

Briefing Session on the US-Africa Leaders Summit

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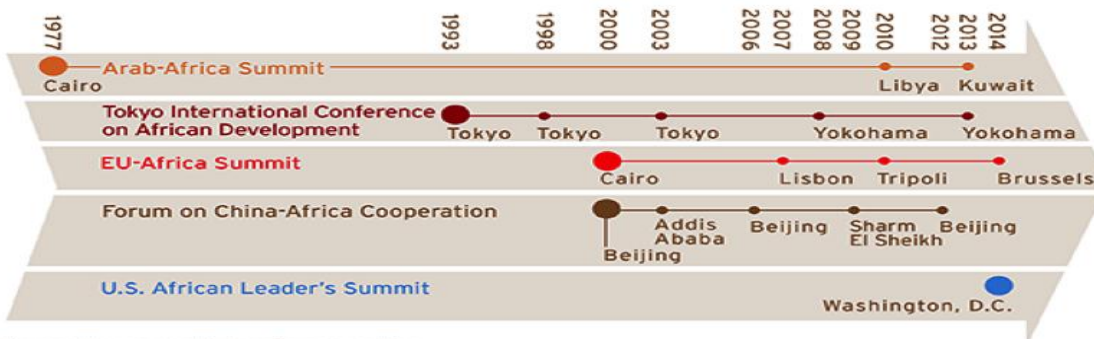
Introduction

The Great Lakes Institute for Strategic Studies (GLISS) is hosting an off-the-record briefing session on the US-Africa Leaders Summit scheduled to take place in Washington, D.C on August 4-6, 2014. The session is designed to provide an opportunity for Ugandans from the civil society, private sector and the media to exchange views and information on the goals and expected outcomes of the Summit. Mr. Michael Newbill, the Counselor for Political and Economic Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Kampala. Mr. Newbill covers the Embassy’s work on political, economic, and commercial, political/military, human rights, and regional affairs.

Background

The U.S Africa Leaders Summit has been hailed as the largest event any U.S. President has held with African heads of state and government. The summit is seen by the U.S Government as an opportunity to strengthen ties between the United States and Africa - one of the world’s most dynamic and fastest growing regions. Through the Summit, the U.S hopes to advance the Administration’s focus on trade and investment in Africa and highlight America’s commitment to Africa’s security, its democratic development, and its people.

All African Heads of State and Government, except 8, are invited to the Summit. The uninvited are: Isaias Aferwerki of Eritrea, Djotodia of Central African Republic, Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Abdel Fattah El-Isisi of Egypt, Jose Mario Val of Guinea Bissau and Her Rajaonarimampianina of Madagascar.

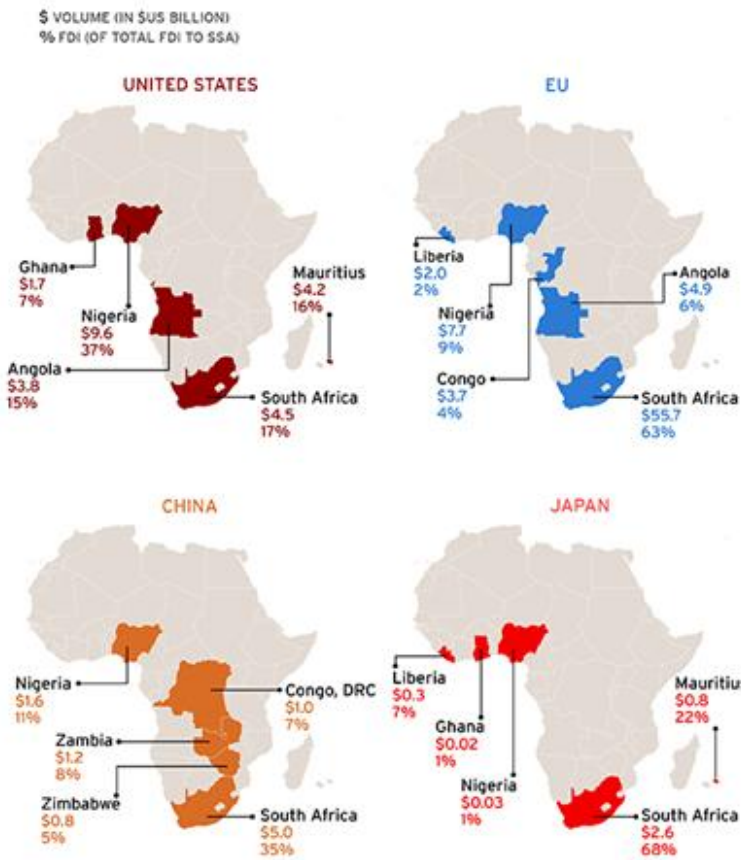


The convening of the US-Africa Leaders Summit follows such other summits initiated by other regions. According to Brookings, one of the world’s leading policy think

tanks, the first similar summit was held way back in 1977 between Africa and the Arab World. There are now similar summits held annually between Africa and Japan, European Union and China.

There is growing interest in Africa mainly driven by the “Africa rising” narrative. Afro-optimist narrative paints an optimistic picture of Africa. Positive demographic and economic indicators drive this optimism. African economies have grown at a record 5.1 per cent over the last decade according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Increased political stability and wide ranging economic reforms

TOP 5 RECIPIENTS OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (TOTALS 2001 - 2012)



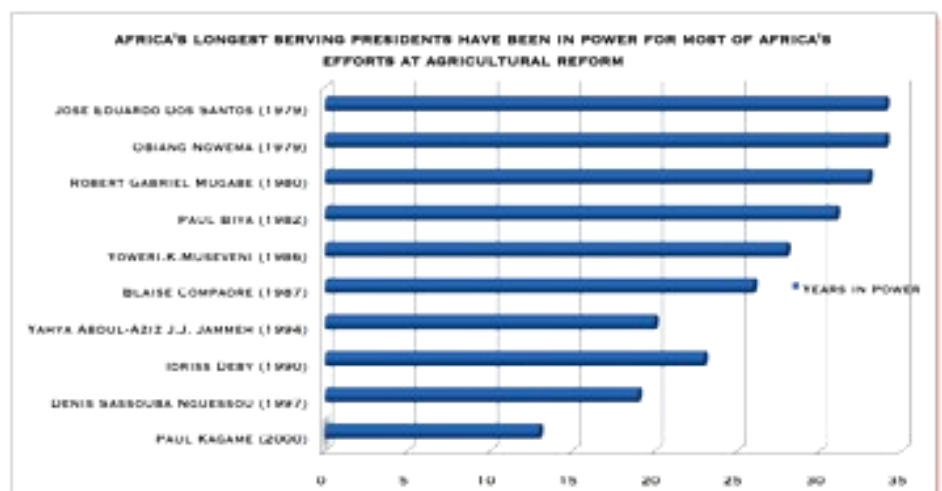
Source: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Bilateral FDI Statistics, 2014. FDI refers to each Partner Country's total "FDI flows abroad" to countries in SSA from 2001-2012. See UNCTAD for its definition of "FDI flows."

that have expanded opportunity for private sector led economic growth mainly drive this growth. A youthful population is opening up a demographic window of opportunity as Africa's labor force is projected to overtake the labor force on any other single country by 2035. With over 60 per cent of the world's unused crop land, Africa can develop its agriculture; create agriculture-based jobs while becoming the world's breadbasket. African countries have also registered sustained increase in FDI flows over the last decade.

However, while Africa's future looks bright, there is still a lot to be done. And this is where the US-Africa partnership adds value to all the other existing partnerships. For example, it is estimated that over 300 million Africans will remain in vulnerable jobs in 2020. But Africa is also trapped by a generation of leaders that have overstayed in power. The most influential of Africa's leaders who will be attending the Summit belong to Africa's pre-independence generation and fall in the category of Africa's strongmen. It therefore remains to be seen whether the world's leading democracy is able to do business with the continents strongmen.

Questions remain about the summit

There can be no doubt that the strategic interests of the different countries drive their growing focus on Africa and the U.S is no exception. What will be crucial therefore is how to balance the strategic interests of the United States in Africa with the theme of the Summit, "Investing in the Next Generation."



Already, there are questions that beg answers and the briefing session is designed to reflect on this questions. For example, beyond the heads of states and government, who else will be at the table? Is it

possible that the world's leading democracy will host a summit where representatives of the private sector and the civil society are not participating? This would make the summit look like an African Union Summit that ended in Malabo where civil society was uninvited. Secondly, while President Obama is scheduled to make appearance at the business forum and later on address the leaders' summit, it is emerging that he will make no show at the civil society session. Could this be construed as the U.S Government abdicating its historic role in promoting the role of civil society in creating stable democracies and as a foundation of sustainable and inclusive economic development?

Session Modalities

This briefing session is an off-the-record event. Participants are advised not to record, broadcast or quote verbatim the discussions at the session. The session is strictly intended to act as information sessions to enable the participants understand the rationale behind the Summit and to follow the summit proceedings from an informed perspective. It is also intended to give the representatives from the media appropriate background information to enable them report accurately on the Summit. The session will involve a formal briefing followed by a question and answer session.

Great Lakes Institute for Strategic Studies (www.gliss.org) is an independent regional policy think tank operating in the Great Lakes Sub-region of Africa. Our mission is to accelerate socio-economic transformation and inclusive development in the Great Lakes sub-region by providing evidence-based policy options that put men, women and the youth at the center of policy development and policy implementation. Our vision is to become one of Africa's leading independent policy think tanks working on contemporary and emerging strategic public policy issues at the continental and sub-regional level. GLISS is affiliated to Technology Frontiers Education Centre (www.tefecschools.org).