

Equatorial Guinea Promotes U.S. Cultural and Business Ties with Experts, Specialists at International Leadership Conference

EQUATORIAL GUINEA CALLS FOR CLOSER U.S. CULTURAL AND BUSINESS TIES

President Obiang highlights importance of American investment in driving Equatorial Guinea's economic growth.

International Leadership Conference unites African leaders with African Diaspora.

MALABO, Equatorial Guinea – October 17, 2012 – Equatorial Guinean President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo called this week for a strengthening of commercial ties and cultural exchanges with the United States—and particularly with African-Americans—as a key to Africa's development. He made the remarks at the opening of the International Leadership Conference <

[http:// gbenergie.com/conference/](http://gbenergie.com/conference/) > , co-sponsored by Equatorial Guinea, GB Energy and the World Mayors Conference, which is taking place in the Sipopo Conference Center <

http://www.flickr.com/photos/equatorial_guinea/sets/72157629658684131/

> of the capital city of Malabo from October 15-20.

"This meeting is an opportunity for the continent to deepen its contacts with the African-American community and create opportunities for development. Africa bears a strong appreciation, respect and confidence in the American people for their fearlessness, dynamism, realism and spirit of excellence in all their undertakings," President Obiang said.

He said that the country's rapid development is due in large part to the investment American companies made in the oil sector: "Equatorial Guinea today has become...the fourth most developed country on the African continent. American assistance could be the solution for Africa."

"Our government highly values the contributions of American citizens in our development, and we believe this momentum can be carried throughout Africa. America has a great ability to do so, given its extensive experience in the development of technology," he said.

The conference brought African-American political leaders together with leaders in government and business from throughout Africa.

This is the second time within the last two months that Equatorial Guinea has hosted a meeting focused on uniting Africans with the African diaspora. Malabo was host to the Ninth Leon H. Sullivan Foundation Summit in August.

Addressing himself specifically to the African diaspora and the importance of uniting people on two continents, he said, "Let's work together for a better future, to unite what others have separated," During his speech, President Obiang stressed the importance of this strategic meeting between Africans and African-Americans, recalling the commitment of Equatorial Guinea to "grant citizenship to African-Americans wishing to settle here, either to work or do business."

The conference is focused specifically on local communities and is being attended by mayors and other municipal and local officials from the United States, the Caribbean and Africa.

Addressing the need for a greater exchange of knowledge and experience at the local level, President Obiang said, "We need to foster a mutual knowledge of local communities, to promote town twinning with communities in the United States. We believe that working together with American community leaders on issues such as education, health, energy, environment, tourism, mining, etc., will foster a mutual understanding of the methods and practices that elevate the values of African-American and African cultures. It is a crucial link to build closer cooperation and solidarity between Africa and America."

The International Community Leaders Conference brings experts and leaders in different sectors with the goal to create a platform to promote the exchange of ideas, concepts and proposals that support the development of Equatorial Guinea. The conference is centered in progress made in Equatorial Guinea, especially in the country's industrialization plan.

Mayors and entrepreneurs, experts and professionals from North America delivered presentations on the most important issues of development and offered their expertise to African delegates. The conference included forums on municipalities, ecotourism, culture, arts and health, education, energy, mining and environment.

The U.S. delegation numbered 96, including Dr. James L. Walls, Jr., mayor, District Heights, Md., and president of the World Conference of Mayors; John McGowan, mayor, Union Springs, Ala.; Tawana Lynn Keels, chair-elect of the National Black Caucus of School Board Members, Princeton, Ohio; Thomas Masters, mayor, Riviera Beach, Fla.; Deborah Denard Delgado, council member, National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO); Mary Ajoku, mayor, Cruger, Miss.; Melony Griffith, member of the Maryland General Assembly; Adam McFadden, councilman, Rochester, New York; Hanifa Shabazz, councilwoman, Wilmington, Del.; and Johnny Ford, mayor, Tuskegee, Ala.

The conference also had delegations from Senegal, Cote D'Ivoire, Nigeria, Liberia, Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Burkina Faso.

Through financial investments and the transfer of knowledge, the African diaspora is having a significant impact on African development. During his closing speech at the Leon H. Sullivan

Summit this past August, President Obiang said, “The African Diaspora is almost like another continent, and it can contribute to the development of the African economy. The developed countries need resources and Africa needs development.”

Equatorial Guinea < [http:// www.flickr.com/photos/equatorial_guinea/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/equatorial_guinea/) > has been increasingly active in African affairs in recent years. It has used its oil resources to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to its African neighbors, and it has conducted a robust regional foreign policy featuring bilateral summits, citizen exchanges, technical assistance and investment promotion. It has also hosted a number of regional conferences in its new facilities in Sipopo.