demonstrate to people or teach people the importance of looking at life cycle cost and what they're getting in the numbers that are being presented.

And recently, very recently, there was a glaring example of this in one country where they're rebuilding for the fourth time the same
designed bridge, and the bridge has collapsed four times now in about a year and a half.

So we've tried to explain to them that the bridge is not being built correctly and that there are issues. And they're still going to move forward with the fourth bridge of the same design.

That being said, the recommendations that I've been asked to convey by the Council here are that first the USTDA has already developed with the energy or the electric power company procurement manual. So we're looking for the U.S. government to request of the board of the power company to formally adopt the manual.

The second item is to update the manual utilizing the services of USTDA, World Bank, the DOC to update it with additional language on the life cycle cost.

Then the DOC is to go out to U.S. companies to educate them on the Ethiopian manual and how they can work within the parameters of this procurement manual.
Finally, there is an issue of translating the existing manual which is, if I pronounce it right, Amharic, and to translate that to the more universal language of English.

And then the final recommendation is training Ethiopian procurement personnel on life cycle costs. And that is a challenging issue. And so with that, Jay, I'll give it back to you.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks, Bill. Thomas Hardy from --

MR. HARDY: Thank you. Tom Hardy from the U.S. Training Development Agency. I couldn't agree more with the Council's recommendation to place a focus on improving procurement practices in Ethiopia as a means of doing more business in Africa.

USTDA has actually supported Ethiopia's procurement reform since 2015. In those projects, that support is paying dividends. Recently, we hosted a delegation of aviation officials from throughout East Africa and introduced them to U.S. companies, U.S.
technologies goods and services. But as part of that visit, we included a program focused on best value procurement focused on quality, not lowest cost.

And as a direct result of that training that USTDA provided to the Ethiopians, U.S. companies secured over $20 million in contracts of U.S. exported goods and services.

As was just mentioned by Bill, we've also worked with Ethiopia's electric power to develop a manual to help them make informed decisions based on quality infrastructure, not the lowest price. That currently is going through the final clearance processes by EEP. And we're hoping that that is approved before we arrive in Ethiopia.

We look forward to the adoption of this manual as it will provide a transparent best value approach for procurement standards. We hope Ethiopia will make good investment decisions that are necessary to develop a fair and open and free market for U.S. goods and services.
CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks, Tom.

Secretary.

SECRETARY ROSS: Thank you, Jay and Tom. As to the translation of the manual, I find it incredible that all of these years have gone by and people interested in Ethiopian government, our government, haven't kicked in together and done it.

How much could it possibly cost? I mean, are we talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars? Millions of dollars? I can't imagine it's a vast sum.

Why don't we just get together, put a pot together and do it. I think it's ridiculous to have that kind of a structural impediment and just complain about it and not fix it.

So let's start with -- I'm going to pass the hat with letters to all of you as we get finished here. Let's put a kitty together. Let's get this thing done. Okay.

But the topic of procurement is obviously an important one for U.S. companies.
Three out of the 10 Council recommendations focus
on procurement practices in Africa. And I think
that's no accident. It's a big dollar item.
It's an item that needs fixing. And so I think
you're right to focus on it.

A transparent, efficient and well-functioning procurement process is perhaps the
best tool we have for eliminating corruption and
assuring a level playing field for U.S.
companies. Ethiopia has begun some procurement
reforms, but a lot more needs to be done.

Commerce's commercial law development
program does a lot of expertise in this area, and
USTDA is a key partner.

Ethiopia is already a member of
USTDA's global procurement initiative. And these
suggestions are very good follow on to those
efforts.

We reached out to the Prime Minister
of Ethiopia last August to address our concerns.
And before our trip, I will prepare a follow-up
message to drive the point home to the new Prime
Minister, Abiy Ahmed. You will also recommend
that the government publicize Ethiopia's improved
procurement practices to American companies.

We're looking at options for a
tangible event focused on this goal during our
trip. This is part of what I meant in my
introductory remarks when it said this should not
be just fact finding, but fact creating, because
that's what will help us communicate more broadly
what's going on.

We're working closely with African
ministries to get actionable market intelligence
at an early stage even before tenders are
announced. I think that's been one of our
weaknesses historically that by the time it gets
announced, somebody else has had a big head
start, sometimes accidentally, a lot of times
deliberately. We have to close the knowledge
time gap.

When we work with interagency partners
around the table today, we've got to ensure we're
providing all the support we can so U.S.
companies can close deals.

So those are my responses to it.

Let's get tangible. Let's get precise. Let's get functional.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you, Secretary.

I agree with you on those points and from your point on the translation, I would say let's hire some Ethiopian law school interns. It will keep the cost down.

SECRETARY ROSS: I take that as a contribution from GE.

CHAIR IRELAND: You wanted to say something, Mimi?

MS. ALEMAYEHOU: I just wanted to say that I speak and write Amharic so I can contribute.

SECRETARY ROSS: Oh, there you go. We can have her do it.

MS. ALEMAYEHOU: So I'll cut down your costs.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. So we'd like to turn our recommendations over to the next
country that we'll be visiting, which is going to be Kenya. And I would like to turn it over to Andrew Patterson, a fellow resident of Nairobi with me.

MR. PATTERSON: Thank you, Jay, and thank you, Secretary. I'm pleased to be here today, and I'm pleased to be talking about Kenya, which is currently our new home for Bechtel's corporate headquarters for Africa. We're celebrating a year of setting up our office there.

And through that year, being on the ground really does make the difference. It's one of the things we've been talking about as part of attracting U.S. businesses is being on the ground and being engaged.

We've had some good traction. We've had a lot of support from the U.S. government, from the new Secretary, from the Commerce Department, OPIC, US EXIM and the State Department on securing a contract to build a new expressway from Nairobi to Mombasa.
We're working on closing that financing and hopefully will be in a position during that trip to be able to have some type of ceremony to start that project.

So the project is around $3.8 billion for 473 kilometers of an expressway. And we hope that this will clearly demonstrate the American quality, the local content engagement of delivering a true international standard of road there, which they desperately need if anyone has ever spent any time driving around Nairobi or driving down to the cost, which can be a very dangerous situation.

So I'd like to say thank you for all the support. And we hope we are able to make an announcement on that.

Really, the framework of that deal was based around the commerce MOU with a direct procurement under a government-to-government framework in which we talked about in Ethiopia, when we talked about other countries and we'll talk specifically about updating it here.
I think that's a real testament to engaging under an MOU and the work that can come out of that. And we would encourage not only in Africa, but other parts of the world for commerce and the U.S. government to engage in these areas.

Some specific recommendations to get in for the trip. We talked about it just a little bit last time around local content requirements and how they can be a real obstacle. Obviously, governments are very focused on building their capacity with their supply chains and their skill sets.

And this is one of the areas that the Chinese have not done a good job at and this is what gives an opportunity for American businesses to do well. But there are challenges when governments sometimes overreach on local content programs, including in Kenya.

There can be cases where you need to bring in skilled labor and even what would be deemed unskilled labor, but people have experience in the construction industries to be
able to set up the job, get the job going, manufacturing facilities and technology areas. And it's quite important. And there is a lot of restrictive requirements in Kenya around these areas. Although we're able to bring in top managers like, Jay, I'm sure has no problem getting his visa in Kenya, when you're looking at larger teams to deliver these projects, it becomes a bit more complicated. And this is an area of focus that we would like to talk about. Additionally, they've issued a new Procurement Act in 2016, which really puts a bias on Kenyan companies securing work and restricting the ability, in some cases smaller American companies, of securing technologies or supply materials and skill sets in Kenya. There is also particular areas of carve outs that restrict the U.S. companies to be able to compete fairly on this and gives price advantages to Kenyan market. Of course, we understand the desire to
build the Kenyan base, but being able to get American companies at all levels, small and big, into these countries, such as Kenya, and working with local companies, is really going to be able to build the local capacity in skill transfers. That's an area that we'd like to focus in on.

Some of the market barriers are specifically around these local contents, the Procurement Acts, the government of Kenya and the President has set out new objectives of the Big Four.

And these Big Four, actually, I'd say, complement for what U.S. businesses want to do in Kenya within industries and manufacturing. But some of the specific Big Four is they want to increase 15 percent of GDP to come from manufacturing, build over 500,000 affordable new houses, 100 percent food and nutrition security and 100 percent universal health care. This is an area that I think, we, as U.S. companies, can come and help support these Big Fours.

Obviously, the backbone of the Big
Four is infrastructure and energy. And having a reliable network and hopefully the expressway will start soon. And delivering that will create the opportunity to expand on these Big Fours. Energy sector and stability of energy is very important in bringing down those price points.

So our recommendation is given the increase of local content policies in the market, access barriers, we'd like to see USTDR to engage with the Kenyan government and see if we can come up with flexible local content programs specifically to support U.S. companies coming in to the market and being able to allow us to bring in the right skill sets to be able to deliver these.

The second recommendation is around the MOU. It was a successful MOU in 2015. With the new Big Four objectives, with increased presence from U.S. companies, we think renewing this MOU and signing an updated one would be strategically important around this, highlighting the benefits of bringing in OPIC, US EXIM,
similar to Ethiopia, and have specific targets of what can be included.

There are things that we can include in local content, including -- sorry, in the MOU such as local content policies, being flexible and maybe some areas around the restrictions on procurement to allow smaller U.S. companies and technologies to be able to come in and compete.

The third area is really -- AGOA is very much Kenya one way. And we'd like to see that coming both ways and the opportunity for U.S. companies to compete more. The delivering of infrastructure and energy is critical to that, so getting these types of projects, such as a highway, some power projects.

We've also been discussing gas to power solutions there. These are the type of things that can create an environment to allow more U.S. companies to come set up operations there.

And then the fourth area is to engage with U.S. government agencies such as OPIC, US
EXIM, USTDA, MCC, USAF to collaborate and work
together to find solutions for U.S. companies to
deliver these infrastructures and addressing the
local content and procurement issues. Thank you.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks, Andrew. Mr.
Secretary.

SECRETARY ROSS: I'd like to start
with a question, is the problem that the workers
are not trainable or just that there aren't
mechanisms for training them?

MR. PATTERSON: Actually, the Kenya
market has a very strong base from engineers,
business people, even operators, huge, huge
potential and actually a good base to start from
and some of the best we've seen in Sub-Saharan
Africa.

The key is when you're looking at
setting up these projects or bringing in your
technology, you're going to have your expertise
at all levels. It's important to be able to
bring those levels in initially.

And the view would be to ultimately
transfer those skills over, not keep them
permanently, but you will need to have those
skill sets brought in to be able to deliver that.

And then, of course, you're going to
need a continuous engagement and oversight
because all of our businesses have requirements
that need to be met. And we want to make sure
that we have the right engagement from legal to
corporate oversight.

SECRETARY ROSS: Well, then maybe a
way to deal with the Big Four constraints and
these labor rules would be to get in the new MOU
that companies would come in, provide the
training. Obviously, we would have to bring
people in to do the training and then transition
out.

Maybe we can get a carve out for the
training activity. Do you think that's something
that might be agreeable to the government?

MR. PATTERSON: I think it would be
agreeable. We had some carve outs in the
previous MOU around taxations to be able to lower
the cost of capital of these projects. I think they'd be receptive to that, and I think it would be a good idea to include that.

SECRETARY ROSS: Work with us on getting some language together that fits both your needs and would blend into the Big Four concept. Then we may have a basis for doing something that really works.

MR. PATTERSON: Absolutely. And I think also working with groups like MCC, USTDA, USAID to use what they want to do from training programs and integrate these into projects and programs that we want to deliver, we're able to capitalize on those programs and do more with the dollars.

SECRETARY ROSS: But I think we need to get very specific in how we're going to go about it to try to get them to buy into it.

CHAIR IRELAND: I think that's right, Secretary. If I might, is that we've done a significant health care project in Kenya and tied into that was a significant training.
Part of the issue was quantity.

Andrew is right. The quality is good. The question is quantity. So we're in the process of within that package that we worked with the government is there a significant training requirement by us to them to train up to 10,000 biomed techs --

SECRETARY ROSS: Wow.

CHAIR IRELAND: -- and radiological technicians, et cetera. So it should be part of the discussion for sure.

SECRETARY ROSS: Well, what I like about the recommendations is they correspond very well to a whole of the government approach that was outlined in the November report.

And I agree with you that the 2015 MOU needs to get reworked. But let's get to work on it very quickly so we can get it processed through the interagency, get it processed in time to get it over to them well before so we have it agreed. And we sign it when we land there, and not fiddling around with it while we're over
there.

I think we got to get everything preset for each one of these countries. So you are going to hear me saying that over and over.

We really need to get this highly organized. Otherwise, it's too far to go, too many days for too little results. So we really need tangible projects and if we're going to do documents, they really have to be ones that are significant and pre-prepared.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thank you, Secretary. I'd like to go to C.J. Mahoney of USTR.

MR. MAHONEY: Well, thank you, very much, to Secretary Ross and to Jay and to Cyril for hosting us. Let me just say generally that USTR is quite interested in Africa at the present moment.

Everyone is aware of Ambassador Lighthizer's comments about our desire to do a model FTA with an African country. That is a process that is still in its early stages.
But I definitely hope that the work of this group, which is laid out in your thoughtful materials that were provided in advance of this meeting, I hope that that can inform that effort.

With regard to Kenya in particular, our engagement with Kenya through the USCAC trade investment partnership has been important and that effort continues to be an important tool.

However, recognizing Kenya's strategic importance as well as its economic importance, we are very supportive of the recommendation for enhanced bilateral engagement with Kenya. And, again, I look forward to speaking with everyone in this room about the ways that USTR could participate in that effort.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thank you, C.J. C.D.?

MR. GLIN: Thank you, Jay. Appreciate it. The African Development Foundation couldn't be more aligned and supportive of the Council's recommendation to enhance bilateral support to trade and investment.
USADF is all too familiar with some of the constraints that U.S. and African companies face which forbid them from taking full advantage of AGOA.

The first poor transportation infrastructure, that one we'll leave to Andrew and Bechtel. But the other two that are noted constraints, access to power and limited local supplier capacity, are directly in our Kenya country strategy.

We have 35 years of Africa specific grass roots economic development experience. We currently operate in 20 countries and have expertise in skill development and capacity building.

Our direct grant financing and local technical assistance provides in Kenya, for instance, off grid energy access and builds the capacity of local enterprises, local suppliers, particularly in the agribusiness space, helping them to become more competitive, enabling them to take full advantage of AGOA and thus enabling and
enhancing bilateral trade.

Under an MOU, we welcome the opportunity to collaborate on projects, including, as was mentioned, local content, training, skills, skills transfer, opportunities and also those at the community level to support greater trade and investment, particularly those that link to two of Kenya's Big Four goals, local manufacturing and food and nutritional security.

Thank you.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you, C.D. Is there any other comments on this? Yes, Cheryl.

MS. ANDERSON: I would just add that USAID's work in trade promotion and trade facilitation has supported past trade and investment frameworks. And our talks with African nations will continue subject to the availability of funds to play a role, a supportive role in those discussions.

The work of our trade and investment hubs, and specifically the East Africa trade and investment hub, supports enhanced regional
economic integration. It promotes two-way trade
with the U.S. under AGOA, and it attracts
investment that drives commercial expansion
within the region and to global markets. Thanks.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thank you.

Okay. I'd like to go to the next recommendation
for Kenya, which will be similar to Ethiopia on
the procurement initiative. So, Bill.

MR. KILEEN: Hi. First of all, Kenya, it has a very good procurement system in place
already. So there's really just one
recommendation that's bubbled to the top here and
that is to have the USTDA re-engage with the
government of Kenya to work a way to support
Kenya, to have better ways of adopting life cycle
costs into their analysis of procurement and also
to put together a long-term program for GPI, for
global procurement initiative. That's it.

CHAIR IRELAND: Okay. Tom.

MR. HARDY: Thank you. And thank you
very much, Mr. Secretary. As you know, three of
ten of these recommendations are focused on
procurement. And then this is an important one.

This focuses on the strategic imperative of quality infrastructure. This was actually raised directly by President Trump at APAC and focused on quality infrastructure.

And I look forward this upcoming visit to re-engage with the Kenyans on figuring out where they are on this continuum and are they willing to make that leap to get into making higher value determinations, moving away from lowest cost, cheapest quality to a value proposition focused on quality infrastructure and paying the difference that quality brings and that U.S. products bring with that quality.

Thank you.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thanks, Tom.
Okay, we'll move on to -- any other comments on this? We'll move on to our next recommendation around skills development and Rahama Wright.

MS. WRIGHT: Thank you, Jay. Thank you, Secretary. Kenya faces significant workforce shortages with youth unemployment that
exceeds 20 percent. And it has the highest unemployment rate in East Africa.

So our recommendation is really looking at how to improve workforce skills development and help reduce the barrier to entry for many companies because if you don't have access to a skilled workforce, you are unable to create the ability to run your company successfully.

So one of the things that we are recommending is that the U.S. government develop a U.S. Africa skills development program and establish Kenya as the East Africa hub.

This pilot program will leverage resources that are already in place in the region, so the Department of Commerce, USCID, USTDA already have programs in place.

And I want to point to the fact that the young African Leaders Initiative has a training center in Kenya as well as the U.S. government has a Women's Entrepreneurial Center in Kenya.
So we've heard already that there are issues in terms of having resource allocation. So instead of recreating the wheel and creating new programs, we really want to be able to leverage existing tools and resources that are already on the ground.

We also see a role for the private sector, specifically the private sector can ensure workforce development initiatives that are matched with the demands of the market and utilize existing investments geared toward closing the skill gap.

I want to point to an example of a great program in Kenya, the McKinsey's Generations initiative that's trained thousands of youth in Kenya. And so we can utilize some of these private sector examples as a way to develop this proof of concept and also ensure that we're creating a sustainable working model that can be enhanced and improved upon.

And part of why we believe this is going to be a great recommendation is because it
supports President Kenyatta's Big Four development agenda, which includes job creation and youth employment as one of the two pillars.

And in terms of how we see this rolling out, we recommend when we go to Kenya in June that we develop a memorandum of understanding between the U.S. government and the Kenyan government.

And this MOU will do a couple of things. One, it will help identify best practices as well as identify opportunities to leveraging current private sector training programs.

And lastly, we hope to utilize this program as a way to create a matching workforce development program for the private sector.

Part of the reason we think that this will be a good recommendation is because of the fact it's going to be very low cost in terms of making sure that we are leveraging the U.S. government resources as well as private sector resources. Thank you.
CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks, Rahama.

Cheryl, you were going to comment?

MS. ANDERSON: From USAID, I think this is an area where we can coordinate better. And so let's talk. Our bilateral strategy in Kenya as well as our regional strategy for East Africa, they both stress workforce development as an important part of the portfolio.

So we're currently developing a new at-risk youth job training initiative that's based on private sector demand. And we're working with the government of Kenya to create professional certification programs.

So we look forward to sharing with you and talking about it more, coordinating better. I think we'll also encourage our East Africa team in piloting its workforce development program to continue to work closely with our interagency partners, including the foreign commercial service so that we can determine the right key sectors to focus on.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thank you.
Are there any other comments on this?

MR. LESLIE: Hey, Jay, can I just make a couple of -- these are unscripted comments, but I know there's a discussion after some of these.

I was recently in Nairobi. I went to Nairobi last month and opened a new office for our company. And kind of furthering Andrew's point, we met when I was there.

And we find that there's a skilled workforce at least in our area, the media, in fact we'll find when we go to Nairobi that Nairobi really is a dynamic media hub for East Africa. And the education is pretty good in terms of all the basic communication skills that you need for our business.

What I found there, though, and this goes to the point of youth unemployment, is that young people are very interested in digital and in technology. And in fact they've become -- they have an iHub there that I spoke of. They really are starting to move in this direction pretty aggressively, but we don't have the
resources there, particularly in technology skill
development, which we're obviously so good at.

So one of the things I'd recommend,
too, when we're there is perhaps meeting with
some of these young people who are directing
these skills programs, too, and find out what
they think they need.

The second quick point is from my
other hat. I chair the U.S. African Development
Foundation. And just a quick story on Somalia,
right next door.

In Somalia, where most traditional aid
organizations can't really work or haven't been
able to because of what's going on on the ground,
ADF was able to go in because our model uses
local partners.

And we, over the last five or six
years, have funded 50 different grants in Somalia
that have taken 7,500 young people off the
streets, most of them in Mogadishu, and not just
given them skills training, but importantly
really tried to figure out the placement end
first.

So we go in -- and most of it's in construction. And we go and we find what do they need? They need three carpenters or whatever. We then go train three people to be carpenters. And we give them free to the employer for three months. And then the employer picks it up.

So it's a shared responsibility. And when folks ask why is it in our national interest to be doing this? When you know in a ground in a place like Somalia that you're able to take mostly young men and get them into gainful employment, we're doing a real service to our national security. Thanks, Jay.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thanks, Jack. Okay, we'll now move to West Africa, and I would like to introduce Mimi Alemayehou to talk about our first recommendation for Cote d'Ivoire.

MS. ALEMAYEHOU: Thank you, Jay, and Secretary Ross. For Cote d'Ivoire, where the African Development Bank is based, the Council is recommending improved identification and
As you know, the African Development Bank, AFDB for short, is a regional multi-lateral development finance institution currently with about 80 members, 54 of them regional African members and 26 non-regional members, including the United States.

I actually had the privilege of serving as the U.S. representative under President Bush, so it's an institution quite dear to me, and I'm a bit subjective sometimes.

As a development finance institution, of course, their main objective is to spur economic development and social progress of its regional member countries, therefore, contributing to poverty reduction.

The Bank has a AAA credit rating, and it is currently supporting significant infrastructure investments in energy, agriculture and several other sectors.

Actually Black Rhino, currently
alongside with GE and Exxon-Mobil, is working in
Nigeria with the support of the African
Development Bank, which is financing up to $200
million of our project. And OPIC is actually
looking at it also for a significant amount of
its debt.

While the U.S. is the largest non-
African member of the institution, Nigeria, being
the world's largest shareholder, U.S. companies
only represent about 3 to 5 percent of the bank's
tenders. The vast majority of it is obviously
going to China.

Therefore, the Council is recommending
to you, Secretary Ross, and the Council to engage
during the trip to Cote d'Ivoire with the
President of the African Development Bank,
President Adesina, in a roundtable discussion
during your fact finding mission to find greater
ways for the bank to share its information and
market analysis and for the American companies,
obviously, to participate more in the tender
process. And hopefully, as you were saying,
Secretary Ross, for this trip not to just be identifying, but for us to achieve comeback with, you know, things that we can actually implement and do and support U.S. businesses.

SECRETARY ROSS: Can you help me understand why our market share of the funding is so small? I hear we need funding to compete. And here's a source of funding. Why are we not accessing it?

MS. ALEMAYEHOU: In terms of actual procurement for the bank?

SECRETARY ROSS: Yes.

MS. ALEMAYEHOU: To the bank. You know, and I see this actually in other countries as well where we have bid on projects in Senegal and other places where I find that unless the process is transparent, and truly transparent, and competitive and, you know, some of the things I think being recommended by TDA will help. U.S. companies, we have things like Foreign Practices Act and other things --

SECRETARY ROSS: Right.
MS. ALEMAYEHOU: -- that we have to abide by. I'll just give you a small example. We were bidding on a project in Senegal. I asked our general counsel if I could send a basket. It was a holiday, an Eid holiday in the country where everybody sends baskets to each other.

And I was told, no, you can't, you know, because we were bidding on an actual live project. It could be viewed differently.

And I went to visit, you know, the minister two days later and there were baskets everywhere, you know, what I mean, from many, many countries.

I'm not saying we would lose because, you know, a basket didn't come through. But I think U.S. companies obviously operate under different guidelines.

And so I think unless the competitive process, the bidding process, becomes truly competitive, truly transparent, and sometimes maybe even managed by an independent body, you know, U.S. companies will continue to lose to the
lowest bidder --

SECRETARY ROSS: Right.

MS. ALEMAYEHOU: -- in terms of actual price.

SECRETARY ROSS: Right. Is the bank in a position to put in an anti-corruption thing into its loan agreements?

MS. ALEMAYEHOU: You know, I think the bank, you know, the U.S., as I said, is the second largest shareholder institution. So although we do not have a veto power on the bank, like perhaps other institutions, we do have a very strong say. And they do have a very strong anti-corruption sort of practice. And the good thing is, I think, the bank --

SECRETARY ROSS: But is it actually part of the loan agreement that it would be a default if it turned out?

MS. ALEMAYEHOU: Yes. For sure. For sure, it is. It is.

SECRETARY ROSS: Okay.

MS. ALEMAYEHOU: And, you know, as I
was saying, with GE we're actually working with
them in Nigeria.

SECRETARY ROSS: Thank you.

CHAIR IRELAND: Steven, did you want
to comment?

MR. DOWD: Yes. Thank you very much.
Mimi, I have a surprise for you. I am mislabeled
here. I am actually the United States Executive
Director of the African Development Bank today.
So I live in Cote d'Ivoire. We're very excited
about your upcoming visit, Mr. Secretary.

Mimi covered most of the sort of facts
of the bank. I would say this, when I was going
through the confirmation process, several
senators encouraged me to broaden the scope of
our office at the bank.

So, of course, you know, we're
advocating American companies in the bank, but
more broadly in Africa. Two of the greatest
assets the bank has are sort of off balance
sheet, you might say.

It has tremendous credibility on the
continent, perhaps more than any other
institution in Africa. And I want to leverage
that goodwill that the bank has. And the bank
also operates in all 54 countries, which is
extraordinary.

I was just in Ghana a couple of days
ago meeting with the bank's team in Ghana. We're
very excited about your upcoming visit. We look
forward to hosting you.

I'm trying to leverage the bank. I
was encouraged by the members of the Senate to
use this chair to promote American business
continent wide. So I travel all over the
continent. I have a very wide mandate, and I
take advantage of it for the benefit of the U.S.

If I can help anybody in this room or
beyond, our office is at your disposal. We have
Treasury professionals in the office. We have a
full-time Commerce Department professional
assigned to our office, who is outstanding.

And so we will dedicate everything we
have to facilitate or to ease the way for you,
whatever we can do, anywhere in Africa. We're at your disposal.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks, Steve. Erin?

MS. WALSH: Sorry. One of the main reasons as well as the others that you mentioned that we are not getting the deals is because there is a lack of market intelligence that is getting to American companies.

And one of the things that's encouraging about PAC-DBIA not only recognizes this problem, but has developed this recommendation to address it.

The recommendation is also very timely because the Department of Commerce is currently in the process of improving its approach to expanding U.S. commercial presence in Africa, including through increased interagency collaboration to provide U.S. companies with improved access to market intelligence.

Better coordination among agency partners on contacts in key ministries, state-owned enterprises and major procuring private
sector companies to determine potential spending
plans in sectors in which American companies are
highly competitive.

As the Secretary said, we need to
close the knowledge time gap to get this
information to U.S. companies.

Once these opportunities are
identified, we've set up a system now at the
Department of Commerce where we have a team that
will capture these particular opportunities in
the countries.

And then we'll translate the
information to specific -- it's all a data driven
process that we're currently building right now.
We'll transfer this information to large, medium
and small sized companies across the United
States through our 100 offices based in the
United States, who will then follow-up with these
particular companies in these sectors for those
that want to work in the African continent and go
after this deal.

So it's one thing sending an email
notice that something is available. It's another, really, following through.

    So what we would like to do with our interagency partners is to take that information, really build a deal team when necessary and then provide the advocacy to close the deal. That's our real hope now.

    And then finally, as Steve mentioned, we do have a wonderful commercial service officer who is completely on board with this new strategy, Julie LeBlanc. So thanks very much.

    CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you, Erin.

    C.D.?

    MR. GLIN: Thanks, Jay. I was recently in Cote d'Ivoire with my team, and we met with senior government officials. We met with the Secretary General of the Presidency, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Youth and the First Lady around establishing a program for the Youth African Development Foundation in Cote d'Ivoire.

    The focus would be on local economic
development activities and would include support
to agricultural cooperatives, youth development,
women entrepreneurs.

The goal of USADF's programs is to
create jobs, improve incomes, grow revenues of
local enterprises in underserved communities.

But I want to state by getting a
better understanding of market opportunities via
the African Development Bank's market
intelligence, USADF can strategically channel its
small grant financing to early stage African
firms who have perspective linkages to U.S.
companies thus matchmaking and de-risking
potential U.S. investments.

So in the spirit of whole of
government initiatives and interagency
collaboration, we would also like to say that, in
those meetings, we talked about aligning our work
and our programmatic objectives to complement
those of MCC, especially with regard to youth
vocational training and workforce development.

And I'm sure Mr. Nash will share the great news
about MCC in Cote d'Ivoire.

But given the Ivoirian government's interest in the Youth African Development Foundation establishing a program there, we would look to sign Secretary Ross a country compact, a country protocol agreement, during -- a country compact, sorry, Jonathan. A country protocol agreement during the fact finding trip in June and July. Thank you.


MR. NASH: Great. Thanks, Jay. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. MCC continues to be impressed with the level of commitment and effort with the PAC-DBIA. We're thrilled that two of our partner countries, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, have been included in the trip and the report.

To date, between the two countries, we've provided $1.5 billion in grant financing for a variety of projects we believe will help support private sector-led economic growth and create a number of business opportunities for U.S. firms.
We look forward to continuing the PAC-DBIA on opportunities to leverage our investments not only in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire but the other 20 countries where we're invested.

With regard to the specific recommendation of Cote d'Ivoire, we very much support this recommendation. We, along with Steven, met with President Adesina recently to discuss the MCC AFDB partnership. And it did seem as if President Adesina was genuinely interested. He and his executive team were genuinely interested in bringing in U.S. firms' expertise and companies into AFDB's work.

So a number of people are opening offices in Cote d'Ivoire. And we just opened one as well, and we're collaborating with our USG colleagues and look forward to supporting this initiative in whatever way that we can.

In addition to engaging the AFDB while the PAC-DBIA is in Cote d'Ivoire, we hope that you will also take some time to explore some business opportunities for investment in Cote
Last year, MCC signed a $525 million compact with the government, focused on improving transportation and logistics in and around Abdijan and a skills for employability project. We believe that U.S. firms can benefit greatly from both of these investments.

The transport project will reduce costs and improve efficiencies for businesses by rehabilitating roads in and around the main corridor of Abidjan and improving the road network management and maintenance system.

The skills project will increase access to secondary education and through public/private partnerships in technical and vocational education and training, TVET, to develop the skills sought by businesses. Specifically, we've set up a $35 million fund to support private sector led training initiatives that ensure workers have the skills needed to meet private sector demand. There may be some elements of this
program that could influence or be helpful as you look at implementing the skills development program in Kenya.

So we'd like for U.S. companies to bid on the various procurements. And we'll be working with Commerce and others to make sure that the market intelligence about our opportunities are made available to U.S. firms.

And we oftentimes think that participating in an MCC procurement or partnering with us in a particular country can be a good foothold or bridge to the continent. So very much look forward to working with you all.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks, Jonathan. Any comments? I just would like to make two. One is on the AFDB, they've really recently opened up a real focus on private sector, which has helped most of their previous loans, who were sovereigns, which kind of helps explain a little bit of the market share. And we've been working with them around that.

And then on the MCC compact, I can
tell you working with the Ivoirian government on
some of our projects, the focus on getting
themselves qualified for the compact really
helped governance issues in the country as well
as a lot of practices that were really improved.

So that's a very good -- the MCC
compacts are great tools to do that.

Okay. The next one. Yes, sorry.

MS. VINEYARD: If I may just
interject. Also remember the World Bank. The
World Bank has more commitments to Sub-Saharan
Africa than to any other region. And, depending
which set of stats you look at, may also be
lending more to Sub-Saharan Africa than the
African Development Bank.

Through its arm at the International
Finance Corporation, it has a real interest in
working with this group in particular as you
think about projects that you want engage with
the IFC.

Unlike the other parts of the World
Bank, the IFC is very open to your pitching
proposals to them. So something just to keep in
mind, especially since this week is their annual
spring meetings.

So if you're able to go across town,
just a few blocks away, there's a great set of
programming and individuals in town for this as
well as many things are being live streamed. So
happy to talk with anyone afterwards if you want
any more information.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Also work on
getting the World Bank comfortable with us
pitching to them, too. Ms. Kusum, you were going
to do the next recommendation.

MS. KUSUM: Thank you, Jay, and thank
you, Secretary Ross. I just want to do a quick
shout-out to all the folks from the U.S.
Department of Commerce. The Advocacy Center, in
particular, we are a small manufacturer from
Southern California.

And although our deal was not included
in the one that you just mentioned, Secretary
Ross, in Uganda, the Advocacy Center was really
instrumental in helping us get a power generation project in the Sub-Saharan Africa region.

Also the USTDA over the years has really assisted us. And I cannot say enough good things about the U.S. Export/Import Bank helping us to put our foothold in Sub-Saharan Africa.

I am very proud to say that we are now in five countries in the West Africa region and looking forward to doing a lot more business there.

My recommendation is very similar to the one that you've heard before. And this is the USTDA Global Procurement Initiative Program. Procurement, as we've heard before, is something that is the bedrock of putting very good RFQs out there and having a process and a procedure on how to do that well is our recommendation here from the Council.

So for years, the USTDA has worked with World Bank to establish common goals that support sound procurement systems. And what the Council wants to do is to leverage this USTDA
experience with the World Bank and pass that forward to the African Development Bank.

The African Development Bank puts out over 1,200 procurements per year of which the U.S. companies get a fraction of. And so we want to be able to understand these procurements and be able to bid on them.

Council recommends that the USTDA establish this procurement framework with the life cycle cost. And as Acrow Bridge has mentioned, what we have seen firsthand is that the African nations want to buy power generation assets, but then later on, when it comes to spare parts, maintenance, operation, do not have the funding for that.

And so that power generation asset is kept on the side because none of that life cycle cost was agreed to up front. And so I think that the USTDA addressing the LCCA, the life cycle cost assessment, just to support the African Development Bank, is a great recommendation.

We also think that the pilot country
to roll out this program should be somewhere in
the Sub-Saharan African region. And that will
also be enhanced with procurement training and
technical assistance programs. Jay.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thank you.
Tom, do you want to add anything?

MR. HARDY: I'll be very quick. A
quick recognize, maybe it's just an update for
you, Mr. Secretary and Jay. I spoke with our GPI
team or procurement team this morning.

They're already running with this.
They are already engaging the AFDB. We have the
budgetary resources. We're in the process of
bringing on additional technical expertise to
really implement this and hit the ground running
when this is signed and once we're on the ground.
So we've got everything lined up already to make
sure that this is doable when we arrive.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thank you.
Okay. We'll move -- any other comments? We'll
move to Ghana. And there, our first
recommendation is around the SEC-led technical
assistance. Fred?

MR. SISSON: Thank you, Jay. The Ghana market currently has $1.2 billion in bilateral trade annually, $832 million in exports.

The capital markets are instrumental to promoting greater liquidity and market valuation and also greater trade, good ways of growing the market space, but capital markets require reliable processes and procedures in order to be effective.

Ghana has been working since 2007 with the Securities and Exchange Commission and other agencies to try to mature its processes to become signatory to an organization called the International Organization of Securities Commissions.

They have a multilateral memorandum of understanding. There's 117 global signatories to that. Ghana has been trying to become signatory to it.

They made it through most of the
processes of becoming signatory, but they need
some help to get to the last processes of
becoming signatory. Becoming signatory allows
greater access to capital. Capital flows through
the global market.

What the Council is recommending for
is either the USAID or other U.S. agencies to
fund the US SEC technical assistance program to
help the Ghana SEC become signatory to the IOSCO
MOU.

In addition to that, during our June
trip, the US SEC has additional requirements,
data information, that we think we can use the
June trip to gather to engage individuals and
others involved in the process to gather that
data to bring it back to help the US SEC tailor a
program that's more specific to helping Ghana's
SEC meet those requirements. Back to you, Jay.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thanks.

Thanks, Fred. Scott.

MR. BIRDWELL: So we can help prepare
the team, the delegation, to gather the correct
information and process it with the right individuals.

We're already in discussions with the leadership of the Ghana, the SEC and the exchange. They would welcome our technical assistance once we have developed our -- thank you.

Once we've developed our insights into the problems on their market and the impediments, then we can prepare a series of recommendations. And we can go and do consultations to help them fix those problems. So we would assemble a team of SEC staff and perhaps others that can go out and take care of that.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thank you.

Eric Meyer.

MR. MEYER: Thank you, Jay. Eric Meyer with the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of International Affairs.

And I think we really strongly support this type of engagement in Africa. So, you know, this is SEC sharing American expertise and know-
how on how to develop deeper and broader capital markets. And this is something that is a true gap in most of Africa.

And this is also vital to the longer term interest of American companies because we need to have strong financial intermediation in Africa to support American businesses who are investing there and on the ground, but also to support African entrepreneurs and businesses who are going to become the customers for America's businesses in the future.

So this is a great example of how we can use what's best in America to help support and build this in Africa. Thank you.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thank you.

Any other comments? Okay, great. We'll go to the second recommendation on customs. And Andrew Torre?

MR. TORRE: Thank you, Jay. Mr. Secretary, I'm pleased to talk about the Council's recommendations on customs modernization and trade facilitation.
At the heart of Visa's businesses is reducing friction in commerce. And certainly across Africa's border crossings today, there are real impediments to commerce and the physical movement of goods.

One is certainly a high prevalence of cash. It's a major factor to customs delays. It reduces revenue collection for governments, and it also creates real opportunities for both leakage and corruption.

Increasing digital payments is certainly one of the ways to smooth commerce and increase trade flows. Other challenges that we identified are an inability to clear shipments prior to arrival, reliance on antiquated paper based systems and insufficient use of globally accepted processes.

Clearly, U.S. business seeks to operate where shipping networks are predictable and efficient and allow U.S. business to fulfill their customer orders.

And, furthermore, in order to develop
a world market ripe for U.S. commerce, Africa as a whole needs the capacity and systems to import efficiently, quickly and at lower costs.

Therefore, customs modernization and harmonization across ports of entry, particularly in landlocked countries, are vital for U.S. business to do business in Africa.

The recommendations report provides detail on the security governance initiative in which the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency partners with African governments today to improve both border security and management.

While the focus of these initiatives is largely on security enhancement, the program also includes targeted fixes for safe and streamlined supply trains, which certainly help to facilitate trade.

The security governance initiative has been successful in both Kenya and Ghana. And we're seeing interest now from West African countries including both Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria.
Therefore, the Council has a twofold recommendation. The first is that both the Department of Commerce and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency help to connect U.S. firms that can provide implementation expertise for effective and efficient customs systems.

And the second is that during the fact finding mission that it focus on how the security governance initiative can be further strengthened in both Ghana and Kenya and replicated and enhanced in Ethiopian Cote d'Ivoire. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks, Andrew. Mark Koumans, from the customs.

MR. KOUMANS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Mr. Secretary. Mark Koumans from the Customs and Border Protection. I also want to thank Mr. Torre for his comments.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security through Customs and Border Protection has been honored and pleased to be able to participate in efforts to facilitate trade and
streamline supply chains in Ghana.

We're very supportive of the PAC-DBIA as well as Mr. Secretary, your trip to Africa.

In partnership with the Department of State, and I want to recognize Ambassador Yamamoto and the U.S. Embassy in Accra, particularly, Ambassador Jackson.

CBP is focused on eliminating stovepipes among Ghanaian agencies and improving cooperation, thereby enhancing customs management and reducing border crossing times for goods and people. We've done this by enhancing information sharing, improving legal frameworks and establishing partnership with the private sector.

Our next steps include reducing checkpoints and moving towards mutual recognition among Ghana's neighbors and also its ECOWAS partners to be able to speed up trade while maintaining high uniform security standards throughout the region.

This may be particularly relevant and important, as Mr. Torre just said, with respect
to landlocked countries in the region.

Parenthetically I will add that, as you already heard, CBP has also acted in Kenya where we're also working transform agencies involved in border management.

And throughout, Africa CBP is active in assisting countries to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, which encourages the adoption of modern trade best practices.

So thanks again for the opportunity.

I look forward to working with all of you towards enhanced U.S. Africa trade that is secure and streamlined towards the success of the mission.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you, Gil.

MR. KAPLAN: Thank you. The highlighting of this issue in the Council's November report and the recommendation now for scaling up the great work Customs and Border Protection is currently doing in Ghana reflects the fact that this is one of the most common obstacles we at Commerce hear about from U.S. companies that are looking to export more to
As you've noted, whether it's the way companies experience moving goods into and out of ports, the whole time at land border crossings or the lack of adequate transport infrastructure in many countries, we know that improvements on these fronts would yield big dividends in supporting both U.S. companies and African growth efforts.

Harmonized customs processes at borders and upgraded infrastructure create better regional integration, effectively increase the size of markets companies are looking at, which I know is another concern previously raised by the Council.

I was amazed to read in the last report that reducing supply chain barriers in African countries, even just by half could produce a 12 percent increase in their GDP. So this is a really high opportunity with probably not a lot of cost.

And CBP and customs and other
government agencies are very, very good -- and Commerce, I should say, and CBP are very, very good at training on customs procedures.

We have been doing it all over the world for many years. So I think this is a real opportunity. And we will work prior to this trip with customs, as the Secretary mentions, to make sure the recommendations are put into effect. We should start doing that now.

We will also link U.S. companies with those in Ghana to provide the technology, materials, technical expertise to implement these recommendations. I think the U.S. has many solutions to this, including companies that provide this kind of support.

And finally we would plan to have a site visit to ports and CBP, or customs facilities, in Ghana while we are there to make it very clear how important this is and make our presence and support for their efforts very clearly felt.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks. Thanks, Gil.
Tom.

MR. HARDY: Mr. Secretary, I promise this will be the last time I say anything today so. But I will say, USTDA is in support of modernization of custom processes around the world when U.S. industries request our assistance from electronic customs modernization to noninstrusive inspection systems.

USTDA has delivered assistance designed to improve our partner countries' ability to import goods efficiently and safely.

We are pleased to work with you and the PAC to consider programming to address these barriers in Ghana through educating customs officials and our stakeholders on U.S. best practices and U.S. technologies to ensure a speedy, secure and transparent customs system.

So thank you very much.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thanks, Tom. Any other comments. I'd like to make one for my absent Vice Chair Laura Lane from UPS. As we all know from the last meeting, she was adamant about
this point. So I'll just leave it at that because we all know how she feels and especially from a standpoint of what free borders look like.

Our next recommendation is government-to-government MOU to increase the U.S. private investment and commercial participation.

I am the person that will do the recommendation. As I said upfront, I think one of the key things that we see on the ground from other countries is a much more holistic approach to Africa.

In December this past year, the German President came in and announced $100 million of funding around the renewable energy sector in Ghana for German companies along with some concessional financing.

We've also seen similar amounts $50 to $100 million by the Danes in Ethiopia, also around wind projects for Danish companies. So there's a lot more going on than just from China and others.

And I think the recommendation that we
have is to again look at the holistic capability that the U.S. government can provide to companies as well to countries.

And today, Secretary, I think you've heard the depth and the breadth of what the U.S. government has from the capability of really impacting African countries as well as projects.

And I think from that standpoint, you know, if you look at it, we've got Power Africa. We've got project development costs that can be funded through USTDA and a lot of studies through that, equity and lending through OPIC, credit enhancement and bankability through the USAID DCA along with U.S. EXIM and again the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

So there's a lot that we can bring as a country to governments within Africa. So I think one of the key things for us -- and we're working with your team at Commerce -- is to really focus in on what projects are available, what we can really pull together and take a look at and recommend to you for the trip around some
of these.

So that would be the recommendation.

So I'll turn it over to you.

SECRETARY ROSS: Well, I thank you for that recommendation. And I think it's obviously a good one. I'd like to make a kind of recommendation back to those in the room who are funding sources.

I think it would stand us very well if each of the entities, like Ray's and the others, could say, as a prelude to the trip, in concept we're prepared to block out X dollars for this country, subject to the individual projects coming forward.

And I think if the governments all know that there's a series of both concessionary and more conventional funding and that they're kind of competing for it, we might come a lot further with getting something concrete out of them in response.

So in addition to passing the little hat about the translation, I'm going to pass a
big hat about project funding. So that's all I have to say.

CHAIR IRELAND: All right. Great.

Ray, do you want to respond?

MR. WASHBURNE: Well, I say, yes.

Although we only had $3 million in Ethiopia, we have $1.4 billion in Ghana. So we're very active there. And do you want me to speak to Ghana?

CHAIR IRELAND: Yes.

MR. WASHBURNE: Yes. Okay. We have 22 projects in Ghana. We've been there since 1974. And it's actually the second highest concentration in our portfolio.

In fact, I'm meeting with the Minister of Finance for Ghana this week to explore further projects, and we're encouraged by their move by the President to Beyond Aid that they're going to.

This MOU is very important for us because that will enable OPIC to engage in a lot more key and strategic projects. We have a pipeline of deals with them now. We'd like to do
more.

But as all of you are aware, OPIC, in order to provide more financing, there's legislation going through right now that will enable us to do equity investments and gives us an additional tool to utilize.

So we're part of the administration's recent national security strategy and having the equity authority in this legislation will go a long way to help you on your trip.

So call your Congressman. Tell them to vote.

CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thanks, Ray. And they've been very supportive of projects of ours and OPIC has in Ghana as well as other countries as well. Cheryl, do you want --

MS. ANDERSON: I think our response is the same as on the recommendation on an MOU in Ethiopia. We can be quite supportive.

I think it could be very well aligned with Ghana's new Beyond Aid policy, which we like. That's where we want to be going in Ghana.
We have a lot of experience on the ground with whole of government partnerships with Ghana, and we can learn from them. And I think we can also be supportive with not only guaranties but our technical support and our capacity building.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you, Jonathan.

MR. NASH: Thanks, Jay. I'll be brief. We are pleased to see that the report identified renewable energy generation. And Ghana is one of the top five priority sectors in which U.S. firms see market opportunity, specifically independent power producers and wind, solar and hydro power.

MCC's nearly $500 million Ghana Power Compact, which is currently in implementation, was developed to increase private sector investment in the sector and was informed by consultations and input from U.S. firms including GE, Endeavor, Contour and others.

Specifically, we are supporting the government of Ghana's efforts to improve the
management and efficiency of Ghana's largest state-owned electricity distribution utility by bringing in a private sector operator and by making investments in systems at the corporate level to improve overall service quality.

    Basically, we're trying to put the utility on more commercial footing. This will give independent power producers a more credit worthy power purchaser with which to do business.

    As many of you know, it's great to have a power purchase agreement, but if the utility is insolvent and can't pay you, it doesn't work. I think Jay and Fred and others around the table can share a lot of war stories there.

    So we work closely within the interagency including USAID, OPIC and Power Africa on the development and implementation of this compact. And we look forward to ensuring that U.S. companies are able to leverage our investments.

    CHAIR IRELAND: Great. Thanks,
Jonathan. Any other comments? Yes, Rahama.

MS. WRIGHT: I just wanted to
highlight that the Ghanaian President was here in
February meeting with the National Governor's
Association, and he was the first African
President to come and meet with this association.

So when it comes to us talking about
private sector engagement, I think it's very
encouraging that it's also being led at the state
level in terms of having that level of engagement
with an African President.

CHAIR IRELAND: Yes. I agree. I met
with the Minister of Finance this this morning
and very interested in private sector investment
and continued investment by U.S. companies. Yes.
Kimberly.

DR. BROWN: Thank you. My company,
Amethyst Technologies has an office in Ghana. So
one of the things that I'll also throw out to you
is the importance of small business.

So most businesses in the U.S. are
small businesses. So we've been working with
OPIC for years on a health care deal in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone. But looking for ways to get more small businesses engaged in Africa, risk is very high in some instances.

Small businesses aren't always averse to risk. Also, small businesses look at smaller projects where risk is minimized, but you still have returns that are quite significant in many instances.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you. Any other comments? Okay, great. Secretary, you've heard the -- this is the conclusion of our report, all the recommendations for the four countries that will be visited in early summer.

And at this point in time, are there any objections to adopting the Council's report of what we discussed today? Okay. Can I have a second?

MR. MEYER: Second.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you. And a voice vote, all in favor?

(Chorus of ayes.)
CHAIR IRELAND: Opposed?

(No audible response.)

CHAIR IRELAND: Excellent. Thank you.

So, Secretary, closing remarks?

SECRETARY ROSS: Thank you, Jay, and thank you and I congratulate Council for the recommendations you've just adopted and even more for the very productive discussion that we had today.

The most exciting part of these recommendations is that they will help directly to shape the agenda for our trip this summer.

So before we conclude, I've made some notes on the trip and its objectives. First, of course, the trip must assist PAC-DBIA in executing its mandate of advising the President on ways to strengthen the U.S.-Africa commercial relationship.

Firsthand engagement on the ground with government officials and local business leaders is clearly the best way to gather the kind of information that will yield concrete
action items.

But even as we take steps toward some
of the recommendations you have made today, we
welcome more information and will assess any
adjustments necessary.

More importantly, we'd like to think
about identifying new ideas that you will bring
forth in your final report this fall.

Second, we must use the trip to
advance actual business deals and address key
trade barriers in each country. The Yatra deal
highlights the value of well-coordinated U.S.
government advocacy in advancing commercial
interests and the kind we all hope to see more
across Africa and during the trip.

So we really need the latest
information you have on the deals your companies
are pursuing in each country. Wherever possible,
we'll try to push them across the finish line and
hopefully incorporate a meaningful amount of
signings on this trip.

On the trip, I'll conduct official
advocacy for U.S. companies competing for foreign
government contracts. So I encourage such U.S.
companies to contact Commerce's Advocacy Center
and the sooner the better because I'd rather have
it be closings not just sales pitches when we get
over there. We're seeking engagements that will
help bring down the barriers to U.S. businesses.

Finally, as PAC-DBIA members heard
from our National Security Council host, prior to
this meeting, the refining of the
administration's overall strategy for Africa is
well underway.

A core pillar definitely will be
enhancing commercial relationships with African
countries. And to be effective in that, we must
marshal support from the entire U.S. government
for American companies in the region.

Our trip will be a direct
manifestation of that focus of President Trump's
administration. With those overarching goals in
mind, I look forward to finalizing plans for a
robust and productive trip.
My thanks to everyone here and to the team at Commerce for all that's gone into the report we've received today and will go into preparing for our trip.

We will be fortunate to have Under Secretary Gil Kaplan accompanying us on that trip. So before we close, I'll turn it over to him for some closing thoughts. Gil.

MR. KAPLAN: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. After listening to the discussion here today, I am convinced that the work of the PAC-DBIA will contribute greatly to the President's goals.

U.S. companies working in partnership with the African business community will help many African countries move from an aid-based relationship to a trade-based relationship.

In the process, U.S. companies will support private sector initiatives that will increase electricity connections, improve transportation infrastructure and create jobs both for a young and growing African workforce and for the U.S. economy, both of which are very
much needed.

Many of the world's last emerging markets are in Africa, markets in which U.S. companies can supply both superior technology and superior know-how regarding corporate governance and project management.

Strong corporate governance, fair labor practices and other hallmarks of desirable private sector development happen most effectively through direct company-to-company transfer.

The ties that are formed between companies and nations when they deepen trade and investment relationships are among America's most enduring forms of diplomacy.

And this economic diplomacy, by growing the economies of both our African trading partners and the United States will help strengthen U.S. economic security and buttress our own national security.

We in ITA will do everything possible with our commercial experts overseas, with our
Advocacy Center, to make this happen. I look forward to working with the Council members and my interagency colleagues as we prepare for this exciting upcoming Africa trip.

CHAIR IRELAND: Thank you. Cyril, would you like to?

MR. SARTOR: I don't think I can add anything to the closing comments of Secretary Ross and Undersecretary Kaplan. Just to say I wish you all a very successful trip and please know that you have very enthusiastic advocates for your work within the White House. Thank you.

CHAIR IRELAND: Okay. Thank you. Thank you. Just in closing I'd like to thank the Commerce Department for their help in this meeting and the recommendation report as well as all of the company representatives that do the hard work.

And, again, I think the capability of utilizing this Council to pull together an interagency aspect, I think, is a pretty good practice and will really help us on the ground in
Africa as we all continue to drive more business
from U.S. companies.

And with that, I'd like to say it's 5
o'clock on the dot. The meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
went off the record at 5:00 p.m.)
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was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

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