

Center for Strategic and International Studies

## Online Event

# “Africa’s Global Reset: Foreign Relations in a Post-Pandemic Era”

RECORDING DATE:

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FEATURING:

**Andrew Alli,**

*Partner and Group CEO, SouthBridge; Former CEO, Africa Finance Corporation*

**Akunna Cook,**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State*

**Bogolo Kenewendo,**

*Former Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry, Republic of Botswana; Non-Resident Fellow, Center for Global Development*

**Koji Yonetani,**

*Assistant Minister for African Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan*

CSIS EXPERTS:

**Judd Devermont,**

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*Transcript By  
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Judd Devermont: Good morning. My name is Judd Devermont and I am the director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. And it's my pleasure to welcome you to "Africa's Global Reset: Foreign Relations in a Post-Pandemic World." This event was made possible through the generous support of the Embassy of Japan.

In the wake of the once-in-a-century pandemic, there's an opportunity for sub-Saharan African countries and their external partners to establish more equitable, collaborative, and constructive relationships. However, if a reset is in the offing, Africans and their international partners need to be clear-eyed about the trends that are reshaping the region and the fallout from the past year. It'll be necessary to manage expectations. There's almost certainly going to be tensions and tradeoffs between what is needed, what is wanted, and what is possible in a post-COVID-19 world.

As many of you know, the region so far has curbed a massive spread of COVID-19 but remains mired in an economic crisis. And it is vexed about insufficient assistance from the outside world. African governments and publics are asking for greater equity in vaccine distribution, more generous debt relief, and targeted investment in key economic sectors. Moreover, African leaders say they are fed up with the unequal treatment in the global community, the harassment of their citizens abroad, and the zero-sum premise of global power competition.

So what is the way forward? How do we work together to speed the recovery from the pandemic and address the region's crippling debt obligations? How do we tackle systemic racism which has led to discrimination towards Africans and African diaspora in China, the United States, Israel and the Middle East, as well as other parts of the world? How do we renew our commitment to democracy when the United States and many African countries are struggling with divisive politics, attacks on democratic institutions and media, and the rise of digital authoritarianism?

How do we lower the temperature of zero-sum global rivalries? The United States and China, of course, are locked in a serious competition over values, and rules, and relationships. It is, as Secretary Blinken said, the biggest geopolitical competition of the 21st century, but can this process play out in a way that doesn't negatively impact the region's peace and prosperity? And finally, how do we respond to the challenges of climate change? How do we work together to mitigate the negative consequences of extreme weather for African economies and societies?

And that's a tremendous amount of things to get through in just 60 minutes, but I am very confident that we have the right group of panelists to ask hard questions and to supply insightful answers.

Today I'm very fortunate to be joined by Andrew Alli, who is a partner and group CEO of SouthBridge. Andrew has been investing in Africa for the past

20 years, most recently when he was CEO of the African Finance Corporation, where he was responsible for over \$4.5 billion of investment made in 30 countries.

We're also joined by Akunna Cook. She is the deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs. She's a seasoned diplomat, lawyer, and expert on public policy and political strategy. Akunna began her career at the State Department, where she served for almost 10 years as an economic and commercial officer in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Bogolo Kenewendo is an African economist, managing director of Kenewendo Advisory. She is the former minister of investment, trade, and industry of Botswana. She is a nonresident fellow at the Center for Global Development and a member of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

And finally, Ambassador Koji Yonetani is the assistant minister for African affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan. He was previously the deputy assistant minister for global issues within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a foreign service professional with over 30 years of service, Ambassador Yonetani has served as Japan's ambassador to Djibouti, as well as vice president of the Japan External Trade Organization, also known as JETRO.

So today what we're going to do, we'll have a moderated panel and then we'll have an opportunity for some Q&A. It's very easy to share – to ask questions. Just go onto the event page website, click on the link, and then we'll be able to answer your questions towards the end.

So I want to start with Andrew and Bogolo. I'd like to hear your thoughts on the state of African countries' foreign relations. In the wake of the pandemic, how are these relationships changing? What do African governments want from their foreign partners? How decisive are the issues of debt and vaccine access in shaping the future of these relationships?

Andrew, why don't I –

Andrew Alli:

Thanks, Judd.

So I hope you can all hear me, because I think I'm having a few connectivity challenges. So thank you. I think that one thing that African governments and people would want, and I always hesitate to speak for Africa since there are 54 countries and probably a billion different opinions on every subject. But I think the one thing that Africans would like is actually really a reset in how Africa is seen and the relations with Africa post-pandemic. I think many of us get the feeling that Africa is very often seen in the context of something else.

So, you know, someone's policies towards Africa is shaped because, you know, China is doing something, or the U.S. is doing something, or somebody wants to get, you know, access to some resources, or, you know, we don't like the sort of – none of us do – we don't like some of the, you know, Islamic terrorists in the Maghreb. You know, it's always about something that's almost sort of external to Africa itself, rather than treating African countries, you know, almost as grown-ups, and really part of the world – the world system.

So, you know, I would certainly like to see a reset along those lines. If one is looking at specific issues, I think you mentioned a number of them that are top of mind. So while we've – we seem to have managed to avoid some of the, you know, worst things we've seen in terms of vaccine – sorry – in terms of COVID mortality in places like the U.S. and the U.K. and other places, I think we are concerned about being locked out of the global economy, you know, because of lack of vaccines and things like that. If people start requiring vaccinations to – you know, to travel and to be part of the economy, then vaccine access becomes an issue.

The other thing is that while we've avoided the disease elements of the pandemic, we haven't been able to avoid the economic elements. And the whole thing about how do we, you know, help us to get us back onto our feet economically, how do we bring in new thinking? I mean, there's somebody and I can't remember who – I think it may have been Larry Summers or someone like that – said, look, all the developed countries have kicked economic orthodoxy out of the window, you know, for their own sort of COVID recoveries, but are still insisting on it for emerging economies.

And we can see this around the debt relief. We can see this around the reluctance to do innovative things like, you know, the SDR program that has been mooted for the IMF. So I think that those are two of the things. And then the other thing is really how do we get put into the world economy post-COVID in a more constructive way that allows us to develop as countries, rather than just being the sort of football kicked between, you know, the West and China, if I can say that. And I'll end there.

Judd Devermont: Thank you, Andrew. That's a great start.

Bogolo, what are your thoughts? What can the U.S. – what can Africa's international partners do to rest the relationship? How should they think through these issues of economic recovery and the vaccine?

Bogolo  
Kenewendo: Right. A very good morning, good afternoon to everyone joining us today. As Andrew already said, you know, it's very difficult to always just say "Africa," considering that it's not a really homogeneous group. However, some of our interests are so intertwined and are evidenced by the political will and the drive towards the AfCFTA. And I believe that that really shows

the aspirations towards unification and working together in building better and in driving the development of the continent.

Now, I just want to take us back to 2018, when, you know, there was this trade war, and it was so clear that Africa was caught in between the trade war. And it was so clear that there was one group that was looking for Africa's attention. China was pulling in one direction. The U.S. was pulling in one – in another direction. And then the EU as well inserted itself in this conversation. And at the time, the interest in Africa was so strong, and you could see that it was all about geopolitical influence and power.

And I think if we just look at the relations then and what was being pushed from the U.S., pushed from Europe, and from China really needs to speak for itself now, because you really want to see your partners – who your true partners are when you are in need. And there is evidence that has been put out by the World Bank, the IMF, whoever, and the AFDB that shows that right now African countries are stressed, basically. And they are having to assume debt in order to just provide and have COVID relief, in order to have some of the basic resources.

You know, there was this study I was just reading that showed that at the beginning of COVID and the pandemic it was very difficult for some countries to institute a lockdown because there wouldn't be water in the quarters where people are staying, there are no toilets, they have to stay in the public toilets. So to show true partnership, to go back to 2018 and 2019, the things that were said, to say I'm your real partner, should be implemented and should really come to life. So that's number one.

And then the second one is so when we look at debt, and debt relief, and the package that has been put on the table by G-20, clearly it's not working. It means it wasn't enough. So we need to revisit that. Africa's partners need to revisit that and make sure that they are in consultation with the beneficiaries in how that final package needs to look like in order for debt relief to effectively – or, that package to effectively work for the continent. Because it's not just about saying, well, we'll pardon you for this one year.

But it has to be a time for long, you know, there's going to be this debt relief, because we want to make sure that that capital is – (audio break) – for the vulnerable groups and to avoid economic scarring in the long term. I don't want to talk about what the impacts could be if we don't recover and other countries recover. We already see the impacts of immigration and emigration. And I don't want to touch on that.

And then the second one is on vaccination. While many – while many times we can talk about donations of vaccines, I think the real thing that is needed here is for us to have a global action program on vaccine distribution, to ensure that vaccinations are not just being hoarded by one group but are also being provided to countries that are least developed. And right now

it's very difficult when you think about Germany buying a vaccine for \$2 and then South Africa buying the same vaccine for \$5, plus logistics.

It just goes to show that we will always have those – the divide. And the divide, the inequalities, they are not going to – (audio break). Once again, a partnership is only – or, the world is only as strong as its weakest. So if we just work on a partnership towards vaccine distribution, a global action program on vaccine distribution, then – you know, I'm just challenging our partners to rise up to that.

Judd Devermont: All right. Well, I have two of your partners on the line – Japan and the United States. So I'm going to turn to Ambassador Yonetani and then DAS Cook for their response. But Bogolo said, you know, how do you act as a true partner when there is need? So let me turn to you first, Ambassador. From Japan's perspective, considering these issues about the need for innovative economic policy from – on the continent from the 54 countries, considering the challenges of the debt packages that are not sufficient, what are Japan's – what do you think as a representative of the Japanese government on how to move the relationship forward?

Koji Yonetani: OK. Thank you very much. And it's a great pleasure for me to be able to join the discussion. So – and the interesting and important, this juncture that we are facing a lot of challenges within the context of COVID, and also challenges of solidarity and how to revive and strengthen the multilateralism in the international community.

In fact, the partnership and the relationship of all of us – of various international stakeholders and actors with the African countries is always something difficult in terms of – very often in putting some contexts – in relation to some broader global competition or confrontation. And from that point of view, I have to – I want to underline that since more than 25 years ago – since 1993 Japan is willing to introduce a new perspective of putting Africans at the center of the discussion, trying to focus what are the challenges for African development, and putting the Africans at the driver's seat to plan and envisage their ambitions, how to achieve that, what are necessary.

And around that process of ownership – establishing ownership, it is the international partnership which is needed to be mobilized. And that's the TICAD process. And of course, but I am glad to come back on that in the next subject. But regarding the situation, natural context of COVID-19, I think we have to look at the reality, what's happening in the world and also on the African continent.

First of all, I think it's important to recognize the fact that Africa – African governments and people, are relatively doing very well compared to other places like in Japan, Europe, the U.S. The number of infections and the deaths are relatively small in terms of percentage. Of course, not all the

numbers are counted probably, but still I think they have acted very quickly and mobilized well to take necessary measures to – as a response to the COVID-19. Of course, there are limitations of capacity, but in that regard we need to mobilize international support. And Japan has also contributed in that respect.

Secondly, the challenge is not only health or medical aspect. There are a lot of – enormous spillover effects on economy and society. So that's – on those aspects we need to build an international partnership, how to – relaunching and recovering better from those massive challenges. Fragility, vulnerabilities existing in the system before have been accentuated by the COVID-19. That's what I think – I believe that we are seeing. And the – take the challenge and opportunity of innovation. That's also necessary. The digital transformation and business opportunities to address the government needs. Those are the innovations and the opportunities we need to seize together with our partners.

So I'll stop there and thank you very much.

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Ambassador. Akunna, let me turn to you to respond to the openings from Andrew and Bogolo, and hear your perspective on how the U.S. resets its relationship with African governments and publics, and particularly these issues around debt relief and vaccines. Where do you – where is the U.S. government on moving forward on these issues?

Akunna Cook: Thank you again, Judd, for inviting me to be part of the august panel. It's a pleasure to be talking about the U.S. relationship with Africa, and particularly this idea of a reset. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to creating a foreign policy for the middle class. What does that mean? It means that we have to be cognizant that what happens around the world affects the American people, just like what happens in the United States affects people around the world.

In Africa in particular, we have had a strong partnership with the African continent based on what we believe to be shared values between American people and people on the African continent. So that's – whether that's in democracy and governance, or that's in prosperity, or whether that's health. COVID-19 has really just exposed how interconnected we are. A pandemic that is happening in Africa affects us here in the United States. We saw that with Ebola and we definitely saw that with COVID-19. And so to that end, the United States has been committed to ensuring that Africa has what it needs to overcome and heal from the pandemic. We've invested over \$2 billion into the Global Vaccine Alliance. And we will do more.

In terms of debt, you know, this is the first year in about 30 years that African economies have backslid. And so we are committed to ensuring that Africa can come out of this recession, just as America needs to come out of its own economic recession brought on by the pandemic. And so we

support the efforts of the G-20 to provide debt relief through the World Bank, and IMF, and other international financial institutions. And we are committed to remaining a partner with Africa and truly – a true partnership that centers Africa’s needs, as Ambassador Yonetani mentioned, and centers African solutions to African problems. And to the extent that the United States can be a partner, can lead conversations, we’re committed to doing that as part of this administration.

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Akunna.

Let me pick up on two points that both – that all four of you raised as we – as we go into a second section, which is really thinking about multilateralism and some of the challenges of global discrimination. And what I heard from Ambassador Yonetani and from DAS Cook is that multilateralism versus – a reembracing of multilateralism on the U.S. side, a continued commitment on the Japanese side. And that’s one of the ways in which they’re going to address some of these issues around the economic challenges and around vaccine, at least through COVAX. And then Akunna mentioned, you know, the U.S. – the Biden-Harris administration being focused on connecting foreign policy to domestic policy. And I think some of these issues around systemic racism is one way in which we think about that.

So let me first turn to Ambassador Yonetani again because you mentioned TICAD. I had the privilege of going to TICAD in the before days when you could actually go places. I went to Yokohama. You know, I think that TICAD is an incredibly important organization because it is multilateral, because it brings civil society into the engagement. But I’d like to hear your thoughts on where you’re going next. Where will be the next TICAD? What are the areas – you alluded to it earlier – that you think Japan wants to focus on for this reset with Africa? And then a little bit more about your partnerships with African governments, but with the United States, with Europe, with other countries. And how do you, again, we’re going to just keep going back to this theme, how do you push a reset?

Koji Yonetani: OK, thank you very much for the second opportunity to come into this discussion in the first session. Before going into the TICAD, where we are, I want to come back on the vaccine supplies and then effort in relation to multilateralism. We believe that mobilizing the international solidarity for the sake of ensuring that all the countries have access to vaccine, it goes – it should go through multilateralism. That’s why we are working – since the beginning – working closely with the U.S. and other allies to establish a multilateral mechanism, including COVAX and other mechanisms to provide necessary response tools to the COVID.

We shouldn’t – of course, we need every helping hand from all over the world. And no one should instrumentalize the tool of providing vaccine or other indispensable need to fight COVID in their other interests. So that’s

why Japan has worked with others in contributing to COVAX and increasing the contribution since the beginning of this year up to \$200 million U.S. dollars. So we will continue to do that.

And if I may come back briefly to – on TICAD, I think that health sector, of course, is amongst the various areas of longstanding discussion in this framework. TICAD is not a bilateral Japan-African dialogue forum, but is a multilateral forum organized together with the U.N., UNDP, World Bank, and African Union. And we have been addressing various issues related to the economy, society, and peace and stability. And the basic important principles that we have established after very extensive discussion with African leaders at the beginning of the process, is ownership and partnership.

So the countries, the governments of African countries should be at the driver's seat, and international partners including Japan and others should look at how and what we can do to accompany their efforts. So in that – with those principles what we are aiming at is a long-term development, sustainable development, that should be achieved. And for that – for that purpose, what is essential is institution building and capacity building of the countries themselves. I agree that in the context of COVID this approach has proven to be very relevant, pertinent, because just distributing material – those kind of things doesn't sort of bring about solutions. We need the institution, health workers, policymakers.

And that has proven to be effective in various countries, including like in the – and if I may mention just only one example, in Ghana, Noguchi Memorial Institute, to which Japan has been working very closely with Ghana and other international partners, has proven to be very much active. They have implemented about 80 percent of PCR tests in Ghana. And they serve as a region hub also in response to COVID. So I think we will continue to work on that basis and, of course, addressing the newly emerging various challenges not only in health sector but also in various – maybe very often aggravating situation of socioeconomic context to build back better and with good governance. OK, thank you very much.

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Ambassador. And you did mention in your opening remarks that there was also a focus on technology too, and what we can do in the tech sector. So I think, you know, medical, and health, and tech are key areas of focus. And I know that the U.S. is also focusing on health strengthening similar to the way Japan is, as opposed to other countries who are much more focused on providing equipment.

But DAS Cook, I wanted to get to the second part of this section, which is around some of the challenges around systemic racism. The U.S. has been dealing with a racial reckoning this past year. And the Biden-Harris administration has pledged to mend some of these deep historic wounds at home and then address injustice and police brutality, you know, in the

world. And so how is this playing out in the U.S.? How do you think – how will the government address African governments that have poor human rights records. How do we better support civil society? How do we have a better people-to-people relationship so End SARS protesters can talk to Black Lives Matter protesters. How do we have a better people-to-people relationship with thinking about these systemic challenges?

And then, Andrew and Bogolo, you're going to get to be able to tell them why they're wrong or what else they're missing in just a bit, so get ready.

Akunna Cook:

Judd, thank you for that question. The reality is that the multiracial democracy, the union, in fact, that we have been trying to perfect, is very much a work in progress. COVID-19 and the events of the last year have really exposed a lot of the vulnerabilities and a lot of the crises, frankly, that have been facing communities of color for generations in the United States. So we had a health crisis that played out where communities of color were being infected and dying at higher rates than White communities. We had a(n) economic crisis that saw Black and brown businesses going out of business, and sometimes permanently, and being least likely to receive assistance because of their lack of networks, that are perpetuated because of racism.

We saw a democracy crisis. And we saw Black and brown people standing in line for four, five, six, seven, eight hours just to exercise their right to vote – a direct result of the voter suppression that has targeted these communities for years. And lastly, we did see police brutality playing out on our police – on our TV screens. And something that communities of color have been facing and talking about for years. And it took this particular crisis for the world – for the United States and for the world – to recognize that enough is enough.

So I think that the events of the last year really do precipitate a reset in the way that the United States engages in the world. I think we have to approach the world, as Secretary Blinken has said, with a combination of humility and confidence. Humility, because we are very clear that we are not where we need to be. That there is a lot more room for improvement in terms of our domestic challenges around race. And it beyond personnel, although it does – although in terms of the foreign policy context it does include personnel in ensuring that our foreign policy establishment and that the folks who are creating and enacting our foreign policy actually reflect the American people – a more diverse American people.

But it goes beyond that in terms of the way that we relate to countries. And again I bring it back to this humility, that says that we approach countries not with a bias from the past that does implement the old racial hierarchies, but one that recognizes that every country has something to learn and something to contribute to this project of creating democratic, a more free, a less authoritarian world, right? But we also approach this with

confidence. I mean we see, right, with the election of our first Black and Indian vice president, in Vice President Kamala Harris, that there has been progress in the United States.

And so we have confidence because we know that although we have yet to achieve the values and achieve the perfection that we keep at it. And so we approach our partners and say: To the extent that you, your people, share those values with us we will continue to fight for you and we will continue to advocate for democracy. We will continue to advocate for gender equality, racial equality. We will continue to speak out against brutality levied against people by their governments. And we will continue to protect the rights of LGBT individuals.

And to your point, I think you're exactly right. We have a vibrant civil society here in the United States that advocates for all of these issues. And I think that there's a tremendous opportunity to partner with civil society in other countries who are fighting similar issues, because I think that when we do that as Americans, and lead by the power of example, we are strong and we're in a better position to lead.

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Akunna. Really powerful remarks. Of all the things that Amanda Gorman said, our youth poet laureate at the inauguration, the one that keeps coming back to me is that we are a nation that is unfinished. And I feel like that's a way to think about our foreign policy as well, that we're continuing to be open about our shortcomings and honest about our efforts to continue to perfect the way we deal with our partners.

So I wanted to give Bogolo and Andrew an opportunity to respond – to respond to Ambassador Yonetani's points about Japan's focus and Akunna's points about how the U.S. intends to engage with its partners. Are you looking for humility in that partnership? What would you like to see the focus be? What is the way forward? And I know both of you have been in government or at least in pseudo-government positions – at least I can call that, Andrew, the AFC that way. And so you know what it's like to be a member of a public, but a member of a government as well. And so maybe we'll go to Bogolo first. Just your reactions to what you've heard, and what kind of corrections or amendments or improvements you would add.

Bogolo  
Kenewendo:

Right. Thanks again, Judd.

So, I mean, I have attended TICAD – the last TICAD meeting. And it was – it was actually very productive. A lot of issues – the right issues were being discussed at TICAD. And in particular, I mean, it was about good infrastructure, bringing it into the continent and ICT, and looking at newer financing models. And similarly, I've participated in the U.S.-Africa Summit, in 2019. Now, my advice – I mean, I accept what has been said. And these are priorities for countries. And it's important for us as partners to recognize other people's priorities as we want them to recognize ours.

And you will recall earlier this year when we were asked how active do we think the Biden administration will be with African on the onset? And my response, honestly, at that time was, given the state of what's happening in the U.S., and just as how Cook just said it, you know, you anticipate for someone to want to take care of home first before they take care of anywhere else. But what – in addition to that, what we're looking for – and I think what would be really helpful for the – (audio break) – is just going back to the global action on vaccine rollout – that's not just COVAX. That looks at the equitable distribution, less hawking of vaccine. You know, that is what will be important in making sure that we get the vaccine at the – (audio break) – price and at a speedy time. So that is just what I wanted to – (audio break) – particular issue.

Now, the next issue in relation to the – to humility, I completely agree. Very needed. I could tell you all about how we dealt with – (audio break) – administration, but I think we can have a drink over that. (Laughs.) But the issue is the tone that has been used during the trade war, the tone that was used towards the continent, towards African presidents, was really – it lacked humility. And I think bringing back humility into the partnership, into conversations with African leaders, will really help to strengthen the partnership and make sure that the relationship moves forward.

And when it comes to the economy and what Japan was – Yonetani was just talking about, Africa's aspirations right now – as I mentioned in my opening – are all about unification, making sure that we trade together, we develop together. And when we look at that, we want our partners to also rise to the same ambitions, to recognize that our priorities now are more on the economic development on developing value chains, on infrastructure development that will facilitate that intra-African trade and, by extension, the rest of the world. Evidence points to that intra-Africa trade growing, the AFCFTA will not only benefit us in the continent but will also inject a sizable amount of capital into the world economy and into the trading system.

So partners need to come up into those ambitions as well and see how they meet us into the ambitions so that when we talk about American priorities, Japanese priorities, and all of our partners' priorities, we are able to mirror each other and really make sure that we're working towards a working multilateral system. Because, again, that's something that has been broken in the past couple of years. We've seen severed relationships, particularly the multilateral system hasn't been functioning. And we are hoping that now we will see a little bit more movement at the – (audio break) – see a little bit more movement in Gavi and COVAX, and many others, how we relate to each other.

Judd Devermont: I don't know if it's coming through but there's a lot of vigorous nodding going on amongst all of us, especially with the AFCFTA, Bogolo.

Andrew, let me give you a chance to respond here. You can also let us know we need a table for the post-event drink conversation as well, and we'll just keep a running tab of things that we can't say in public but we're going to work through. Andrew.

Andrew Alli:

Great. Well, thanks. You know, the picture that Bogolo has behind her reminds me of a saying we have here in Nigeria, that when two elephants fight it's the grass that suffers. And so, you know, when we see the sort of, you know, great power contests going on – and Bogolo refers to 2018 and the trade war, I think of Alaska last week; I'm still digesting that – you know, we sort of wonder. And then, you know, when you think about how Africa really suffered during the Cold War – when, you know, it was sort of, you know, two other parties having a great-power fight, with the grass, being Africa, suffering – you know, it does worry me. And so I do – I do like what I hear about multilateralism. But of course, as another saying goes, actions speak a lot louder than words. So, you know, we would like to see that really translated into action.

I think, just to – just to make a specific point on this, for example, you know, the COVAX program, and I think it's great, but as my boss and founder of SouthBridge, Donald Kaberuka, said in his testimony to Congress last week, COVAX only covers about 20 percent of the African population. You need 60 percent to get to herd immunity. And you know, that's why I found it very disappointing that most of the Western powers vetoed the moving the WTO around, expanding production of vaccines. And when you take that with, you know, hearing about countries that have, you know, 100 million more doses than they really need of the vaccine, you sort of wonder whether the rhetoric is really matching up with the actions.

And again, you know, it comes back to the whole point about – you know, again, very good points that were made. The whole point about, you know, Africans charting their own course and really being allowed to be participants. And, you know, I mean I think that – to be frank, as an African I would like to see us doing more around actually manufacturing vaccines and, you know, developing IP on the continent, rather than just being given, you know, free doses of vaccines and things. Now, maybe you need the quick free doses of spare vaccines immediately to get yourself out of the worst of the pandemic. But, you know, how can this be used to sort of reinforce, build African economies, African value chains, African IP?

And these things are all, in a way, self-serving for the people that would help us to get there, because, you know, a stronger Africa, a more vibrant Africa, a more joined-together Africa – I'm a very big fan of the Africa Free Trade Agreement as well – you know, becomes a more important and more useful and more valuable partner for those countries that help us, or those regions or multilateral organizations. So for me, it's really just – you know, I mean, everything sounds fine.

And you can't really gainsay what is being said, but, you know, I'd just like to see these things translated into real actions that, you know, have a real benefit and a real reset of the relations with the African continent, which I think going back to where we were at some point – you know, maybe it's not bad, but I'd like us really to think forward about, you know, what new relationships. How can we reset we even think about the relationship with each other?

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Andrew. Well, I think we're going to have an opportunity to do that in this final section, where I think there is an opportunity to really create new pathways around how we approach climate change. It's a focus of the Biden-Harris administration. It's a focus of the Japanese government. It's a focus of many African governments and publics. And so we'll just spend a little time on climate change. And then we'll open it up to questions from our audience. It's very easy, once again, to submit questions. Just go to our event page, click on the tab, and then we'll be able to ask our esteemed panelists.

But, Bogolo, why don't I go back to you and get your sense on climate change? We all know that Africa's contributions to global greenhouse gas emissions are so small relative to the rest of the world, and yet Africa's countries are the ones that are most vulnerable to it and perhaps least prepared for a response to extreme weather patterns. So from your – from your point of view, what should African governments be doing domestically to address climate change? And what kind of partnerships are they looking for?

Bogolo  
Kenewendo: Yeah. I mean, it is estimated actually that about \$20 to \$30 billion U.S. will be needed in the next 20 years for African countries to work on mitigation and adaptation measures around climate change. And this is mainly because, as you rightfully said, the continent is going – is being already severely affected by climate change. Floods everywhere. I mean, we've had rain since December and still up to now, which is really irregular. And others are experiencing droughts when they're supposed to be in their rainy season. And this is really affecting food security and it's affecting issues around settlements as well – so provision of housing and so forth.

So the cost to the continent is really more instability. And African – I know some of the thought around adaptation is now using solar energy. And we are seeing some of the programs from the U.S., this Power Africa that is now here trying to help connect solar panels all over African households. I know that they're negotiating a deal there. So these are some of the aspirations, setting up power plants. There's something else happening in Ethiopia. But beyond that, it is about going back to private sector. See, I think – and this is because I believe in the role of the private sector in development.

So I believe that most African countries, what they should be focused on is how to provide a conducive environment that encourages innovation – (audio break) – mitigating climate change issues, and such that other partners can come in and slot themselves in an – (audio break) – in development, and – (audio break) – feel that this is a space that allows them to be innovative in delivering measures towards climate change. So I – (audio break) – look at climate change from different aspects. But I like to look at it from an economic point of view. What happens if we don't deal with it? Who's going to eat? Who's going to move? What are we going to do economically?

And so it's important that – (audio break) – to the issues now before we are pushed to them later. And, you know, similarly with digitization we've seen that in the past just two years ago really most African countries didn't want to talk about the digital economy. But now we are forced to by COVID. And it is a very tight space to be in for you to wait to be forced into something and be more reactionary, rather than having been more proactive to the issues that you know that are coming.

Judd Devermont: Thank you. That's, I think, really wise words.

Akunna, President Biden, when he was a candidate, said he was going to spend much more time and resources on climate adaption in sub-Saharan Africa. We know next month there will be a big summit around climate change. So can you preview a little bit of what the Biden-Harris administration's approach towards climate change in Africa will be? And particularly, how do you think – how do we deal with the fact that many of these countries have considerable debt right now trying to recover from COVID and also shifting towards green economies? What is the way in which the U.S. government can be helpful here?

Akunna Cook: Yeah. So the Biden-Harris administration has been committed to confronting the crisis that is climate change. And it's another example of where our domestic priorities meet our foreign policy priorities. We know that even here in the United States that many of the communities that are most affected by climate change, and therefore are also the same communities that are least resourced and able to mitigate the effects of, whether it be floods, droughts, extreme weather events. The same thing is playing out in Africa.

And so we, you know, day one, rejoined the Paris climate agreement. In terms of our engagement in Africa, I agree with a lot of what Bogolo said. This is going to require governments but also private sector engagement to ensure that African countries have the resources that they need, but also that we're taking advantage of the innovation that is available in the rest of the world, but the brilliance and innovation that is on the continent itself. We know that African businesses, African – the private sector needs support, and that we have to support their resourcing because that is the

way that we can capitalize on the innovation that will help to steer their economies towards more green energy sources.

The other thing I'll say about climate is we know that our ability to present a green world for our children really depends on the investments that we're making today. Bogolo referenced Power Africa, which has – which is the U.S. flagship program working on bringing power to the – to the African continent. To date, we have brought power to 18 million homes and will continue to do – to facilitate additional deals. And we're continuing to evaluate how we can supplement what we've been doing with Power Africa to ensure that the African continent is a place that African businesses can thrive, U.S. businesses can thrive, and that they're doing it in a way that is sustainable.

And so we are approximately 63 days into the administration. And climate is a top focus. You've heard the president say it. You've heard the vice president. You've heard Secretary Blinken say it. And our attention to this climate summit that you referenced, Judd, is another example of the tension that's being paid to it. So Africa will definitely be a part of this conversation. And our ability to mobilize all of our partners around climate is going to remain a top priority because it is such an existential crisis here at home as well as abroad, including in Africa.

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Akunna.

We're going to do just a quick, short response from Andrew and from Ambassador Yonetani. And then we've already got a bunch of questions in. So, Andrew, why don't I turn to you, if there's anything you want to add here on climate change and what Africa and its international partners should be doing together.

Andrew Alli: Yeah. So I think climate change and climate financing can be one of the biggest economic opportunities for the African continent, but also if handled incorrectly can be a big disaster as well. Economic opportunities not just because, you know, given how far back we are in particularly electricity, we can – I hate to use the word “leapfrog” – but we can sort of adopt the latest, most efficient technology to meet our power needs. And in the same way, also sort of help to reverse some of the economic damage – sorry – environmental damage that has been done by climate change or climate change-related things.

So, for example, you know, like Lake Chad has shrunk by about 90 percent in the last, you know, 100 years or so. Maybe not entirely due to climate change, but climate change is a big factor. And this is, you know, at least one of the causes of a lot of things that are happening in the Sahelian region, particularly north – in the north of Nigeria, where I live. On the other hand, I think forcing African countries to move to a sort of renewables-only power strategy when that may not be the best option for them – especially

given they lack a lot of baseload power which most other regions have. And, you know, in many cases the best source of baseload power is gas.

I think that that may be sort of moving too fast and too prematurely and may do a lot of damage. I mean, you see, for example, the costs of operating Kenya's grid have gone up considerably because of the large amounts of renewables that are on that grid relative to the baseload that they have. So that's why I said it could be a huge opportunity but, if handled badly, it could be a disaster and set things back. And so a very careful course needs to be set. But, you know, it is something that is happening. And I think that the other point I would just make is around, again, it's not just a question of how African – and Africa and Africans can change their electricity mix. It's actually how can they become a part of the climate change economy?

You know, so rather than just, I don't know, buying the panels from country X, how can the panels be manufactured here? How can we be a part of that economy? I mean, other than, you know, in the normal way of sending our raw materials off somewhere else to be processed and sent back to us. So I think those are the things we need to think – that's maybe the second-order way of looking at climate change. Thanks.

Judd Devermont: I think that's great, Andrew.

Ambassador Yonetani, just quickly, what is – from the Japan government's perspective.

Koji Yonetani: Thank you. Yeah. I'm very much glad that people are talking about this climate change issue, and then also the role of private sector, the opportunity created by the launching of the African continent FTA. Those are really the issues that we should be starting to look at throughout the – throughout the preparation process and the discussion in the TICAD – the TICAD version eight year, to be held in Tunis. I believe that the Japanese private sector stakeholders, together with others including in Africa and in other countries, can play an important role to address the challenges of climate change and also creating a value chain, supply chain, integrating the African economy into the global economy. That's the common challenge that we share amongst all the countries. Not only regional – the one region, another region, but worldwide.

And in terms of climate change, I would like to recall that our Prime Minister Suga has made an announcement that Japan will also aim at realizing a decarbonized society by bringing the greenhouse gas emission overall to zero by 2050. And so he is stressing that we have to change the mindset to the notion that addressing environmental needs – reducing carbon emissions – is not a cost creator, but it's an opportunity to develop new technologies and utilizing in a good manner to create new economy. And I think African continent is one of the big stage where various actors should work together to create this – to realize this opportunity, at the

same time providing access to power, creating value chains, and also maintaining the target of zero carbon emission.

Of course, that's very much challenging in terms technology development and how to implement it. But it's a challenge that we need to address jointly. So that's – Japan particularly wants to be amongst the partners, both from public government side and from the private sector side. And so we want to promote and mobilize our private sector through this TICAD process. So thank you very much.

Judd Devermont: Thank you, Ambassador. And I think that perfectly aligns with what Andrew and Bogolo said.

All right, figure this math out: We have two minutes, two questions, four panelists. Here we go. I'm going to do – these are the two that I really thought were fantastic. So this is – Fakhriyyah Hashim from the African Leadership Center asks: Should there be optimism with the presence of an African WTO head? Can that shape Africa's relationship with advanced economies, given the COVAX vote? And so I think maybe Andrew and Bogolo you can help us with that question.

And then the second – the last question maybe DAS Cook you can do that for us. But what are the implications of Africa's pro-democracy movements, such as End SARS, in a post-COVID era? How can these movements form relationships with foreign partners? And what can they teach African governments? And that's from Juliet Fugara from Harvard University. So why don't we do Andrew, Bogolo, and then we'll end with Akunna.

Andrew Alli: So obviously, as a Nigerian, I very much welcome Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala taking over as head of the WTO. I think it's great to see an African and a woman in that position. And you know, we need global leadership for trade, as has been mentioned. And I think Ngozi is a global leader. So from that – from that extent I'm very pleased and, you know, very optimistic.

However, I think we also need to understand that the WTO is a big, multilateral organization. And therefore, moving it is kind of like moving a supertanker. It's not something that's going to, you know, spin around on its axis. It's going to take time. And it's going to need to be launched. But hopefully – and I believe she will – Ngozi will be able to make that organization and launch trade in a direction that is more inclusive than it has been. Less discriminatory. I don't – I don't really take either as anything massively positive or massively negative from the vaccine turndown. I now look to see how things develop over a longer timeframe.

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Andrew.

Bogolo.

Bogolo  
Kenenwendo:

Yeah. I mean, we were all very excited when Dr. Ngozi was appointed as the DG of the WTO. It's a great feat. We are excited, and everyone should be excited. And the – you know, just like Andrew said, the WTO is such a big organization. And I think at the heart of it what's important for us to recognize is there could be good leadership in the organization, look at it as a secretariat, that could be pushing, implementing what it has been given cue by the members. Because the WTO is a members' organization. And the secretariat works from cue of the members. So she will push what she can, but it will also require for the membership – for the member states to want to see change.

The WTO in itself and the secretariat before has been accused of having biases and not tabling all issues from all partners at the same time or giving them priority. So hopefully the change that we will see with an African head in the WTO is less bias in the issues that are being tabled at the WTO or the ones that have been expedited to being heard at the WTO. But as for every other thing, how the – how member states agree to new issues or agree to old substantive issues, for example, from the Doha Round, that is up to them. That is up to them if they want to move forward with issues of subsidies or not. It is up to member states if they want to move forward with the digital economy or not. And they need to support her in order to see the WTO succeed.

Once again, I think it's a little worrying that we only have the FTA to show for the WTO. And that's the TFA, the Trade Facilitation Agreement. So we need to do more. But I would like to end on a positive, because I feel like I just said a lot of things, like, we need member states to do this. But I – in the last couple of days we've also seen a little bit of positivity coming back into the WTO, talking about rebuilding the appellate body. And I thought, OK, so one thing at a time. And we will celebrate the small steps, the small milestones that come. But this COVID, what we're seeing with the vaccine, I hope is not indicative of the protectionist policies that member states of the WTO will continue to implement post-COVID, because that will only harm the world economy even more and ensure that no one actually rebounds back better.

Thanks, Judd. And thank you, everyone, for a good afternoon.

Judd Devermont: Thank you.

Akunna, on the pro-democracy questions? I know we're running just a little over time, so we'll be brief.

Akunna Cook: OK, so I'll speak quickly. So we absolutely welcome the pro-democracy movements taking place across Africa and the rest of the world. You mentioned the various movements, including End SARS, but of course also here in the United States the Black Lives Matter movement. There are benefits and drawbacks of technology, but I think that one of the great

benefits is that it's easier to link – to, one, create and strengthen civil society movements – civil society and create movements online. It's also easier to link civil society in countries. So it's easier for, you know, anti-police brutality efforts to be linked – here in the United States – to be linked to those around the world.

And so I believe that by taking advantage of the place that we are in the world and the – and the time that we are in now, trying to come out of this pandemic and trying to come out of the exposures that we've seen in terms of the shortcomings in our democracy, I think that that gives us some opportunity to really strengthen our commitments to democracy, and so put governments who are not aligned with those values on notice that a new day is arriving and that people are no longer going to be oppressed by governments that are not sharing these commitments to democracy and a free civil society.

Judd Devermont: Thanks, Akunna.

Ambassador Yonetani, any closing remarks?

Koji Yonetani: No, thank you very much. I think it's a very exciting discussion we had. And I think – I hope that we would continue to work together between Japan, U.S., and other partners on the common issues that we are facing on the continent of Africa, but the common issues that we are sharing, I think, on the global scene. Thank you very much.

Judd Devermont: Thank you. I think that's well-said.

Let me thank again our panelists, especially let me thank the Embassy of Japan for their support for this event and the report that we published late last year. I'll just summarize some of the things that I heard. We need to approach these relationships with humility. We need to celebrate small steps. We need to reinvest in multilateralism, particularly around the CFTA. Africa's partners need to do way more than just support COVAX. And then in thinking about how do African countries fit into the African climate change economy.

And I'll end with a quote from Sekou Toure – that doesn't happen much in 2021 – but Seko Toure said, "Don't judge us by what others say or what we say, but by what we do." And I think that's an important message for Africa's foreign partners to think about. You're going to be judged by what you do, not by what you say.

Thanks to everyone and have a great day.

(END)

