



{jcomments off} The US Chamber and the Africa Business Initiative along with eighteen delegates from Sub-Saharan African AmChams came together to discuss common themes at the first annual AmCham Africa Summit. It's no surprise that the meeting place for the increasingly influential business organization was none other than Johannesburg South Africa, home of the 2010 World Cup.

This coming together of nations was at the behest of President Obama's' Africa initiative to spur growth of exports from the continent to the United States.

The US Chamber which supports the growth and development of AmChams around the globe organized this exchange of best practices designed to be an interactive learning event.

Cameroon was the largest delegation with four representatives. In attendance were Executive Secretary, Charmian Penda, AmCham Treasurer Nick Achiri, Erik Martini and Olivier Tchamake from the Embassy Yaoundé.

Craig T Allen, Senior Commercial Officer for Commercial Affairs US Chamber launched the discussion with Executives from Cameroon, Uganda, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique and Ethiopia each giving a brief overview of their host country's political and economic situation. The discussion then gravitated towards invariably plural and complex issues such as adding value to members, and marketing the AmChams. Other issues included partnering with US Embassy and government officials on advocacy and working well with the Board of Directors.

Of even greater interest was the policymaker's briefing from Florie Liser, Assistant United States Trade Representative for Africa. Liser emphasized exploiting the AGOA trade agreement

as Africa remains underserved although many countries qualify. Liser further suggested lobbying Capitol Hill for an extension if needed before the legislation expires in 2015.

Carol O'Brien, Executive Director of AmCham South Africa moderated the lively discussions that culminated in each participant sharing new strategies they would adopt back on the home front. The boon of the Summit were the much needed networking breaks that permitted members to learn more and speak to one another candidly about what's happening in their Chambers respectively. Moreover there was recognition of the need for greater communication between the Chambers and more assistance from Washington.

The Summit ended with the networking cocktail and closing remarks by Honorable Donald Gips, US Ambassador to South Africa. Gips shared the success story of AmCham SA and encouraged each to take the opportunities presented to show the world that sub Saharan AmChams are open for business. Indubitably all benefited from the encounter such that a continental Africa AmCham group was formed to grow the seed planted in South Africa. While the objectives are already defined, and strategies in place, the need to adjust priorities is key so that in the year to come this translates to more opportunities, more exports, and more growth, for the members.

by Charmian Penda