



# News Release

**Embassy of the United States**

877 Pretorius Street, Arcadia, Pretoria. Tel: 012-431-4000



**August 18, 2010**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

For more information: U.S. Embassy Pretoria

Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau 012-431-4217/ 079-111-8280/ [trudeauk@state.gov](mailto:trudeauk@state.gov)

*Remarks as prepared for delivery:*

***South African Institute of International Affairs  
Donald H. Gips, United States Ambassador to South Africa***

Good afternoon, and thank you for the introduction.

My thanks also to Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, the director of SAIIA, for the invitation to speak to you today.

And for all my ambassadorial colleagues and those in the audience today, I will use my favorite expression: All protocol observed.

This is a special week for my family and I. Tomorrow marks the one-year anniversary of our arrival in South Africa. At this point, I consider myself "proudly South African," despite my primary role of serving as the United States Ambassador. We have fallen in love with this country – its beauty, its diversity, its cultural richness. I have also developed a fondness for the braais, the wine and the amarula...sometimes I think the real role of an Ambassador is to eat and drink for your country.

From the northern reaches of Kruger Park to the southern tip of Cape Point, there is no more beautiful country in the world. Not only is it physically beautiful but the warmth of its people make it a very special place. My family and I have become huge Bafana Bafana fans-- we were thrilled with Bafana's recent win against Ghana, although that may also reflect Ghana's role in sending the U.S. home from the World Cup. We won't comment further on that.

The United States-South African relationship is a partnership that starts from a simple premise: There is a bond between South Africans and Americans. As Nelson Mandela said after his first visit to the United States, "We are linked by nature, but proud of each other by choice." Our citizens do business with each other, travel to each others' most beloved places, study together and enjoy much of the same culture and music. Our governments work together to fight HIV/AIDS, build peace and stability around the continent, and bring more jobs and prosperity to our people.

Through our strategic partnership, our two great democracies can achieve great things for our people, and the world.

Relations between the United States and South Africa are on an upswing. In 2009, in remarkable demonstrations of democracy at work, new leaders took office in both of our nations. This new leadership offered an opportunity for a new beginning in our bilateral relationship, a chance to build a genuine partnership.

Since their respective elections, President Zuma and President Obama have met no fewer than five times. They have committed to working together on a range of issues, from global issues such as climate change and nuclear proliferation to critical regional issues, such as improving health care and food security, increasing intra-Africa trade, and stabilizing trouble spots and promoting democracy.

Our countries share something very profound: We cherish the idea and practice of a multiracial democracy, and the challenges and opportunities that this brings. As a result, our countries are on shared journeys. Before I came here as Ambassador, I worked in both the Obama White House and the Clinton White House, and since coming here I am continually struck by the fact that we

are dealing with many of the same issues, concerns and challenges that face South Africa: How do we improve education? How do we create jobs? How do we solve the healthcare problem? How do we support the institutions of democracy and a free press? We share these issues and while many of the problems are more extreme here because of the history of apartheid, we have much to learn from each other as we seek to improve the lives of our citizens. The richness of the relationship between the two countries is deep, and the foundation is strong.

As Ambassador, it has been exciting for me to see, in addition to everything we do on a government-to-government basis, the exchange that goes on in academia, the private sector, the non-profit world and tourism. Americans come and fall in love with South Africa – we saw this during the World Cup when it was Americans who purchased the most tickets of any foreign nation. There is a synergy between our countries that is dynamic and vibrant and growing. It is a superb time to be the United States Ambassador to South Africa.

In his 2009 speech in Ghana, President Obama said that the future of Africa is up to Africans. He called on individual citizens on the continent to take responsibility for their destiny. South Africa's wildly successful hosting of the World Cup showed exactly what happens when individuals step up, governments work in partnership with average citizens, businesses and non-governmental organizations do their part. While officially Spain won the World Cup, as President Obama has noted, it was clear that South Africa and Africa were the real winners. The challenge for South Africa is to continue to keep on that path of walking together to advance the country.

In his Ghana speech, President Obama also reiterated America's commitment to be a responsible partner of Africa, wherever, whenever we are needed. And make no mistake: It is in the United States' strategic interest for South Africa to succeed in its historic transformation from apartheid to a world leader, where all South Africans share in the nation's prosperity and economic opportunity.

President Zuma has been clear in his recognition that South Africa faces significant problems, including unemployment, an educational system in need of reform, an HIV/AIDS epidemic, high crime rates, poor service delivery, corruption and significant income disparity. Left unaddressed,

these forces could pose a challenge to the country's stability. We believe that the South African government is committed to addressing these issues.

And while our foreign assistance resources are limited relative to the overall resources the South African government is mobilizing, the United States and South Africa have a genuine shared interest in finding ways to best leverage our assistance and expertise to help South Africa tackle these persistent and challenging problems.

The United States provides about four billion rands annually to support South Africa in the fight against HIV/AIDS through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The vast majority of that money supports technical assistance and infrastructure. South Africa, led by Health Minister Motsoaledi, is driving a government wide fight against HIV/AIDS. As a result of the success of this program in getting more people on ARVs, we were asked in late 2009 to provide one-time additional support of \$120 million to augment the purchase of anti-retroviral drugs and improve the delivery system. Through that purchase, we demonstrated that these drugs could be purchased at half the cost that South Africa was paying for these drugs.

The Health Ministry now has issued a new procurement that will allow them to reap huge savings on the purchase of these drugs and treat many more people.

Of course, the real challenge is prevention: How do you keep people from contracting HIV/AIDS? There are existing prevention programs, as well as some brand new research on microbicides that we co-funded, that we are very hopeful will help turn the tide. The good news already is that the situation has stabilized, but the question remains: How do we drive the infection rate down? South Africa continues to develop its mother-to-child prevention programs, which are proven to be very effective, as well as programs like male circumcision, which appear to reduce incidence by 60%. These programs are critical and I am proud that the United States is a key partner in supporting these initiatives.

I am optimistic that South Africa will turn the tide in the fight against HIV/AIDS, due in large part to the commitment of the South African government and the vibrant NGO community here in South Africa.

However, it's important to remember that these gains against the scourge of HIV/AIDS mean nothing unless individual South Africans take responsibility for their actions and sexual behavior. It doesn't matter how many microbicides are developed, how many condoms are distributed, how many prevention commercials are aired - if individuals don't take responsibility for their own future, this horrible disease will continue to ravage and cripple this country. It's time for every individual to step up— every South African needs to look every other South African in the eye and say WE, together, need to unite to fight this disease. That's how battles are fought, and battles are won.

Education in South Africa is also a critical priority, and a personal interest of my family. The United States has invested in programs from teacher training to post-graduate exchange programs for leading South African students – again, with the overriding idea that we support the South African government in their work to improve this nation's schools.

Our partnership with the University of Pretoria established the groundbreaking Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room, which provides supplemental educational resources for hundreds of students in Mamelodi. US Peace Corps volunteers teach in more than 200 rural primary schools in South Africa. The ACCESS English Language Program provides extra after-school support and resources to students across the country as they prepare for matric. We've supported South Africa to create and sustain education and training programs that are responsive to employer labor needs through the Further Education and Training Program.

If South Africa wants to continue to be a leader on the continent and in the global community, its citizens cannot tolerate an educational system that results in failure for millions.

In 2009, only about 60% of South African students passed the matric exam, a decline of two percent from the previous year. These results aren't acceptable, especially given the fact that South Africa spends more on education than most other countries on the continent. This underscores that it is not just a funding issue, but one that calls for system wide reforms.

In America, we know this debate. President Obama has developed several initiatives designed to push educational reform, such as the 'Race to the Top' program. Some are controversial in the U.S., but all are grounded in President Obama's firm belief that we owe it to our children to tackle these vital issues head on. In the U.S., the reform debate focuses on issues such as pay for performance for teachers, teacher tenure, charter schools and vouchers, standards and closing down failing schools.

Let me be clear: America's experiences are not exactly the same as South Africa's—you need to decide on your own how to change your education system. What I am saying is that the status quo should not be acceptable to anyone who cares about the future of this country. As you have this debate, we are committed to sharing our experiences, good and bad, as we both struggle with this critical issue.

We're also committed to partnership on perhaps South Africa's most important issue: Job creation. I believe that the future for South Africa, and for the continent, rests with moving away from aid, towards trade. At the beginning of this month, the United States hosted the 11<sup>th</sup> annual African Growth and Opportunity Act Forum. Bilateral trade between South Africa and the U.S. has increased dramatically thanks to the AGOA agreement. South Africa is the leading non-oil beneficiary of AGOA. Ninety-seven percent of South African exports to the United States entered duty-free in 2009.

There are over 600 American companies with operations here in South Africa. We're committed to increasing the number of American businesses, and increasing bilateral trade - the United States' strong trade and business partnerships with South Africa are hallmarks for the continent. One of the stumbling blocks of increased trade has been a lack of clarity around BEE. While America supports transformation and the goals of BEE, the lack of specificity has been a hindrance for American companies. We, and AmCham, have been working with DTI to seek

more clarity on aspects of the BEE program. We applaud the Department of Trade and Industry's recent agreement with Microsoft as a new model for BEE that we hope will be expanded.

We are also working with DTI on other initiatives to build trade and create jobs. Through the South African International Business Linkages (SAIBL) Program, the US helps enhance the competitiveness of historically disadvantaged small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

This program has created over 18,000 jobs and generated R12 billion in SME revenue.

Job creation is also a priority of the U.S. Government's agriculture programs, which focus on partnering with the South African Department of Agriculture to increase capacity along the entire agriculture and food value chain, with a focus on emerging farmers. U.S. government technical assistance ensured South Africa retained R280 million in fruit trade to the United States and is promoting the development of harmonized technical standards that will facilitate even more trade across Africa and with the U.S.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for both of our countries in increasing trade is to break down the barriers that hamper trade between African nations. Together, we need to foster and facilitate intra-Africa trade. For American businesses, a market of 48 million is attractive, but a market across Africa of 1 billion consumers would be impossible to ignore. Trade barriers between African countries must fall, tariffs must be reduced, trade agreements reached, common standards set, border crossings simplified and infrastructure improved... and the added cost of doing business due to corruption must be tackled.

The South African government's initiatives to fight corruption are critical in this regard. Corruption is an issue in every country and South Africa's 2009 ranking of 55th out of 180 nations on Transparency International's corruption scale is good but there is room to improve. This is the first country where I ever heard the word 'tenderpreneur.' A corruption-free South Africa will attract investors from all sectors of the globe – from the EU, from America, from China and beyond, and trade is what builds nations. For South Africa to continue in its rightful place as a global leader, corruption cannot be tolerated. Not by elected leaders, not by business

and not by private citizens. This will require sustained and personal leadership, a united fight across all sectors.

America's founders recognized that the best way to fight corruption and promote democracy in their new nation was through a free press.

America still believes that a free press serves as the front line in the defense of democracy. We believe that, at the most basic level, governments are accountable to citizens, and democracy requires those citizens to make choices. A free press provides the information that permits the public to make informed choices.

Just as America's founders were concerned about the quality of the media in America's early days, I also understand the government's concern about the professionalism of the South African press. In my conversations with journalists, they themselves recognize that economic pressures have led to lapses and that their internal standards need tightening. Having served in two White Houses, I know how members of government feel when leaders are attacked by the media, sometimes unfairly.

However, as President Obama just said in his remarks to the Young African Leaders Forum in early August, "One of the wonderful things about the United States is that in my position, there are often times when I get frustrated, when I think I know more than some of my critics. Yet, we have institutionalized the notion that those critics have every right to criticize me, no matter how unreasonable I think they may be."

I believe the challenge here is to balance that right of criticism with the need for media professionalism and standards for truthful and fair reporting. We note the efforts of the South African media to discuss reforms, such as greatly strengthening the Office of the Press Ombudsman and diversifying the membership of the Press Council.

In the United States, the balance of criticism with fair reporting includes protections of national secrets, but these protections are strictly and clearly defined and articulated. In the United States, 'national interests' are issues of national security.



We believe this balances the public's need to know, freedom of speech and the protection of national security. Here in South Africa, the media and the government must come together to agree on specific and concrete standards for the management of sensitive information that also guarantee free speech and the right to dissent.

The rhetoric in this debate from both sides is clouding and complicating the hard work that will be required to reach common ground. As an outsider, listening to this debate closely, it appears that the one thing that both sides agree on is that the Constitution, one of the greatest of such documents in the world, is sacred. We hope that the Constitution will serve as a guiding light in this debate, as the parties walk forward, together, for the public good.

In the early days of America, our third president Thomas Jefferson said, "Our liberty cannot be guarded but by the freedom of the press, nor that be limited without danger of losing it." In the darkest days of South Africa, the press was a leading light that helped expose the acts of the apartheid regime. The overturning of apartheid offered South Africans opportunities to come together to create a constitution that is a model both in terms of citizen responsibility and for its protection of the freedoms so many fought to achieve and enshrine in law. South Africa must not turn away from that history now.

I believe there is the potential for these two sides to come together. As Deputy President Motlanthe said yesterday, "...what is required is really to debate with the full understanding that freedom of expression, freedom of speech, free media, access to information, all these are matters that are enshrined in our Constitution. So we should proceed from that point of departure and debate as calmly as possible rather than to be hysterical about these issues."

The world needs this debate to be successful as we believe South Africa serves as the role model for the continent and the world. South Africa has shown the way as a peacekeeper for the continent, in Burundi and Sudan.

This country's role as a regional negotiator for disputes on the continent, including Zimbabwe's power-sharing agreement, is critical, as is the wide range of developmental and humanitarian assistance that South Africa provides to its neighbors.

The U.S. Government assists South Africa in its support of other countries on the continent through the Trilateral Assistance Program. South African expertise has been utilized to, among other things, promote food crop research, disaster preparedness, and training of government officials in a number of African countries. This demonstrates how combined U.S. Government and South African efforts can support development of other African countries, including Sudan and Malawi.

And before I am asked in the Q+A, let me talk about Zimbabwe. The United States and South Africa have identical goals for Zimbabwe— we both want a free, fair, prosperous country in which the Zimbabwean people control their own destiny. We also recognize that South Africa has an immediate and very real challenge – Zimbabwe is on your doorstep. As things destabilize, more and more Zimbabweans cross the border, putting more and more of a strain on South African resources. We do hold some different views regarding tactics and strategies, but we are in constant dialogue to better understand each other’s point of view. I think that dialogue has improved dramatically and will continue to do so.

As the tragic attacks in Kampala demonstrated, terror impacts us all. South Africa has already joined the world community in the fight against terror.

We worked in partnership during the World Cup, and as part of a robust partnership in law enforcement cooperation and security, the United States has provided South Africa with targeted financial support for training, equipment and other security-related assistance. We continue to work closely with the South African government to address future threats to the security of the continent.

My priority as the Ambassador is to take our relationship to a much higher level. South Africa today is a miracle – and we should never lose sight of that. South Africa emerged out of a history of oppression and hatred. It’s the only country in the world that re-invented itself as a free, democratic, multiracial society after suffering the injustice of apartheid. South Africa could be like every other country in the world, but the world needs it to be better. The global community looks to South Africa to be the leader, to set an example, to show us our better selves and what we can be when a people take their own destiny in hand.

When South Africa is at its best, everyone gives a little of what would be in their own self-interest. The World Cup was a great example. During this month-long celebration and the years leading up to the spectacle, South Africans, as the Dinokeng Scenarios said so beautifully, weren't walking behind each other, or in front of each other, but walking together. That's what made the World Cup a success. Individuals, stepping up, working together.

We know it is possible for you, as a nation, to realize the dream of 1994. South Africans need to walk together, and I guarantee you that America will walk with you, as investors, as tourists, as partners in education and health, solving the great problems of our time. We stand ready to help as South Africa's partner, and South Africa's friend.

In the spirit of freedom of speech, I'd be happy to take questions. And in respect of diversity and equal time, I hope not all of the questions will be about freedom of the press.

###