



PACEID

PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
EXPORTS AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

November 01, 2023

STATEMENT FROM THE OFFICE OF ODREK RWABWOGO, CHAIR OF UGANDA'S PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EXPORTS & INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (PACEID)

We are disappointed by the unfortunate decision by the United States (U.S.) to end the participation of Uganda in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) trade programme.

The reason given by U.S. President Biden was, ultimately, because Uganda's democratically elected parliament passed an Act of which he and his colleagues in the U.S. Democratic party disapproved.

It mattered not that the law in question – the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) – is popular amongst Ugandans. There are numerous public opinion polls conducted by reputable western opinion research companies that are testament to that fact. However, it was not popular with President Biden and his colleagues. Therefore, it seems they have decided Ugandans should be punished.

It is difficult to see for whose benefit the Biden administration took this decision, if not their own domestic voter base in advance of the upcoming 2024 election. Certainly, no Ugandan – whatever their sexual preference – will benefit. While Ugandan trade with the U.S. through AGOA was insubstantial, growth of our exports to the U.S. and other partners was an important pillar of our economic strategy going forward. Ugandan farmers and small business owners will suffer.

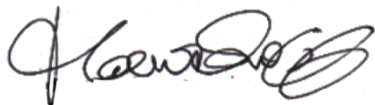
But more than that, it sends a message to all Ugandans – indeed all Africans – that their already slim prospects for economic prosperity are contingent on whether they vote in line with the values of whoever happens to hold high office in the U.S., not their own. They will not find this acceptable. Nor should they.

It is worth noting that democracy is backsliding across Africa while instability is on the rise. Uganda is an increasingly rare example of an African economy that shares Western values of democracy and rule of

law. Like most African countries, we also believe in and seek to uphold our own traditional African values – and public support for AHA stands testament to that.

The AGOA programme was established in order to promote economic growth, good governance and free markets in Africa. It is a policy of great generosity and foresight by those who created it to bind Africa and the U.S. in partnership and respect. It was not established as a stick to beat the populace of African countries who vote in a way that offends the social sensibilities of the developed West. Yet that is how it is being used now.

We note that the decision made this week is a recommendation to Congress – and not yet passed into law. We therefore remain, as always, ready to discuss this decision with our American partners and allies – and hope that they have the generosity to listen.



Odrek Rwabwogo

**CHAIRPERSON
PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EXPORTS AND
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (PACEID)**