

MEDIA BRIEFING BOOKLET
ON THE OCCASION OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S VISIT TO GHANA
6/10/2009



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Security in Africa

Over the past decade, Africa's status in U.S. national security policy has risen dramatically, for three main reasons: America's growing dependence on Africa's oil exports, Africa's importance as a major battlefield in America's "Global War on Terrorism," and Africa's central position in the global competition between America and China for economic and political power.

As a result, U.S. military involvement in Africa has escalated significantly. The total value of U.S. security assistance to Africa has risen from about \$100 million each year, to an annual level of about \$800 million. And the United States has created AFRICOM, a new independent military command for Africa that became operational on October 1, 2008. AFRICOM now oversees all U.S. military activities on the continent, including arms sales, military training, military exercises, naval operations in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea, and air raids. Through the Horn of Africa Joint Task Force in Djibouti, AFRICOM has overseen missile strikes on Somali insurgents and counterinsurgency operations in the Sahara.

The Pentagon expected to set up AFRICOM headquarters on the continent when the command became operational, but the public opposition throughout Africa was so strong that only one country, Liberia, publicly offered to host it. This shows the maturity and strength of African civil society, and sends the clear message that the people of Africa do not want AFRICOM.

However, in his Fiscal Year 2010 budget, President

Obama is requesting further increases in funding for U.S. security assistance programs in Africa and AFRICOM. This shows that, at least initially, the administration is following the course laid down for AFRICOM by the Bush administration, rather than putting these programs on hold until it can conduct a thorough review of U.S. security policy towards Africa. AFRICOM funding is increasing despite recent U.S. military failures in Congo and Mauritania. Until African countries have stable, democratic, and accountable governments, increases in military support are likely to be detrimental.

Our primary concern as organizations promoting peace, development, and justice in Africa lies in the projected structure and mandate of AFRICOM. We are concerned that U.S.-Africa policy will be driven by military engagement, rather than diplomacy, development, and a genuine partnership. The Obama administration is following an approach to Africa that is more focused on security and resources than on developing Africa's economies. This could lead to further instability and insecurity throughout the continent.

We are also concerned that AFRICOM is a further instance of the continuing transfer of control and funding of U.S. foreign policy actions from “civilian” agencies like the State Department and USAID to the Defense Department. Tasks such as drilling wells and building schools, once performed by civilian agencies, will now be partly carried out by the military. The resulting dual nature of the military will not only confuse African civilians but also blurs the roles of armed forces and civil society.

And along with control comes freedom from existing legislative restrictions and oversight mechanisms. It’s clear AFRICOM will rely heavily on the services of U.S. private military contractors, who are already participating in large numbers on current operations in Liberia and Sudan, as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is in the long-term strategic interest of the United States to amplify “soft power.” An alternative framework based on development and diplomacy rather than militarism would reduce conflict and sources of terror in the region. Instead of allying militarily with undemocratic or abusive regimes, the U.S. should seek to defend the true human needs of African civilians. Our vision is a comprehensive U.S. foreign policy grounded in true partnership with the African Union, African governments, and civil society on peace, justice, security, and development.

We urge President Obama to abandon the path marked out by the Bush administration and chart a new path based on a multilateral partnership with Africa, as well as with other countries that have a stake in the continent (including China and India), to promote sustainable economic development, renewable energy creation,

democracy, and human rights on the continent.

Questions:

- Why isn’t the president respecting the opinion of the African people, who have made their opposition to AFRICOM quite clear?
- Why is he moving ahead with the Bush administration’s plans for AFRICOM before he conducts a thorough review of U.S. security policy toward Africa?

Agriculture

Just before the economic crisis hit the United States in full force, a severe food crisis emerged in the developing world that pushed 100 million more poor people into hunger and poverty. In the past year, many countries in Africa have faced rising levels of food insecurity, exacerbated by an unjust global agricultural system. Unfortunately, rather than addressing the root causes and problems of the crisis, the approach has been to bandage over the symptoms with the same methods that caused Africa to face a food shortage in the first place.

In the 1980s, the International Monetary Fund used structural adjustment programs to alter the way food was grown in Africa. Rather than growing local staples such as cassava and millet, farmers were urged to produce more internationally tradable goods such as rice, cotton, and fruits. As a result, many farmers reduced food production that would feed their communities and instead began producing for export to the international market. On top of that, as a condition of aid, many African governments were prohibited from subsidizing their agricultural sector, to the detriment of their own farmers.

The injustice of these policies is heightened by heavy subsidies the United States has long provided to agribusiness, to produce some of the same crops African farmers has been encouraged to grow as exports. Thanks to these market-distorting subsidies, world commodity prices for staple grains are artificially low, making it impossible for African farmers to compete globally or even within their own countries. Subsidizing industrial agriculture in the United States is not only injurious to African farmers, but also to small family farms in America who cannot meet the expectations set forth by agribusiness.

In addition to unjust trade and economic policies, violence, deaths from diseases such as HIV/AIDS, undemocratic regimes, and carbon emissions from other continents have all contributed to Africa's food insecurity. The United States should work with African countries on each of these problems by minimizing the militarization of Africa, taking effective steps to ameliorate the HIV/AIDS crisis, and creating an environmental policy that supports and protects farmers in the developed world. Working to improve policy in each of these areas will lead to a more food-secure Africa.

But now, rather than addressing these core issues, agribusiness and the U.S. government continue to promote expensive and inappropriate technologies that will never, as claimed, "feed the world." Many are seeking a new "green revolution" for Africa, even though the first such "revolution" in the 1960s and 70s clearly failed the continent. From a net food exporter in the 1960s, Africa has become a major importer of food and food aid. The heavy promotion of high-tech, export-oriented agriculture that relies on expensive seeds, pesticides, and fertilizers has not worked in Africa, and will only serve to exacerbate growing hunger and poverty if pursued in the future.

Monsanto and other biotechnology companies are pushing genetically modified (GM) seeds as the cure to hunger and poverty in Africa. But this technology has not delivered its claimed benefits and is clearly inappropriate for African conditions. Biotechnology industry figures show that fully 85% of world biotech crop acreage consists of pesticide-promoting plants that have been engineered to withstand direct application of weed-killing pesticides, known as herbicides. These so-called “herbicide-tolerant” crops—nearly all Monsanto’s Roundup Ready soybeans, maize, cotton and canola—foster excessive and unsustainable reliance on Monsanto’s Roundup weed-killer. This explains the growing epidemic of Roundup-resistant “superweeds” in the U.S., Argentina and Brazil, which in turn require still more chemicals to control. The one benefit these crops offer—reduced labor for weed control—accrues mainly to large plantation growers of soybeans and maize in the Americas. Most small African growers cannot afford expensive inputs like Roundup, and in any case are seeking to increase production rather than save labor.

An exhaustive analysis by the Union of Concerned Scientists shows conclusively that traditional breeding is far more effective at increasing yields than genetic engineering. GM soybeans yield less than, or at best equivalent to, conventional varieties, while the insect-resistance trait in GM corn delivers very little in terms of increased yield.

Meanwhile, the GM “posterchild” crops, hyped for over two decades, have failed to materialize. GM virus-resistant sweet potatoes failed miserably in Kenya, despite the investment of millions of dollars over a decade, while Uganda successfully bred its own disease-resistant

sweet potatoes using conventional methods. The much-touted GM “Golden Rice”—promoted as the cure to Vitamin A deficiency—has still not been and may never be commercialized. These and many other failed promises of biotechnology make one seriously doubt the current hype over GM drought-tolerant corn, especially in light of the success of conventional breeding at producing numerous varieties of drought-tolerant wheat, soybeans, canola, and maize.

These facts about biotech agriculture help explain why the most comprehensive scientific assessment of developing country agriculture ever undertaken—the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology (IAASTD)—saw little potential for GM crops to alleviate hunger and poverty. The IAASTD, which is sponsored by the UN and World Bank instead promoted low-input agroecological techniques better suited to small farmers, empowerment of women, reform of unfair trade rules, and the concept of “food sovereignty” as the best ways forward.

According to Professor Carol Thompson, “the African continent also uses different terminology from that of the green revolution. Instead of food security, African voices articulate the goal of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty expresses resistance to the notion that food security can be provided by reliance on global markets, where price and supply vagaries can be as capricious as African weather. Experiencing political manipulation of global markets by the more powerful, African governments seek to control decisions about food sources, considering such choices as vital to national sovereignty.”

President Obama can use the opportunity of his Ghana trip to support African efforts to defend local, small-

scale farming. In most of Africa, the majority of the population still lives in rural areas and derives their incomes from farming. Dislocation of farmers due to consolidation of land for high-tech farming is as serious a threat as chemical pollution of the environment. Instead of advancing a so-called “green revolution” in Africa, President Obama can support small family farms on both sides of the Atlantic. The Obama administration can move to promote ecological agriculture, eliminate subsidies to U.S. agribusiness, and thus create opportunities for small- and medium-sized farms in Africa and in the U.S.

Questions:

- Globally, there is rising demand for ecologically responsible, sustainable, and equitable agricultural methods to replace current chemical-based, genetically modified food production. Will your administration throw its weight behind this vision of truly sustainable agricultural development?
- President Obama, you’ve said you’ll ask Congress to double funding for agricultural development aid to \$1 billion by 2010. Given the failure of biotechnology to serve the needs of small farmers, will genetically modified seeds play a role in the planned expansion?
- For many decades, U.S. agribusiness has received large subsidies. This advantage makes it extremely difficult for African farmers to compete in world markets. How do you plan to rectify this situation?

HIV/AIDS & Global Health

HIV/AIDS continues to be the largest source of needless death in much of the African continent, despite the introduction over a decade ago of high-quality treatments and effective prevention measures. Meanwhile, communicable diseases like tuberculosis (TB) and malaria and lack of basic services result in thousands of deaths yearly. We see the issue of health as one of justice, and seek a U.S. approach that meets this standard. U.S. policy, at its core, must change: It should both use a tiny portion of our nation's wealth to save millions of lives and also support African nations in building their own capacity to provide for the health of their people.

The financial crisis is already undermining the fight against AIDS. A recent World Bank report detailed how the crisis could place at risk the treatment of more than 1.7 million people by year's end. Tanzania announced that it planned to cut its national HIV/AIDS budget by 25%, and similar moves by Kenya and Sudan have already caused shortages of medical supplies. The new administration comes into office with next year's target dates for universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment, care, and prevention—but right now, only one-third of those in immediate need of medication currently have access to it. We must move faster and more boldly.

Even the Millennium Development Goals—which are actually much less ambitious than befits a world that contains such wealth—are largely off-track. TB continues to be the biggest killer of people living with HIV, even though a cure has been available for half a century; malaria continues to be the biggest killer of African children. For these diseases, as well as for maternal and pediatric health, life-saving plans exist, but lack funding. The Obama administration should recommit itself to reaching these goals and regaining the trust of millions.

Obama's global health initiative reflects bold ideas yet is insufficiently funded. We applaud an effort to expand U.S. support to health care in Africa while also continuing efforts to reduce instances of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Yet we also note that the announced budget largely moves planned investments from one column to another. This would simply change who dies of which cause, and thus we call for a true commitment to improving the health of Africa through expanded goals with expanded funding.

Perhaps the most welcome element of a restructured global health initiative would be a true commitment to tackling the health-worker shortage in Africa. Many nations on the continent have less than one health worker for every 1,000 people (the WHO minimum is 2.3/1,000). The United States should immediately launch an effort to help support the recruitment, training, and retention of doctors, nurses, and community workers. This will require funding for the public health sector and reforming our own health infrastructure to produce enough health workers at home, so that we no longer have to pull workers from the global South to

care for our sick and elderly.

President Obama should support what works. Lifting the “global gag rule” and the HIV/AIDS travel ban were excellent starts—and now the U.S. can regain credibility as a leader by putting public health over ideology through lifting the ban on needle-exchange funding, eliminating funding for ineffective “abstinence only” programs, and supporting integration of sexual and reproductive health in all care programs.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria has created a new model for development, rooted in shared responsibility between communities and government, transparency and accountability of funding, and results-driven funding. Yet the previous administration failed to embrace the Fund’s multilateral efforts, requesting cuts to the U.S. contribution nearly every year. Several years of under-funding means the Fund now faces a \$4 to \$5 billion deficit—pending grant decisions are due in November, when life-saving programs will either go forward or be scrapped for lack of funding. Urgent action is needed.

There is also a massive need for increased access to low-cost medicine in Africa. More and better production of drugs on the continent could save many more lives under existing budgets. The U.S., however, has historically played a problematic role internationally, demanding enforcement of overly broad intellectual property rules that limit legal generic production of drugs. The Obama administration should publicly renounce the Bush administration policy of using “watch lists” and other measures to retaliate against countries for not adopting policies that go well beyond even their WTO obligations. Furthermore, the Obama administration should

be proactive in supporting low-cost, high-quality production of medicine in Africa and in nations producing medicine for Africa.

U.S.-Africa health policy is also affected in large part by international organizations, most prominently the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which recently received a massive influx of funding from the United States. Historically, the IMF has demanded economic policies on the continent that prevented nations from hiring doctors and nurses, diverted aid into reserves, and pushed a “privatization” agenda that undermined public health programs. While the IMF claims to have changed, nearly every loan agreement signed in recent months include the same policies. The Obama administration should instead support progressive, expansionary IMF policies with an eye toward their impact on health.

Questions:

- The world made a commitment to reach universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment by 2010, yet due to underfunding and high drug costs, only about one-third of those in immediate need currently have access. What is your administration going to do on AIDS treatment?
- The economic crisis, according to the World Bank, could mean as many as 1.7 million people actually lose access to HIV/AIDS treatment. Is your administration doing anything to address this during this time of global financial difficulty?

- Skilled health workers are a necessary weapon in fighting global health emergencies, yet there is an egregious lack of such workers on the continent. As you know well, having enough doctors, nurses, and midwives costs money and is a long-term investment. Will this hard work be part of your global health initiative?
- Last year, you cosponsored the reauthorization of U.S. global AIDS programs, but the budget this year included none of the planned increases for global AIDS funding. Does this signal a lack of commitment on global AIDS?

Economic Justice and a Green Economy for Africa

The Obama administration can reverse decades of exploitative trade relations by adopting creative new measures that redirect the vast resources of the African continent for human needs, essential services, and development finance. In 2008, the U.S. imported 24% of its oil from Africa. In addition, 80% of the world's supply of coltan, a key component in cell phones and electronic goods, and 80% of the world's supply of cobalt, used for batteries in hybrid cars, come from Africa.

Yet the wealth of the continent is not directed toward meeting the needs of her people. According to a report from the Political Economy Research Institute, "since the mid-1970s, Africa has lost \$420 billion in capital flight." Fairer trade, aimed at improving the lives of all rather than an elite few, can dramatically revitalize African economies and unleash the potential of the continent. This trade must be anchored in international labor and environmental standards. In this time of global economic downturn, fair trade can bring mutual benefits to Africa and the United States, while building a stronger global economy for the 21st century.

In addition to fairer trade, debt elimination should be part of Obama's new engagement with the African continent. Sub-Saharan Africa pays an estimated \$13 billion to wealthy creditors each year. From 1970-2002, Africa received some \$540 billion in loans and paid back \$550 billion in principal and interest. Yet Africa remains today with a debt stock of over \$244 billion. During the presidential campaign, Barack Obama stated that "debt forgiveness has to be a priority." He went on to say, "You've got countries—in sub-Saharan Africa, 44% of its GDP is taken up in debt servicing. It

is a crushing blow. So I will work with other countries in the developed world as well as multinational organizations to ensure we are moving rapidly towards loan forgiveness."

These words, applauded by debt campaigners around the world, have not been translated into Obama administration policy. This trip to Ghana provides a perfect opportunity for President Obama to reinforce commitments towards bilateral and multilateral debt cancellation for African countries, so that resources can be used to build local living economies. Debt elimination could responsibly be financed through the sale of IMF gold. President Obama should also push for passage of the Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending and Expanded Debt Cancellation. African debt campaigners are also calling for the establishment of a debt arbitration mechanism, to address the difficulties many countries are facing as they attempt to service debt arrears to international lenders. A debt arbitration process could balance the interests of both creditors and debtors, particularly in the current global financial crisis. Now is the time to break the chains of debt and bring the change Africa so desperately needs.

President Obama has advanced a bold vision for a global green economy, yet Africa is often not referenced in these discussions. Ghana would be a perfect backdrop to announce U.S. support for the establishment of a major new Global Climate Fund under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Such a fund would be a vital component of any new global climate agreement that involves the large-scale transfer of financial resources from rich to poorer countries in order to help these nations reduce the emissions that cause global climate change.

Furthermore, Obama could bring political leverage for technology transfers and investment incentives in solar, wind, and tidal industries. Creating innovative new jobs can sustain the environment while allowing Africa to leapfrog its development in creative ways and expand opportunities for U.S. alternative technologies firms.

Questions:

- 90% of U.S. Africa trade is in oil, gas, and mining industries. Much of the trade in these extractive industries has been exploitative, bringing little value to those on whose land the resources lie. Ghana has discovered oil just in 2008. How will the Obama administration advance trade policy with Ghana and other African countries that are mutually beneficial?
- How will President Obama translate the commitments of candidate Obama on debt cancellation into policy?

- In advance of Copenhagen, will the Obama administration support the calls from Africa and the Global South for a major new Global Climate Fund? How does Africa feature in President Obama's vision of a global green economy?

Corporate Social Responsibility

Although the “scramble for Africa” is often pegged to the end of the 19th century, it never really ended, as companies from around the world continue to source their raw materials from the resource-rich continent. Despite record corporate profits, poverty rates remain devastatingly high, human rights and labor rights continue to be abused, and the environment is slowly degrading under the crush of regulation-free industrialization. U.S.-based companies operating in Africa must be held to a standard of ‘corporate social responsibility’ that respects the dignity of Africa’s citizens, stewardship of the environment, and the need for justice when violations occur.

CHILD LABOR

Throughout Africa, many children are forced to carry out work that may be injurious to their health or prevents them from attending school, especially in the export-oriented agricultural and mining sectors. In many cases, parents and children work alongside one another in the field to meet demanding production quotas imposed by companies at staggeringly low wages.

Companies such as the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company directly institute policies that encourage child labor in Liberia. Thousands of children in West Africa, especially Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana, work under the worst forms of child labor, on cocoa farms that supply Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland (ADM). Major brands like Hershey and Mars eventually buy the cocoa produced by abusive child labor. Companies operating directly in Africa and those sourcing African raw materials should be required to abide by the child labor standards set by the International Labor Organization (ILO).

LABOR RIGHTS

Employees in many natural resource industries in Africa work in hazardous conditions, are forced to meet unattainable standards, or are not paid sufficiently for their labor. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) noted specific concerns about violent attacks on workers in Egypt, Zimbabwe, Mauritania, and Equatorial Guinea, among others. Companies operating in Africa are also increasingly implementing employment schemes, like temporary contracts and subcontracting, to reduce the number of workers who may unionize under the law. The ability to form a union is an important right for workers throughout the world and should be respected by U.S.-based corporations. Unions provide workers with the means to collectively bargain for higher pay, increased health standards, and numerous other benefits.

Farmers in Africa are often underpaid for their goods, particularly for export-oriented items such as cocoa and coffee. While many mainstream coffee companies such

as Folgers now carry some Fair Trade Certified coffee, much of their coffee is still unethically sourced. The Kuapa Kokoo cocoa farmers' cooperative in Ghana (that produces for and co-owns Divine Chocolate in the U.S. and UK) provides an important example of how the fair-trade system has contributed to positive development and farmer empowerment through providing a just price for farmers' products.

ENVIRONMENT

Extracting resources from the earth often comes at a heavy price to the environment. Oil drilling is a notorious violator of the environment, especially in places like the Niger Delta, where it has led to polluted beaches and gas flares that contaminate the air in coastal communities.

U.S. companies and subsidiaries such as Shell Oil Company and Chevron must understand that their oil production method not only harms the environment but also puts people's health at risk. Furthermore, when civil society groups peacefully organize and demonstrate around these issues, their voices must be heard, not repressed. Mining, logging, and unsustainable agricultural practices are also environmentally hazardous and require stronger regulation to ensure the health of our planet.

ARMED CONFLICT

Sometimes, companies turn a blind eye to armed conflict or human rights abuses occurring as a result of their operations. Consumers in the United States, too far down the supply chain to be aware of these abuses, unknowingly purchase goods that continue to fuel civil

or rebel-led wars.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, companies such as Freeport-McMoran are known to have sourced their minerals from rebel-controlled mines, according to the UN. Dollars from the mineral sales allow rebel groups to purchase weapons and supplies that are often used against the local population. There should be clear limits on mining companies, as well as the electronics companies at the other end of the supply chain, who sell these minerals to consumers in cell phones, video games, and computers. An independent, verifiable means of tracing supply chains must be established, along with strong human rights, labor, and environmental standards.

OWNERSHIP AND EQUALITY

The basis of any politically mandated framework for corporate social responsibility must rest upon the notion that Africans deserve social, political, and economic justice, as owners and cultivators of their land. The Delta region of Nigeria provides the country with 97% of its wealth, and yet its people continue to live in extreme poverty. Another factor influencing Africa's ability to claim ownership over its resources is the new scramble for Africa's land. Corporations, super powers, and emerging powers are engaged in a new race to acquire arable land in Africa. South Korea, China, India, and Saudi Arabia have purchased agricultural estates for the creation of mega-farms to meet the needs of the international market and their respective populations, to the detriment of the African people.

We urge the United States to create a stronger regulatory framework around companies operating in Africa, to develop a plan for companies who have committed

abuses to repay or support damaged communities, and to prohibit corporations from buying unethically or illegally sourced raw materials. The Obama administration should work to ensure that these companies comply with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and institute an effective process to handle violations. Moreover, President Obama can play a more proactive role in holding U.S. corporations accountable for abuses in African countries under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and the Alien Tort Claims Act. U.S. trade and aid programs in Africa should include strong and enforceable protections for labor, human rights, and environmental protection.

Questions:

- What will your administration do to promote stronger labor, human rights, and environmental standards for U.S.-based companies operating in Africa?
- The U.S. is still reliant upon foreign oil. How do you intend to hold oil companies accountable for their actions in the Niger Delta and elsewhere?
- How will your administration work to ensure that U.S.-based companies negotiate fair contracts with governments in Africa? For example, companies like mining giant Newmont make huge profits from Ghana's resources, but contribute little to the economic and social development of communities affected by their operations.

Regional Conflicts

Many countries in Africa, such as Sudan, Somalia, and Democratic Republic of the Congo, are in conflicts over resources. Sovereign states such as these have failed to protect or are actively violating the human rights of their populations. This document highlights a few countries requiring urgent action but draws attention to the fact that there are other relatively stable regions that need continued support to keep them from reverting into conflict.

UGANDA

For years, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has been a strong ally of the United States. Considered one of Africa's first truly democratic leaders, the U.S. favored Uganda as a place of investment—both for aid dollars and for private business. However, a 22-year war between his government and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) plagued the people of northern Uganda. Museveni's repressive attitudes toward the northern Acholi region, on top of LRA leader Joseph Kony's brutal attacks, resulted in mass poverty and displacement.

Although the north is now at peace, the LRA has moved to D.R. Congo, contributing to instability in the Great Lakes Region and pulling the international community into devising a solution. The failure of peace negotiations in 2008 led the U.S. military to support Museveni in a botched military strike, recalling fears about Uganda's prior invasions into eastern Congo for access to mineral resources.

Museveni's 23-year rule continues to marginalize large segments of the population, contributing to a sense of discontent at home. The U.S. government should en-

gage diplomatically with Museveni but should refrain from providing any military support. President Obama should emphasize the importance of a democratic, just, and equal government that is in the interest of all Uganda's citizens.

SUDAN

Six years after the conflict in Darfur captured the attention of the international community, violence in the region persists. UN resolutions, sanctions, arrest warrants, and multiple summits have all failed to broker a sustainable peace in Sudan and the region.

The massive and well-intentioned international response to the genocide in Darfur has been tragically ineffective for two main reasons. First, lack of political will has resulted in an international lack of follow-through on its promises; it has failed to back up its commitments with real action. Second, the U.S. and other external actors have approached Sudan's conflicts in isolation from one another. U.S. and European diplomats worked tirelessly to help broker the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended Sudan's decades-long North-South civil war, while ignoring massive atroci-

ties unfolding in Darfur. As grassroots activists forced policymakers to focus their attention on Darfur, the international community essentially forgot about the CPA, and tensions between the North and South have escalated over the past year, pushing the treaty to the brink of collapse.

The U.S. must pursue an all-Sudan strategy, where both Darfur and the CPA are top priorities. To help broker peace, human security, and justice for the people of Darfur and all Sudan, President Obama should:

- Support democratic institutions that protect against corruption and human rights abuses.
- Make it a priority to jumpstart political negotiations between Darfuri rebels, the government and civil society leaders including, representatives of the displaced, refugees, Darfuris, women, communities, religious leaders, elders, rebel leaders, and governmental actors.
- Provide the political, financial and logistical support of regional and international structures that could help to fulfill the needs for peace and justice (e.g., UNAMID).
- Introduce structures that address peace, justice and reconciliation through community models of restorative justice.
- Prepare vigorously for contingencies in case of highly contested elections, which seem all but certain.

ZIMBABWE

The Obama administration has to address a fundamental question: What U.S. government actions will strengthen Zimbabwe's democrats? The answers must include humanitarian support for the country's most vulnerable; resources to repair the country's decayed health, education and transport infrastructure; and use of the World Bank's newly created multi-donor trust fund to ensure that money reaches the intended recipients, instead of the bloated security sector.

Additionally, appointing a special envoy charged with formulating a new policy that moves beyond the narrow focus on "regime change" toward a comprehensive approach that recognizes the region's multiple, intersecting and complex crises, for which many actors—both internal and external—share some blame and responsibility.

Zimbabwe's military elite was forced to the negotiating table, but it has not conceded power. It retains a declining but still significant level of popular support. On this uneven playing field, donor nations demand that the coalition government produce concrete evidence of change. Yet those seeking change are handicapped by both a lack of access to resources and the intransigence of the Mugabe forces.

Zimbabwe remains extremely unstable; continuing the Bush administration's policy is likely to undermine the very actors on which change depends.

CONGO

According to the International Rescue Committee, 5.4 million Congolese have died, 50% of which are children five years old or younger. Amnesty International has reported that tens of thousands of women and children have been raped. Medecins Sans Frontières (MSF) says the Congo conflict is one of the 10 most underreported stories of 2007. In those fleeting moments when the conflict is reported, it's done without context and often presented as wanton killing by Africans perpetually doomed to committing insane acts of violence and atrocities, without any mention of what fuels the conflict. American, Canadian, and European corporations' pilfering of Congo's natural resources is inextricably linked to this crisis. Congo's gold, diamonds, copper, cobalt, coltan, tin, chromium, germanium, nickel, and uranium are central in the production of cell phones, computers, electronic devices, video game consoles, kitchen appliances, automobiles, airplanes, and numerous other devices. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, reminded the world in his January 2008 interview with the Financial Times that "the international community has systematically looted the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and we should not forget that."

During his trip to Ghana, President Obama can commit U.S. support for more effective multilateral peacekeeping action by the UN and the African Union. He can call for a process of national reconciliation and justice throughout the entire Congo, not just in the east. Such reconciliation should institute a process where the victims of human rights abuses and atrocities are able to secure justice.

The natural wealth of the Congo belongs to, and should benefit first and foremost, its people and not solely foreign multinationals. President Obama can underscore the importance of corporate social responsibility, and call for U.S. and other western corporations who make spectacular profits in the midst of the rapes and killings to cease their pilfering of the Congo.

SOMALIA

In Somalia, fierce street fighting over the past month has claimed hundreds of lives, as government forces continue to fight opposition Islamist fighters. The civilian death toll is now close to 10,000. More than one million people, including half of Mogadishu's population, have fled their homes and are now living in makeshift refugee camps. The UN now estimates that more than 3.25 million people currently need food aid. As desperation for food and security increases, it's not surprising to see disaffected Somalis resorting to piracy and other forms of violence. The Obama administration has responded with a decision in early May 2009 to give \$10 million in weaponry and ammunition to the Somali government, and to pay Uganda and Burundi to provide military training to Somali government troops. This action follows a series of Bush administration airstrikes in Somalia over the last 2 years. Somalia is just one tragic example of where U.S. involvement has directly undermined peace and stability. The U.S.-backed overthrow of the Union of Islamic Courts Union in December 2006, and subsequent U.S.-sponsored Ethiopian occupation, has been an overwhelming disaster. While many Somalis disapproved of some of the more fundamentalist ways of the original courts, most felt that they were well-organized, disciplined, and effective civil administrators who provided Somalia with its first semblance of order

and leadership since 1991. A new path is needed for the U.S. in Somalia. Long-lasting peace and stability can only be reached when the root causes of poverty are addressed and a government responsive to the needs of Somalis is firmly rooted.

NIGER DELTA

The oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria is in the throes of a potentially devastating insurgency. On May 13, 2009, Nigerian military troops went in to the region known as Gbaramatu and bombed villages, blockading the region from humanitarian organizations and journalists. While there is no accurate estimate of the body count, hundreds, if not thousands, of people are feared dead. Over 20,000 people have been dislocated due to the conflict.

This is only the latest manifestation of the Niger Delta conflict, which has arisen over five decades of grievances since the discovery of oil in the region. The conflict has involved millions of indigenous people whose oil-rich land has been exploited by oil companies, with devastating environmental and human health consequences, and a series of Nigerian government regimes, who have marginalized and repressed the oil-bearing communities of the delta.

Leading the oil industry exploitation of the region is the Anglo-Dutch oil giant Shell, followed by American oil companies Exxon-Mobil and Chevron-Texaco.

Since early 2006, resistance against the state and multinational oil corporations operating in the Niger Delta region has taken a more drastic, coordinated, and sophisticated dimension with the emergence of the

MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta) militia. Attacks on oil facilities and abduction of expatriate and local oil workers (and their families in some cases) by insurgents is on the rise. The activities of this group and others operating in the region has shut down about a quarter of the nation's daily oil production.

Obama should use the opportunity of his visit to Ghana to call for third-party talks between MEND militants and the Nigerian government, perhaps facilitated by the Committee of Elders, to mediate in the ongoing conflict before it transforms to another civil war in the African continent.