

# A Word from the Corporate Council on Africa

## *Promoting Trade and Investment Between the United States and Africa*

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The Africa Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) has established a Professional Development Program (APD) which is made up of a series of six study tours in the United States and 16 work-shops in Africa. The participants of the work-shop will come out with an understanding of how to effectively use AGOA legislation for the United States (U.S.) and Africa relations.

The U.S. Department of State has selected 58 African business and public sector leaders from 35 of the AGOA beneficiary countries to participate. The program is designed to introduce these professionals to U.S. markets, business practices and trade associations. The participants are divided into six groups for U.S. based study tours focusing on apparel and agriculture. These study tours are followed by a series of AGOA focused workshops in 16 African nations, allowing the returned business leaders and U.S. technical experts to explain the benefits of AGOA to other African business and government leaders.

The goal of this program is to provide medium and small African business entrepreneurs and members of

business associations' exposure to AGOA and to the American market in order to increase capacity to develop new USA/Africa trade linkages.

Participation in the program is designed to provide the selected professionals with, amongst other things: an understanding of American busi-



ness norms and actual practices; knowledge of U.S. customs operations, product distribution, retailing, business linkages, and finally relationships with manufacturers in their respective sectors.

Since the program's inception on March 1, 2002, all of the 58 African professionals designated to take part in APD have completed the U.S. study tour component of the program. In all the cities visited during the two-week domestic study tour conducted thus far, the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) has attempted to craft a program that offers a multi-faceted exposure to the vast array of issues that will affect exporting to U.S. market. Meetings in Washington, D.C. during these first four sessions have included substantive briefings with those public agencies involved in trade administration in the U.S., including the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Department of Commerce, the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and the Department of Agriculture. International trade lawyer, Paul Ryberg, Jr., President of the African Coalition on Trade and Senior AGOA expert consultant for the APD program, joins each session for an introductory briefing prior to participants making potential business contacts and for a debriefing to answer technical questions that may have arisen during interaction with U.S. companies.

The APD program also seeks to introduce participants to the important factors affecting the creation and

implementation of businesses transactions with U.S. companies. To that end, the CCA has included a business development component in each of the APD/U.S. study tours. This component includes a primer on how to do market analysis by expert consultants from Fintrac Consulting and the Bates Community College to a quality management and industry analysis from AGOA Training Center experts. Since the Washington, D.C. based business coalition that supports all AGOA related matters meets on a regular basis at the CCA offices, there have been a number of candid exchanges between participants and key individuals involved in the passage of the bill. Logistical meetings of important ports of entry are also included in each tour. While it is unrealistic to expect to gain a comprehensive understanding of the U.S. market after only a two-week visit, the CCA strives to provide each participant with an honest overview of the breadth and depth of the American business environment through their APD experience.

The APD program has completed all of its domestic study tours and ten of its sixteen Africa-based forums. Already, almost 900 African companies from ten different countries have benefited from the program through either the domestic study tours or the Africa-based business forums, proving that the multiplier effect of the program is beginning to take hold. The program already has produced tangible results over its short nine-month life.

- A participant who attended the first agriculture study tour last

April signed a contract for the monthly export of 20,000 kilos of shea butter to a company in greater Chicago. In turn, the company will become the exclusive West African distributor of shampoos, hair relaxer, hair conditioning and cosmetic products for their American partner.

- A Nigerian textile factory owner met with a company outside of New York City during an APD study tour. They are currently working together to establish a new textile factory outside of Abuja, Nigeria. The factory will operate with the U.S. company as a 40% equity partner.
- A manufacturer in Botswana is working with a U.S. company, based in Pennsylvania, on a joint venture partnership for the production of t-shirts in the U.S. and Africa.
- A South African shoe company that visited Los Angeles with the program is now working with a U.S. orthopedic shoe manufacturer on a 30,000-unit order.
- A large U.S. retailer made a 100,000-unit order from an APD participant from Malawi after the participant visited the company during the June training program.

The AGOA Professional Development Program is heading for Mauritius, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Mali, and Cape Verde in 2003 for more on-continent workshops. The Corporate Council on Africa looks forward to future success with the program.