

**SPEECH BY HON. RICHWELL SIAMUNENE, MP DEPUTY MINISTER OF COMMERCE,  
TRADE AND INDUSTRY**

**CSOS AGOA CONCLAVE HOSTED BY CUTS INTERNATIONAL LUSAKA, JCTR AND  
CARITAS ZAMBIA ON 25<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2013**

**Representatives of the Civil Society**

**The various media houses present**

**Distinguished ladies and gentlemen**

I am very honored and delighted to officiate at this important gathering to discuss and reflect on the current developments concerning Zambia's trade with the United States under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Consumer Unity and Trust Society - Cuts International Lusaka, Caritas Zambia and Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) for taking this initiative to organize this important meeting. This conclave is coming at an opportune time when the 12<sup>th</sup> AGOA forum is scheduled to take place next month from 9 to 13 August, 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The theme for this year's AGOA forum is "Sustainable Transformation through Trade and Technology".

You may wish to be informed that the government considers the civil society as key stakeholders in the development process of this country. It is for this reason that despite diverse interests, it is always advisable to come together to discuss issues of national importance for the common good of the people of Zambia.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is a trade preference programme enacted by the United States (US) Congress in 2000 aimed at stimulating economic growth and to help integrate Africa into the global economy. Specifically, in May 2000 the United States president signed into law the historic trade and development Act on AGOA whose objective was to promote trade flows between the United States and the Sub-Saharan African Countries, increase investment opportunities for investors in Sub-Saharan Africa and strengthen Sub-Saharan African participation in global trade and promote economic development.

As an integral tool in the trading relationship between Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and the United States, AGOA provides for unilateral trade preferences to products entering the United States originating from Sub-Saharan African Countries. It supports United States businesses by encouraging reform of Africa's economic and commercial regimes, which build stronger markets and more effective partners for United States firms.

AGOA also expands the list of products which are eligible for Sub-Saharan African Countries to export to the United States through the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). While GSP covers approximately 4,600 items, AGOA and GSP combined apply to more than 6,400 products.

### **Ladies and gentlemen,**

The AGOA Forum also referred to as the annual United States - Sub-Saharan Africa and trade and economic cooperation, is one of the cornerstones of the implementation of AGOA initiative. The Forum institutionalizes a high level dialogue between officials of the United States government and the AGOA beneficiary countries and in particular the responsible ministers of trade.

The objective of the forum is to create a platform where both the United States and the Sub Saharan African Countries can articulate their views and concerns in order to foster closer economic ties for mutual benefit. In addition to the ministerial dialogue, the forum also encourages interaction between government officials, private sector and the civil society.

Since 2001, the United States and AGOA-eligible Sub-Saharan African Countries have interchangeably hosted the AGOA Forum. Zambia was privileged to host the 10<sup>th</sup> AGOA in 2011 and I'm glad to say it has been dubbed as the best AGOA Forum ever hosted in Africa. Ethiopia will host the 12<sup>th</sup> AGOA Forum from 9<sup>th</sup> August to 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2013 in Addis Ababa.

#### **Distinguished ladies and gentlemen**

AGOA has had a big impact on African trade with the US since its implementation. Overall, total US imports have increased almost five-fold since it was enacted in 2000, from \$5 billion to over \$25 billion in 2005 which is a clear indication of African growth trajectory. In 2011, for example, Zambia's exports to the United States of America under the AGOA rose to US\$47.3 million from \$26.9 million registered in 2010. This growth pattern affirms the need for Zambia to keep participating in various global partnerships.

#### **Ladies and gentlemen**

AGOA is set to expire in 2015. Despite the many challenges eligible countries face in utilizing this scheme, there is a general consensus among AGOA stakeholders on the necessity to extend AGOA beyond 2015 in order to give African countries reasonable time for building competitive capacity in global markets. It is through such deliberations that the voice of various stakeholders can be heard and submissions can be made to the 12<sup>th</sup> AGOA Forum thereafter. It is the view of the ministry of commerce, trade and industry on behalf the government of the republic of Zambia that this conclave will bring

out Re-Enforcing points in the communiqué which government can take on board as we engage the United States side on the future of AGOA.

**As I end distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

Let me end by saying that, it is my sincere hope that this conclave will produce the needed output of enhanced understanding of AGOA issues to assist non state actors formulate their advocacy messages to government as well as carry the same message to the united states government using your advocacy network on the importance of AGOA to job and wealth creation as well as alleviation of poverty. It is through such understanding that better ideas and strategies for trade and development can be forged and with combined input from all stakeholders, set the stage for stronger trade performance of the nation.

**I thank you all and wish you fruitful deliberations.**