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## **GIST—Sub-Saharan Africa and U.S. Policy**

[The following is an official summary of United States policy toward Sub-Saharan Africa. This summary was originally published in the 2 December 1991 issue of the *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, pp. 873-874.]

The United States is committed to fostering democracies and economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Over the past 2 years, significant progress has been made toward resolving major regional political and economic problems. The civil wars in Angola and Ethiopia have ended with US assistance. South Africa has taken substantial steps toward post-apartheid democracy. There are prospects for resolving the internal conflicts in Mozambique and Liberia. Resolution of other problems remains a high US priority.

### **RESOLUTION OF REGIONAL CONFLICTS**

**Angola and Mozambique.** Sixteen years of civil war in Angola between the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) came to an end on May 31, 1991, with the signing of the Angolan peace accords. The US played a key role in the Portuguese-mediated negotiations that lead to the signing. The accords provide for a multiparty system, new national armed forces, and free and fair internationally monitored democratic elections between September and November 1992.

As an observer on the Joint Political Military Commission, which oversees the implementation of the settlement, the US is committed to ensuring that all the provisions of the accords are scrupulously observed. We have opened a liaison office in Luanda to support these efforts. In addition, we are continuing our humanitarian assistance to Angola and supporting national reconciliation. We intend to establish diplomatic relations with the Angolan Government that emerges from the free and fair elections.

US-Mozambican relations have expanded rapidly as the Government of Mozambique has moved to establish greater democracy and a more pro-Western orientation since 1986. We are currently assisting national reconciliation and peace talks between the government and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO).

**Horn of Africa.** The prospects for peace in other areas are mixed. Although the civil war in Ethiopia has ended, civil wars drag on in Somalia and Sudan. These conflicts generate large numbers of refugees and exacerbate drought-induced hunger. The United States is a major donor of food and medical assistance. It also is prepared to contribute diplomatic resources to peacemaking and internal reconciliation in the Horn.

**Liberia.** The United States fully supports regionally led efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement of the Liberian conflict through a democratic electoral process. We have extended modest assistance to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in support of its monitoring group (ECOMOG) in Liberia, which has maintained a general cease-fire, enforced public order in the Monrovia area, facilitated humanitarian relief deliveries, and made possible the installation of an interim government. The US also has provided more than \$130 million in humanitarian relief to victims of civil strife in Liberia. Finally, we have encouraged the Yamoussoukro peace process led by President Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire, which has brought Liberian leaders together in a series of summit meetings with West African heads of state. The participants have agreed on the need for disarmament of the contending factions, followed by

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free and fair democratic elections in which the Liberian people will be able to select their own government.

**South Africa.** The South African Government continues to take significant steps toward dismantling apartheid and creating a non-racial society and government. These include the release of black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and other key political organizations, the lifting of the 4-year state of emergency, and the repeal of remaining apartheid legislation. The government and the ANC also have agreed on moving forward into multi-party negotiations on a new constitution.

## ECONOMIC REFORMS

State-controlled economies have stifled growth in many Sub-Saharan African countries. Natural disasters, high population growth, low commodity prices, and civil wars have compounded the problem. Gross domestic product per capita fell during the 1980s by 1.2% annually.

**Structural Adjustment.** By 1991, many African countries had accepted the need for economic reform and support of the private sector, if sustainable long-term growth is to be achieved. Although structural adjustment often entails short-term economic sacrifice, it is the entrenched elites rather than the poor who have the most to lose from political and economic liberalization measures. More than 30 countries have structural adjustment programs supported by the International Monetary Fund or World Bank. It is increasingly evident that these programs lead to better economic performance. When allocating assistance, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) gives preference to countries following a reform program. The common objectives of structural adjustment programs are to:

- Establish realistic exchange rates;
- Eliminate government price controls;
- Reduce government budget deficits;
- Reform parastatal organizations; and
- Achieve realistic interest rates.

**Debt Relief.** The Sub-Saharan African countries bear a heavy burden of foreign debt owed primarily to official creditors (i.e., foreign governments and international financial institutions rather than commercial banks). In 1990, total external debt had reached about \$161 billion, equivalent to 112% of the region's gross national product and 352% of foreign exchange earnings from exports.

To address this problem, the United States has forgiven some \$1.2 billion in African official debt to date, including \$788 million in USAID development loans to the poorest reforming African countries and \$416 million in African PL 480 (food aid) debt under a program authorized by the 1990 Farm Act. Other debts to the U.S. of the poorest, most heavily indebted reforming countries are eligible for relief through generous rescheduling terms by the "Paris Club" of official creditors.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The global movement toward democracy is strongly felt in all African countries, and there has been significant movement in many, including South Africa. Both governments and citizens

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are participating in these changes. The belief is spreading that respect for fundamental rights and more responsive political systems are a vital corollary of economic progress.

The United States supports these efforts toward democracy in the belief that human rights cannot be secured in Africa without political pluralism. The U.S. encourages economic and political pluralism in Africa by funding projects that promote constitutional development, popular participation, good government, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The United States also attempts to secure private funding for projects and encourages the European Community to make such projects a priority on its foreign assistance agenda.

## ENVIRONMENT

The environment is a central US concern in its development assistance strategy for Africa. For example, USAID's Plan for Support for Natural Resources Management in Sub-Saharan Africa aims to strengthen the capacity of African countries to manage natural resources. The United States supports the efforts of the International Tropical Timber Organization to develop a plan for sustainable forest management and is interested in negotiating a global forestry agreement.

Wildlife preservation is another important goal of US policy. The US was an original party of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) signed in Washington in 1973. The convention remains the centerpiece of US conservation policy abroad, and it has special relevance for Africa.

The US takes a leading role in protecting the African elephant. In 9 years, because of poaching, Africa's elephant population has fallen from an estimated 1.3 million to 600,000. In October 1988, Congress enacted the African Elephant Conservation Act, establishing an African elephant conservation fund. In June 1989, the Bush Administration banned the import of ivory. Moreover, in October 1989, all CITES members agreed to halt all trade in ivory, providing for its resumption in the future only under a secure system for countries with a healthy and well-managed elephant population.