

An Open Letter on US Energy Efforts in Africa

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As leaders of African civil society organizations committed to sustainable development, we note that one in five citizens on the continent cites infrastructure – especially electricity – as their most immediate concern. In fact, 7 out of 10 business leaders across the region say the lack of affordable and reliable power is one of the most important constraints to growth. The absence of modern energy access limits GDP growth in sub-Saharan Africa by an estimated 2 to 5% each year. With 14 million sub-Saharan Africans entering the workforce annually, government leaders are facing the political imperative to address critical and growing energy demands. Energy poverty is also troubling for its disproportionate impact on women and girls. In many places without power, they're forced to spend hours each day in the time-consuming task of hunting for fuel and firewood, one of the biggest reasons that girls don't attend school. Women are also at greater risk for premature respiratory death as a result of indoor air pollution from open fires and kerosene used for cooking, heating, and lighting. Even the simple act of being outdoors becomes fraught with danger for women and girls in some places when the sun goes down and there are no streetlights.

Fortunately, President Obama and the US Congress are identifying ways to support African countries efforts to tackle this challenge with the Power Africa initiative and the Electrify Africa Act. We are extremely impressed by the United States recognition of the challenge and opportunity that energy poverty presents. African growth and prosperity depends on being able to meet its energy needs. As Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf recently said, "If you don't give us energy quickly, we're not going to be able to grow companies, we're not going to have jobs, and my 35-year-olds who've been nothing but soldiers their whole lives are going to pick up their weapons again."

Recognizing that there are scarcely available resources available to support the vast unmet demand for a mix of solutions to provide electricity in our countries, we support the efforts of the Electrify Africa Act to ensure that the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) can support vital energy investments, and is provided with adequate staff and a flexible carbon cap for investments in the poorest, least emitting nations. We believe OPIC's current one-size-fits all blanket limit on carbon emissions has the unintended consequence of limiting development and poverty alleviation efforts in some of the world's most impoverished and lowest emitting nations.

We know that in the 21st century, the future of the United States and Africa are inextricably linked. In an increasingly inter-connected world, we will rely on each other as economic and security partners. We applaud the leadership and vision that Power Africa and the Electrify Africa Act represent. By working together, we can tackle the challenge of supplying access to electricity. We especially support the idea of allowing African-developed plans to guide investment decisions. As you well know, and as with the United States, there is not one singular solution to addressing the energy needs of a continent.

Africans have the right to determine their own energy future and choose from a spectrum of technological solutions. Some are looking at largely renewable energy solutions, while

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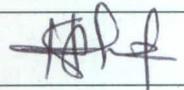
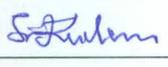
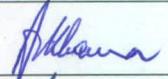
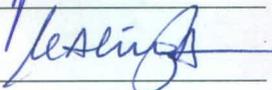
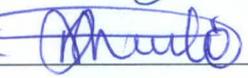
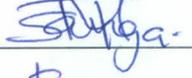
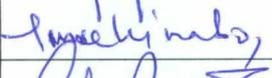
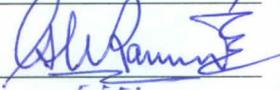
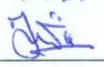
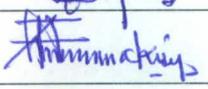
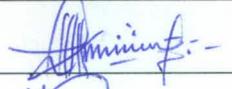
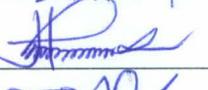
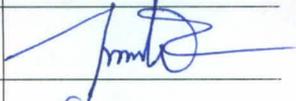
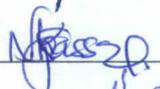
others are looking at a mix of renewables and natural gas. By not taking action, millions will be left in abject poverty. Yet by working together, the United States and African countries can determine the best mixture of solutions to address these pressing needs.

Once again, we thank you for your leadership on this critical human rights issue. We stand ready to work together in addressing this urgent need.

Signed,

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